

5 October, 2018



Theory of Change

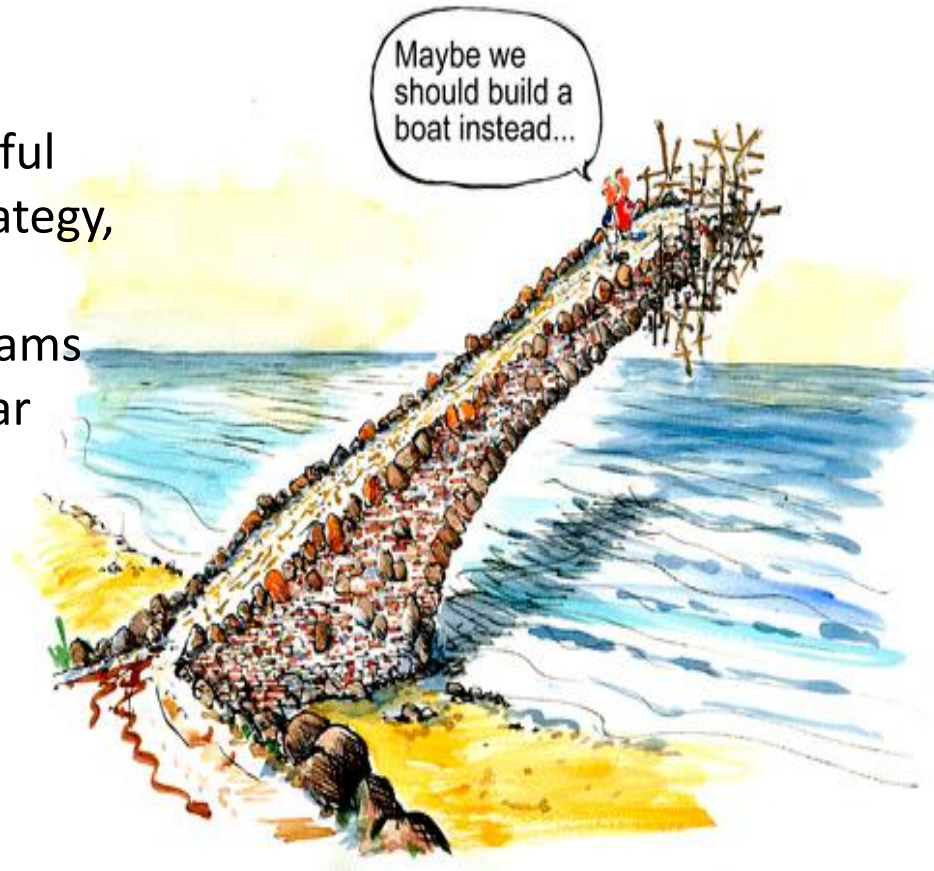
NGO Federatie, 2-5 October, 2018

Alison Napier

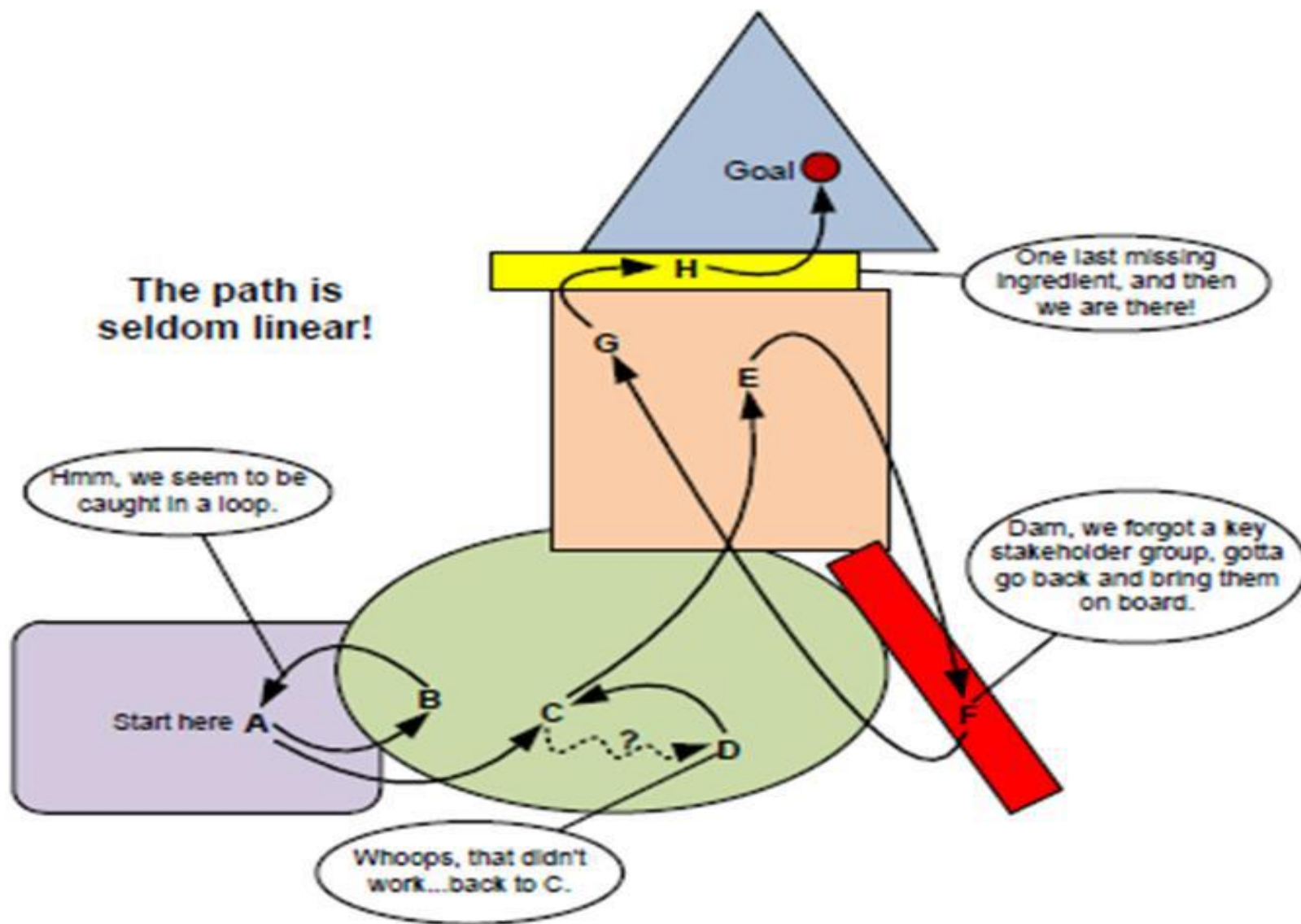
What is a Theory of Change?

“An ongoing process of reflection to explore change and how it happens – and what that means for the part we play in a particular context, sector and/or with a group of people” (Comic Relief 2011)

An ‘ongoing process of discussion-based analysis and learning that produces powerful insights to support programme design, strategy, implementation, **evaluation and impact assessment**, communicated through diagrams and narratives which are updated at regular intervals’ (Vogel 2012)

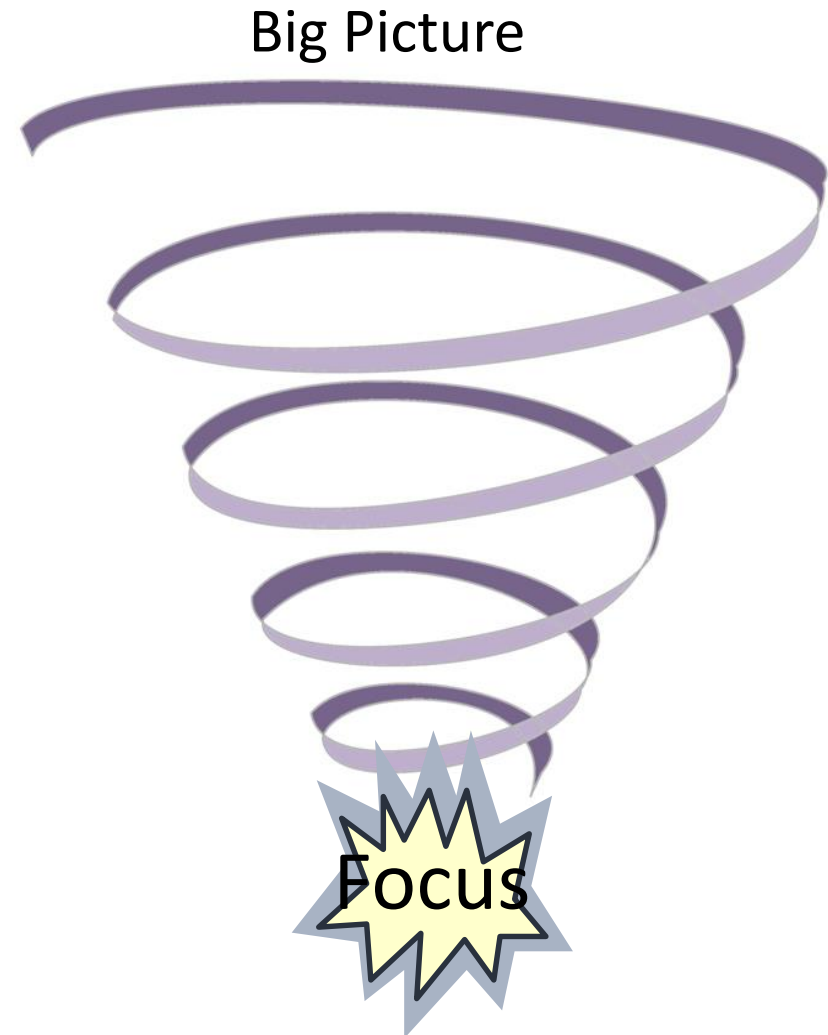


The focus is on what we think will change, not on what we plan to do.



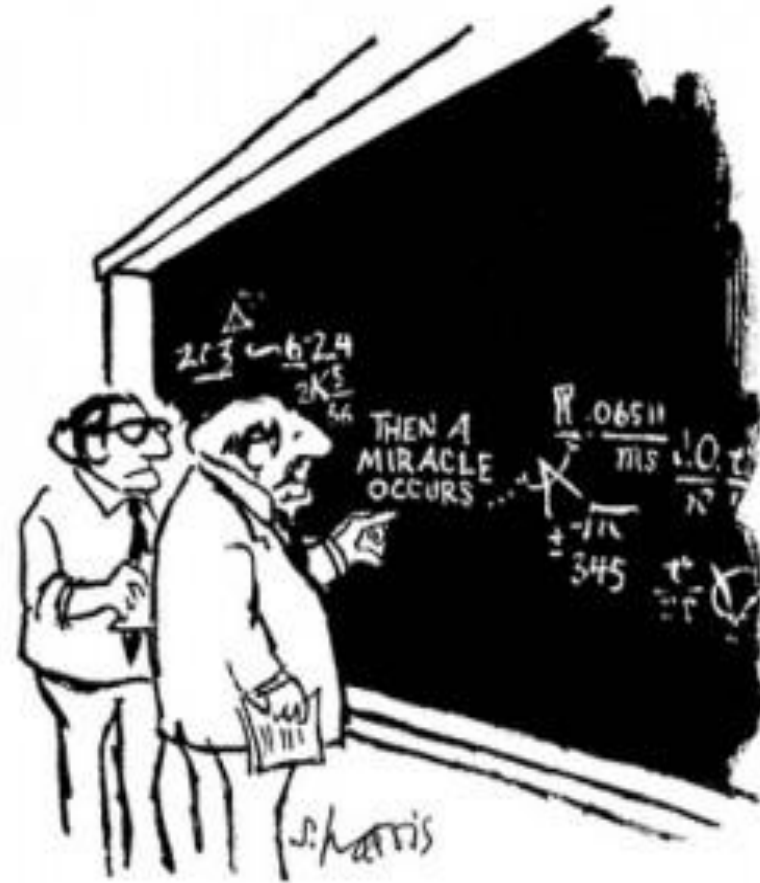
Why Theory of Change?

- Dissatisfaction with logframes
- Need for more complex, systems approaches
- Increased demand for showing it
- Need for more focus in complex programmes



Surfacing our assumptions

- Theories of Change make us think about power and how it works
- They make explicit our assumptions about how we think change and development happens and why (what evidence do we have?)

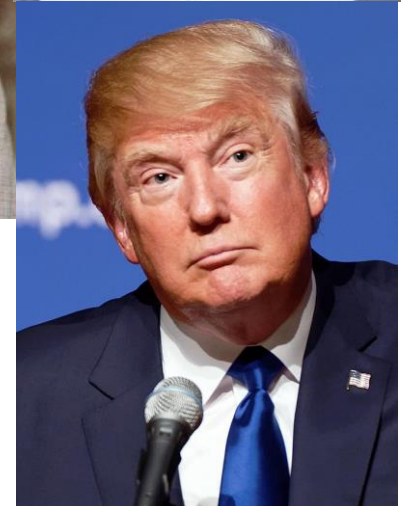


"I think you should be more explicit here in step two."

Who influences change? (Actors)



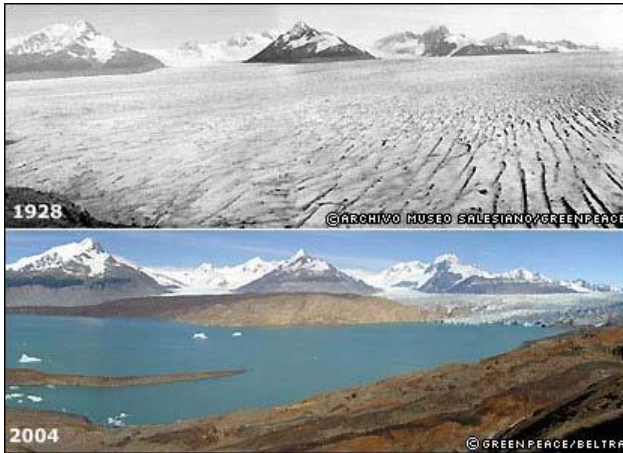
Organisations



Individuals

Organised People

What long term and immediate factors might help or hinder?



Environment



Social norms - Empathy

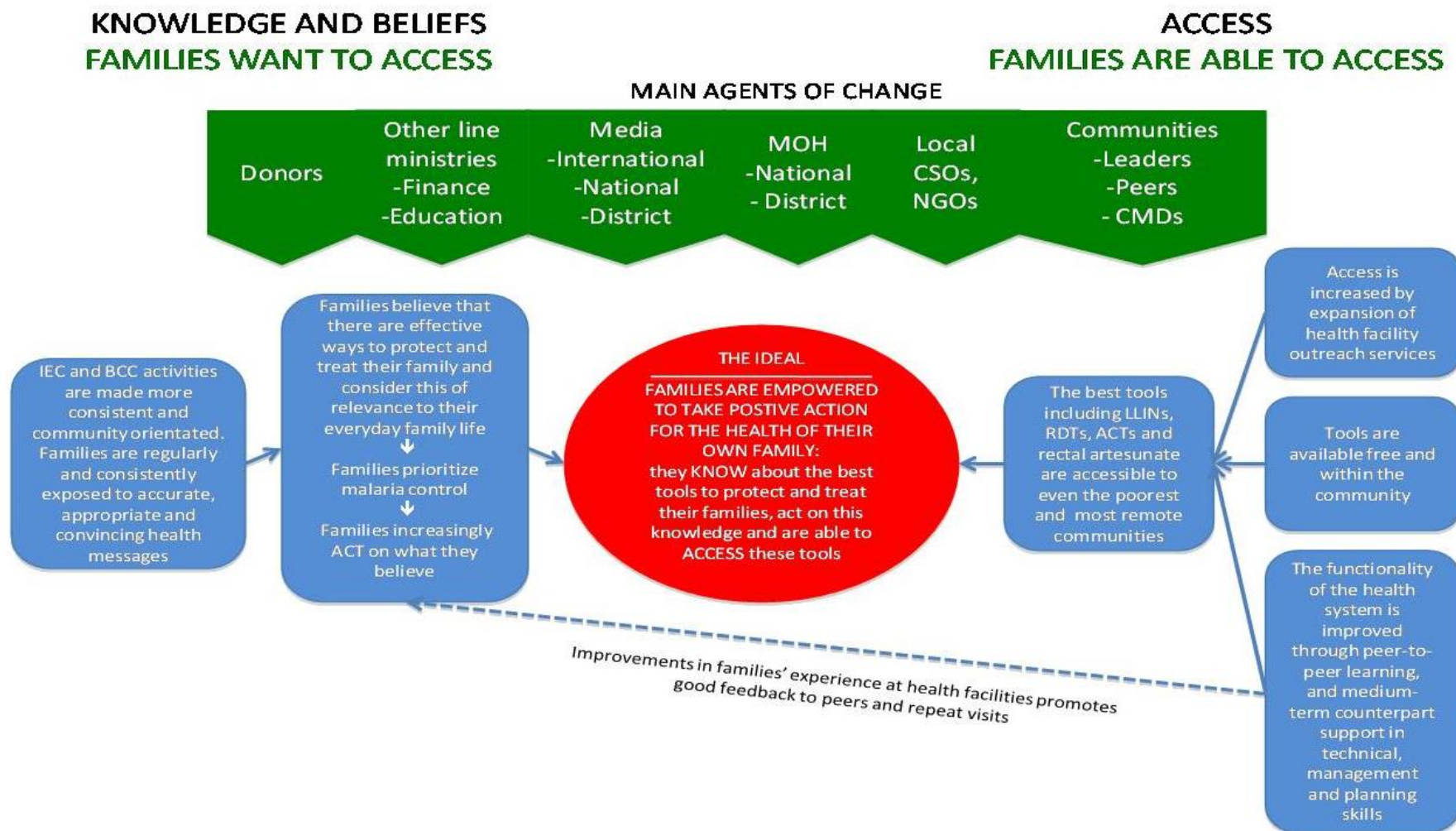


Shocks to the system

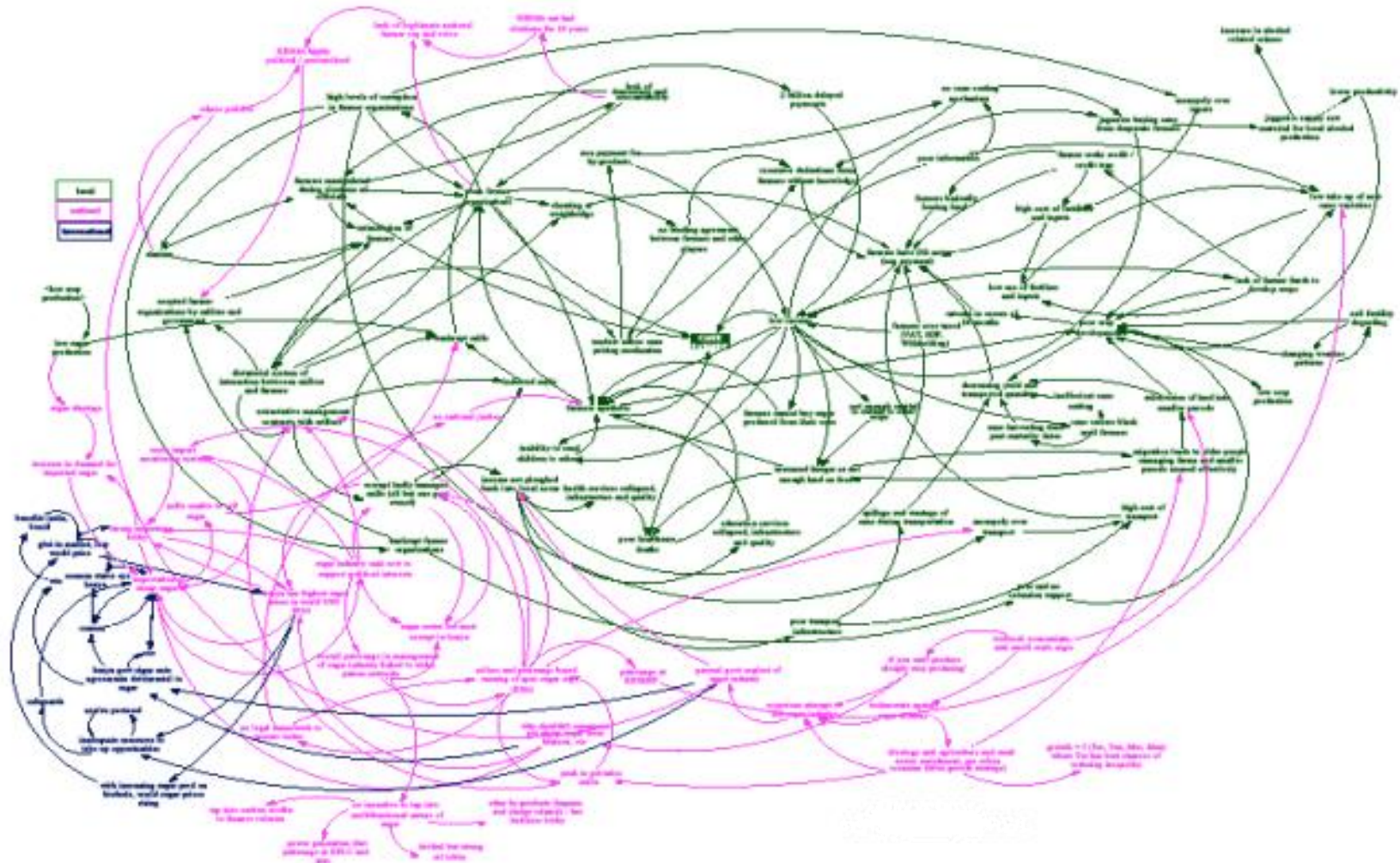


Technology

A Theory of Change is not just a diagram



Reality



What does change really mean for a sugar cane farmer?

Drop in the ocean

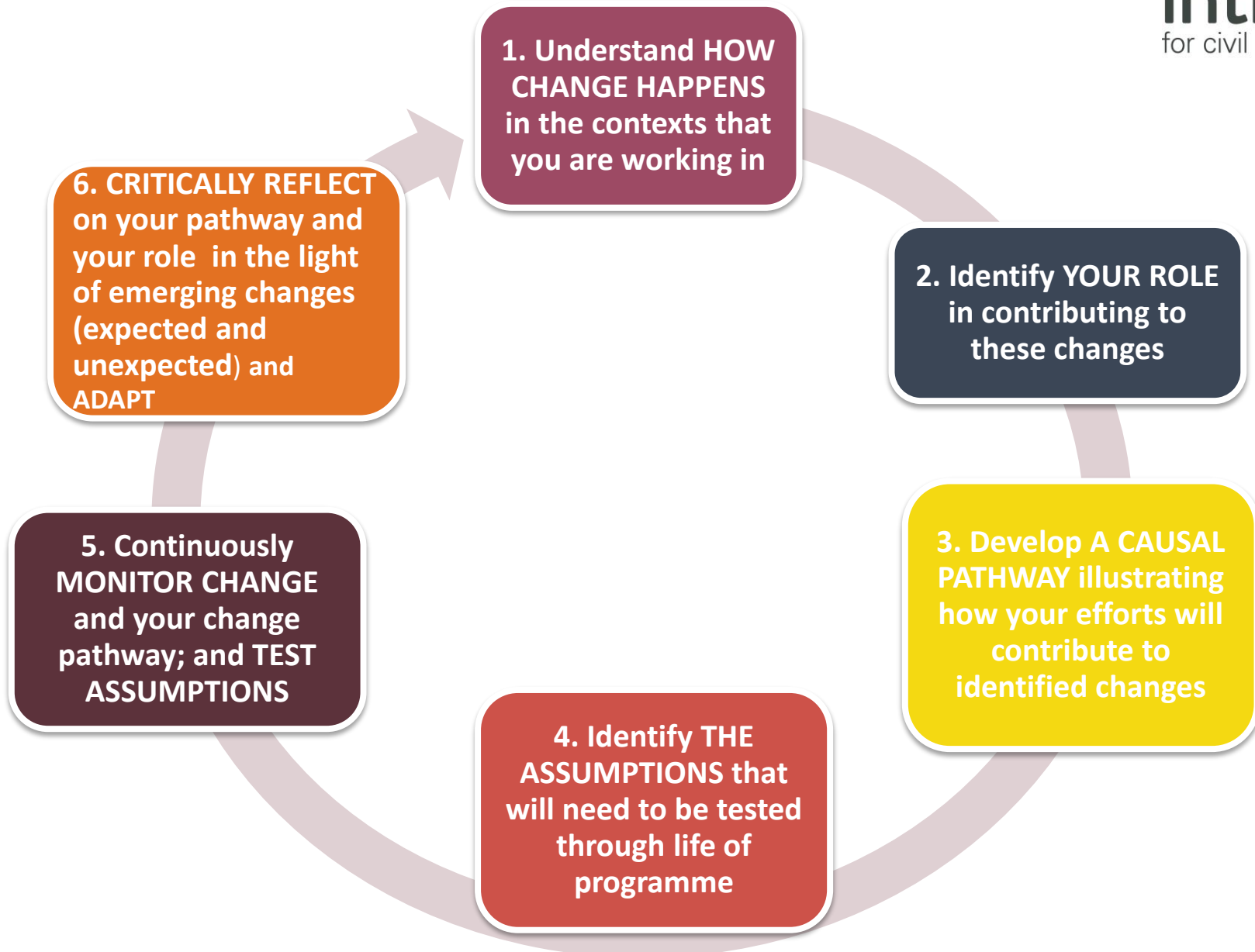


A drop well placed may tip the scales

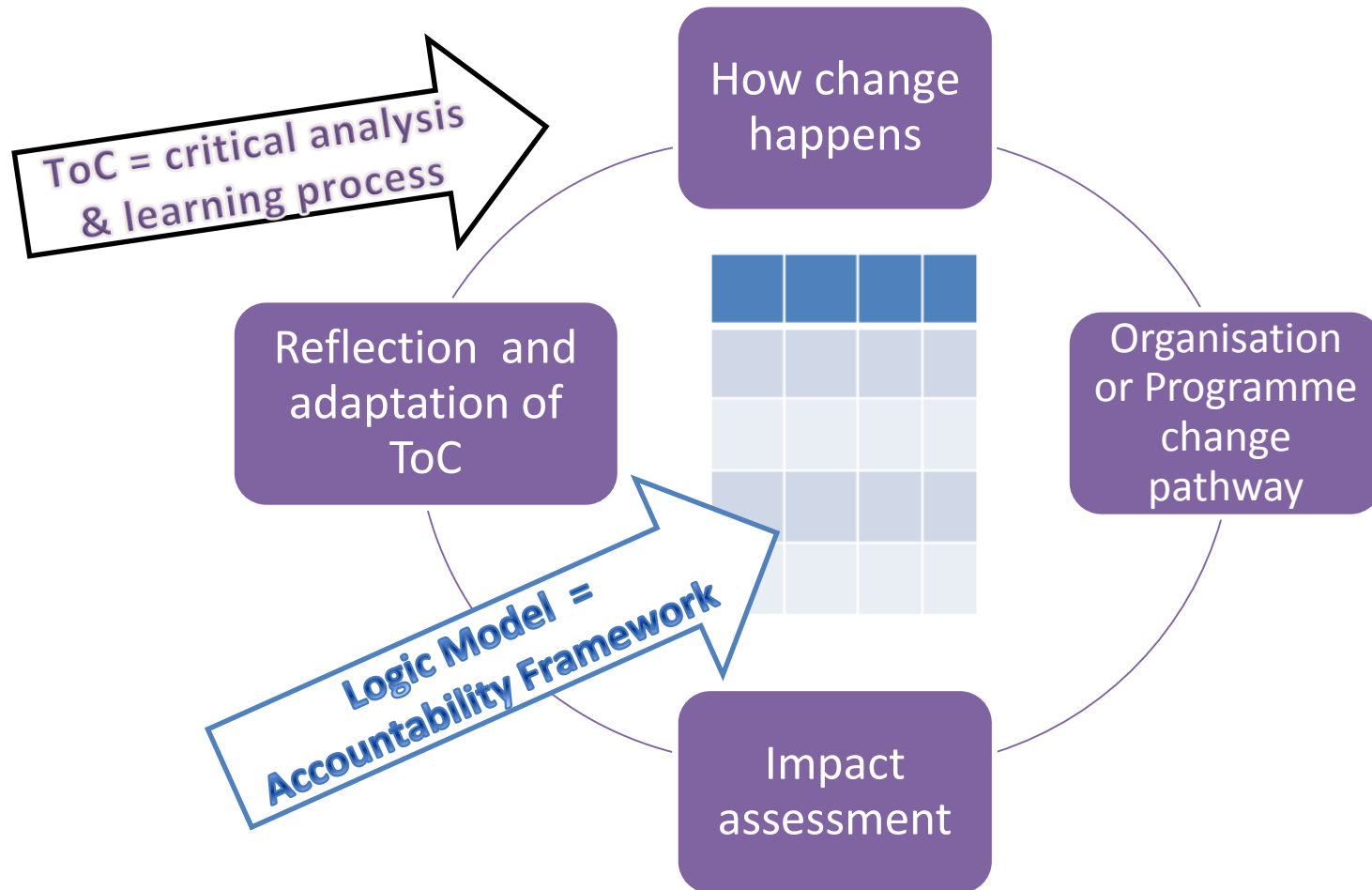


And enable us to leverage change

Cycle of planning and critical reflection



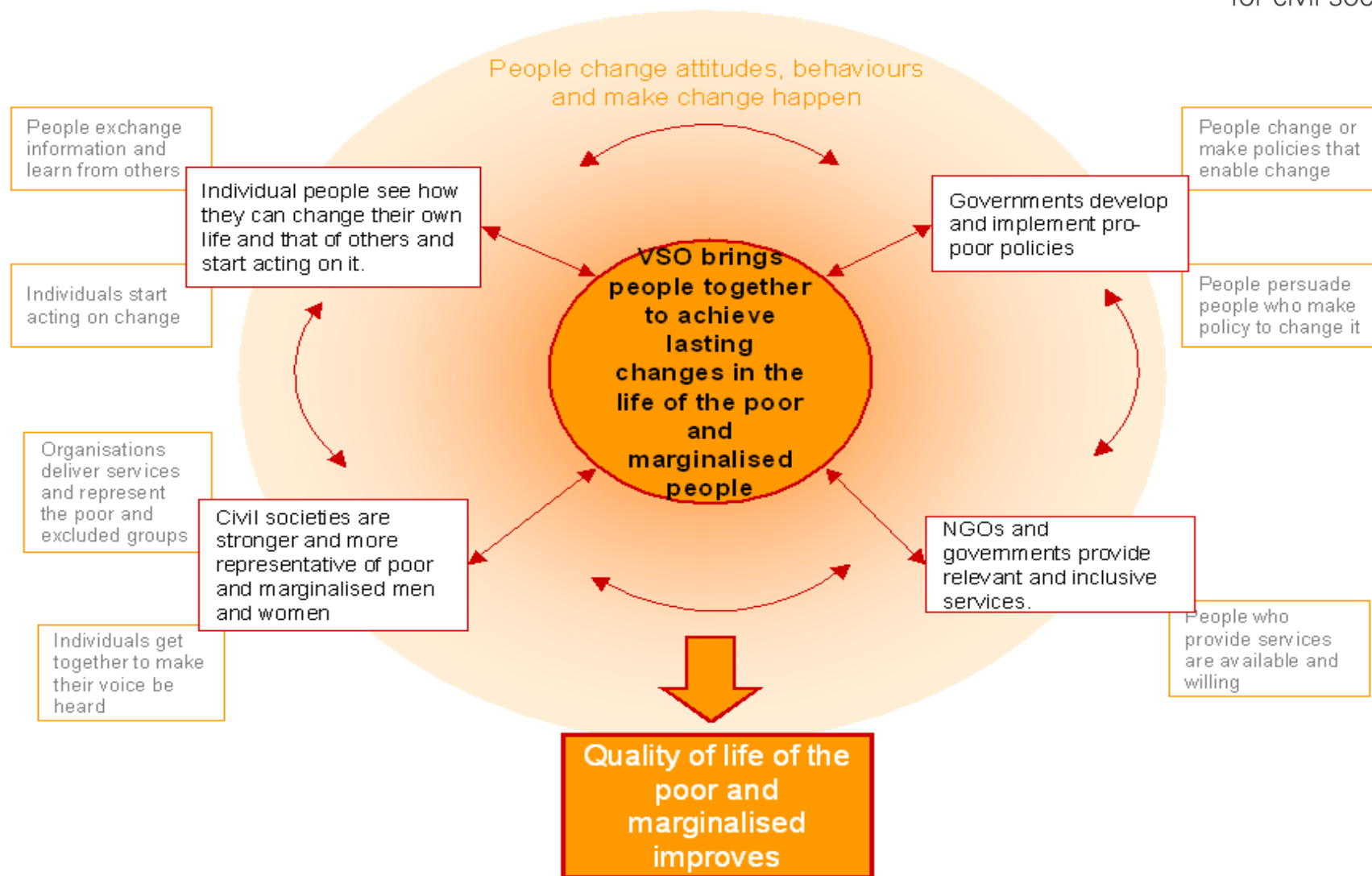
ToC does not replace results frameworks – but makes them stronger

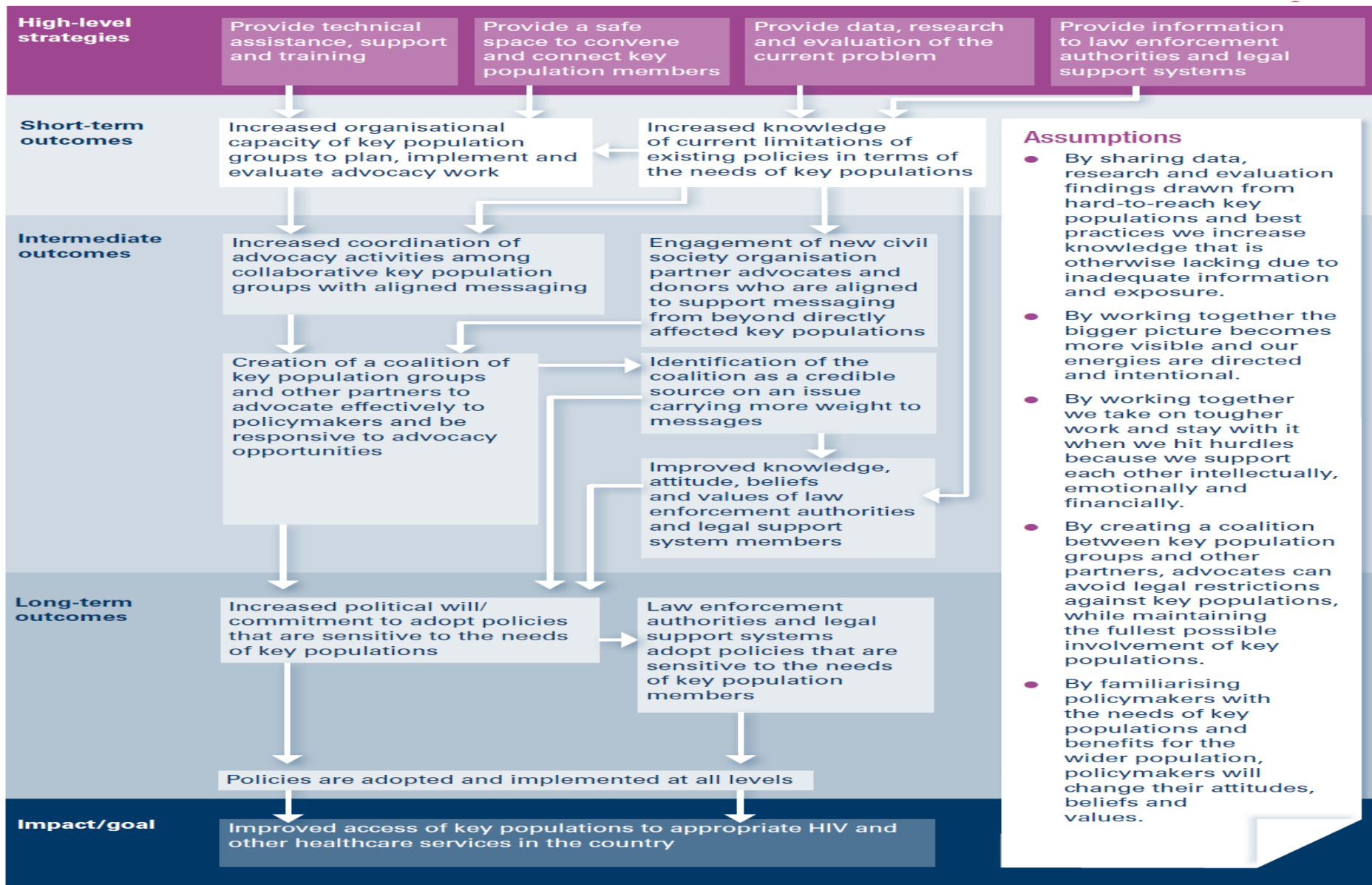


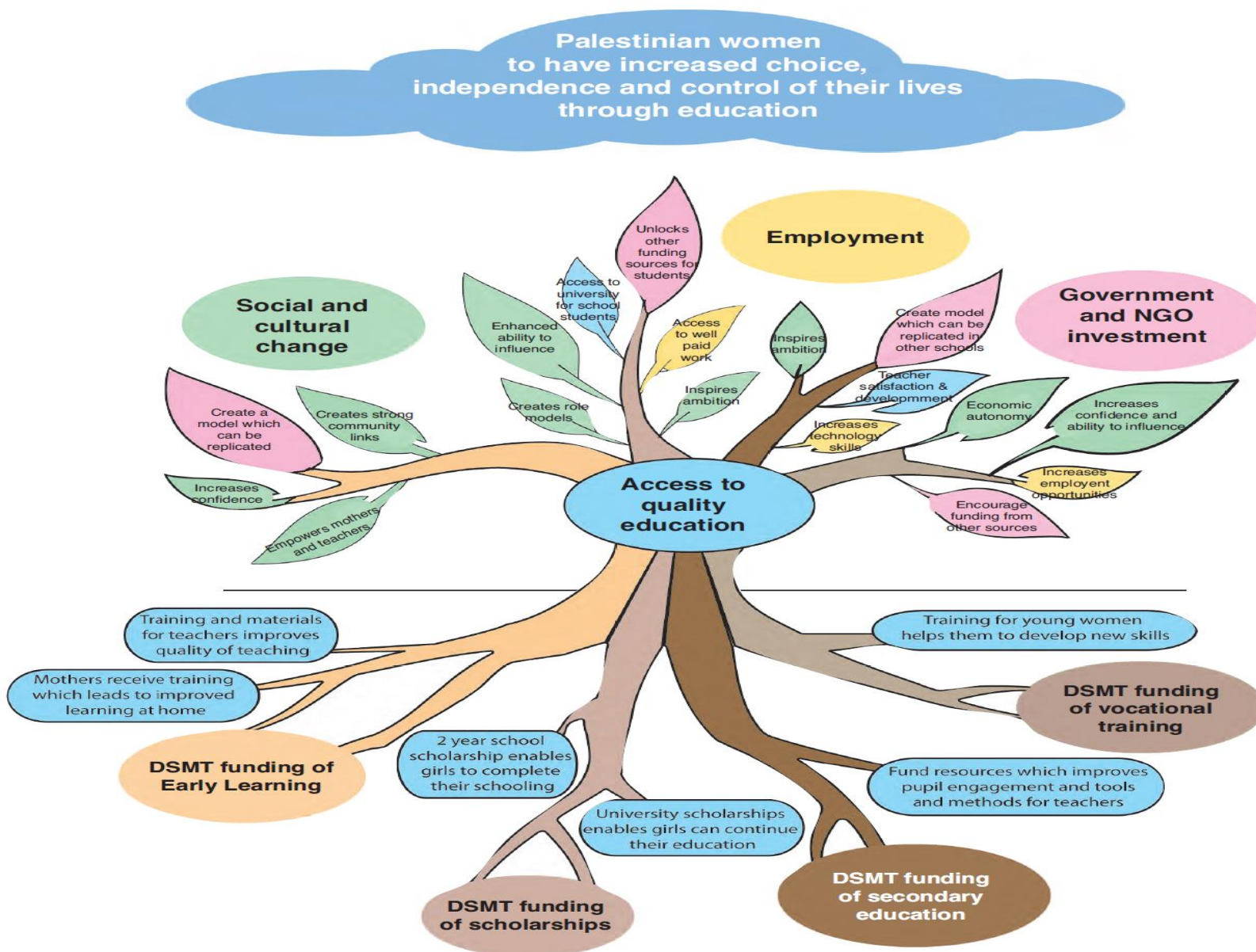
How can Theory of change help?

- Improve programme design by helping us to make more appropriate choices in approach based on the context
- Make us think about power and how it works
- Provoke us to think about new ways of supporting change
- Support us to surface and discuss our assumptions
- **Provide a framework for learning and adapting our interventions and for assessing our impact**
- Help to build common understanding amongst those who participate
- Be used as a communication tool

So what do they look like?







External Environmental Factors

Poor livelihoods, and markets not working for the poor

Poor health, including nutrition/ disease/ HIV/ lack of water

Skills deprivation

Rights deprivation (legislation)

Natural hazards; environmental degradation; climate change

Conflict and violence; governance and corruption

Resource scarcity; population growth

CONCERN UNIVERSAL THEORY OF CHANGE



Two notes of caution....

Theories of Change do not provide magic solutions.....

- They need time and resources – choose your moments for embarking on this journey wisely.
- They need full participation and ownership - so that your ToC (at whatever level) is not just another paper exercise ...

Reviewing and Adapting ToCs

- Update on **context** – what has changed?
- Reflect on **expected** changes – what evidence do you have for change? And your contribution?
- Focus on **actual** changes – what has changed and why? What seems to be working/ not working? Are change pathways holding true?
- Analysis – what have we **learned** and what does this mean for our Theory of Change pathways and assumptions? What do we need to **adapt**?
- Looking forward – where should we **focus** our efforts? What **evidence** will we need and where are the gaps?

Further reading on ToC



INTRAC Monitoring and Evaluation Planning Series: *Theory of change*

<https://www.intrac.org/resources/monitoring-and-evaluation-planning-series-16/>

Vogel, I. Review of the use of 'Theory of Change' in international development

http://www.theoryofchange.org/pdf/DFID_ToC_Review_VogelV7.pdf

Cathy James (2013) *Theory of Change: A guide for small and diaspora NGOs*, Peer Learning Programme <https://www.intrac.org/resources/theory-change-guide-small-diaspora-ngos/>

Maureen O'Flynn (2010) *Impact Assessment: Understanding and assessing our contributions to change*

<https://www.intrac.org/resources/paper-7-impact-assessment-understanding-assessing-contributions-change/>

Aspen Institute: The Community Builder's Theory of Change

http://www.dochas.ie/sites/default/files/TOC_fac_guide.pdf