How to Guide
8 Steps to create your THEORY OF CHANGE

A theory of change (ToC) shows how you expect outcomes to occur over short, medium and longer term as a result of your work/ project. The ToC can be represented in a visual diagram, as a narrative or both. When creating a theory of change, different stakeholders should be involved in the process and these could include your staff, members, partners or even your funders.

Criteria:

- **Credible** - based on previous experience and insights from different stakeholders, relevant research or even national or global standards on scope of work.
- **Achievable** - you have the adequate resources to carry out the intervention.
- **Supported** - your stakeholders will be involved in defining and agreeing in your theory of change.

STEP 1: DESIGN YOUR TOC PROCESS

You should consider the following:

- Who will use the ToC and what is the purpose?
- Whether you need a simple change model, a more detailed, complex one.
- Who will facilitate the ToC workshop (individual or team)? Also decide on whether an internal person or external consultant would need to facilitate the process. Having an external consultant can bring different perspective; however, they might not know your organisation therefore you will need to spend some time briefing them and reviewing their work.
- How you will involve different stakeholders? It can be difficult managing the workshop so you could consider engaging with different stakeholders separately. **Tip: Invite a max of 10 individuals per engagement.**
- You will need sticky notes, flip chart paper and marker pens. If you have staff joining virtually, you can use a Google Sheet to document the diagram.

STEP 2: AGREE YOUR ON INTENDED IMPACT

- Your overall goal/ impact is the starting point for your theory of change. Your overall goal should be a clear and achievable statement discussing the overall long-term outcome you want to achieve. **Tip: Your goal should be the same or similar wording to your project vision and should relate to a global goal/objective.**
- Consider how the statement fits in with your funding programmes, this will involve some research.

STEP 3: ARTICULATE YOUR LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- Next step is to think about what needs to happen in order to achieve your overall impact. To identify the long-term outcomes, think of the causes of the main issues you are trying to address with your work. Also note as you develop your long-term outcomes you should think of the change that would occur. Changes could relate to a policy, environment, services, social norms, etc. **Note: the outcome should be written in a results language, e.g. increase, decrease, improved, enhanced, reduced.**

STEP 4: MAP YOUR MEDIUM AND SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES BACKWARDS

- Map your medium-term outcomes backwards, in other words you need to think of what changes could happen before your long-term outcomes can occur. Tip: Use the words 'If' and 'then' to talk through the chain of events**. E.g. "If we increase knowledge on funding sources, then more CSOs will apply for/access new funding sources."** In this example the knowledge change is a medium-term, followed by access to new funding as a long-term result.
- Once you have captured all your outcomes, you need to map out in which order they will occur.

STEP 5: IDENTIFY OUTPUTS AND ACTIVITIES

- You need to think of what outputs and services must occur to give you the outcomes you have identified. You need to think about what outputs have brought about your outcomes to occur.
- If you are creating a theory of change for an existing initiative, you can simply write down all the existing activities and outputs. This will help you discuss how the activities and outputs are helping achieve your desired outcomes. An important thing to note is that activities may have been a collaboration with other agencies and these need to be part of the theory of change.

STEP 6: CLARIFY ASSUMPTIONS, CONTEXT AND EVIDENCE

- Document all assumptions you have made about the context and environment in which the outcomes will be achieved.
- Assumption can be related: to the relationship between the long-term and medium-term outcomes, and the contextual or environmental factors that may influence whether your outcomes are achieved. It is important to list your assumptions as this helps you identify some critical factors that might affect the success of your programme or project and test out your assumptions during evaluation period. **E.g. If we provide training on new funding sources and increasing CSO knowledge on these sources, we assume that they are willing to apply or have the capacity to apply for new funding sources, and that they receive new funding.**
- If there is existing evidence to support the ToC this should be documented in a narrative supporting the diagram. This could be evidence on specific results chains that document the

likelihood of a result occurring if certain activities are implemented (e.g. has there been research or organisational lessons documented on the relationship between funding training and CSOs accessing diverse sources of funding?).

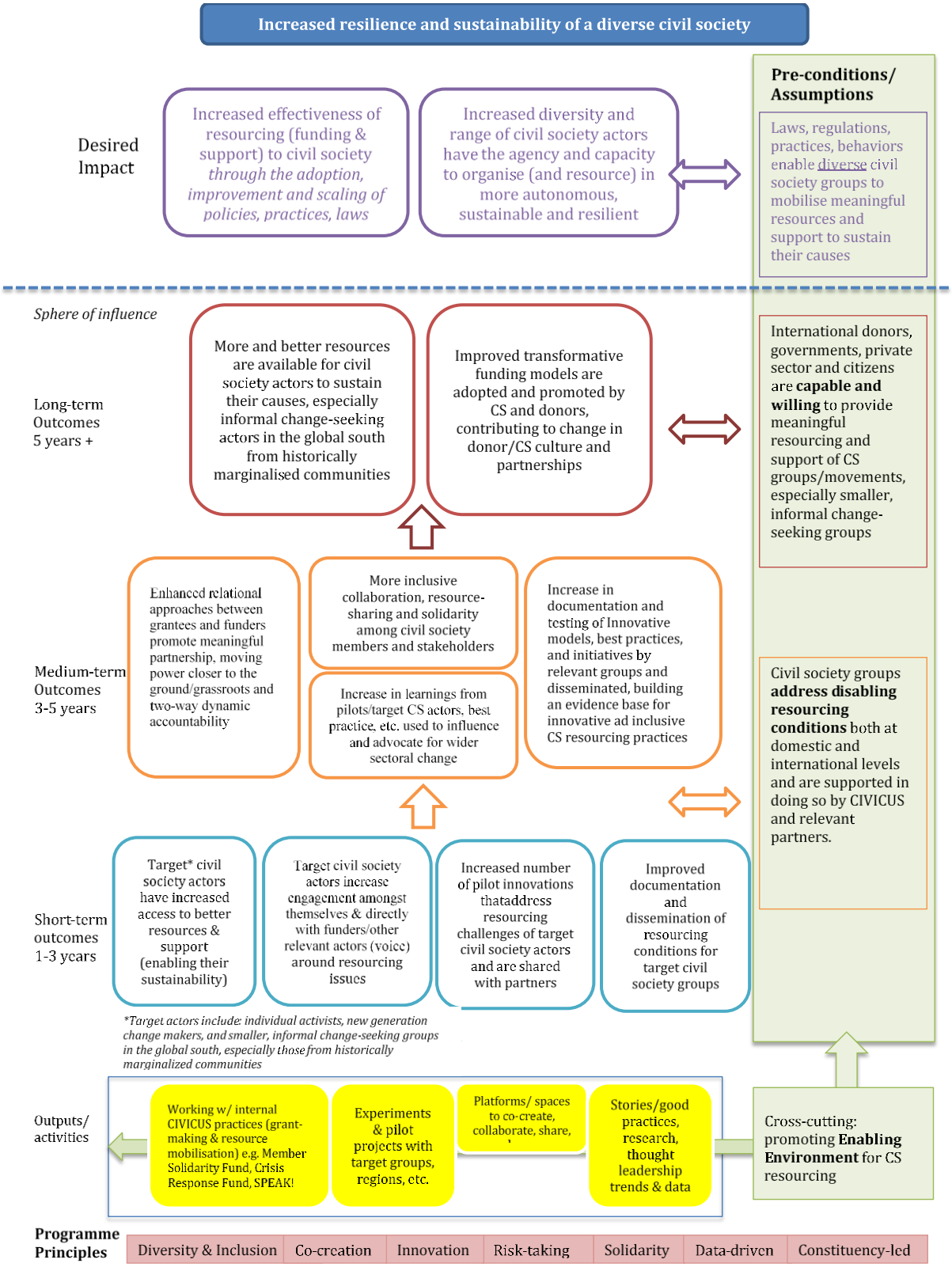
STEP 7: DISSEMINATE AND ITERATE

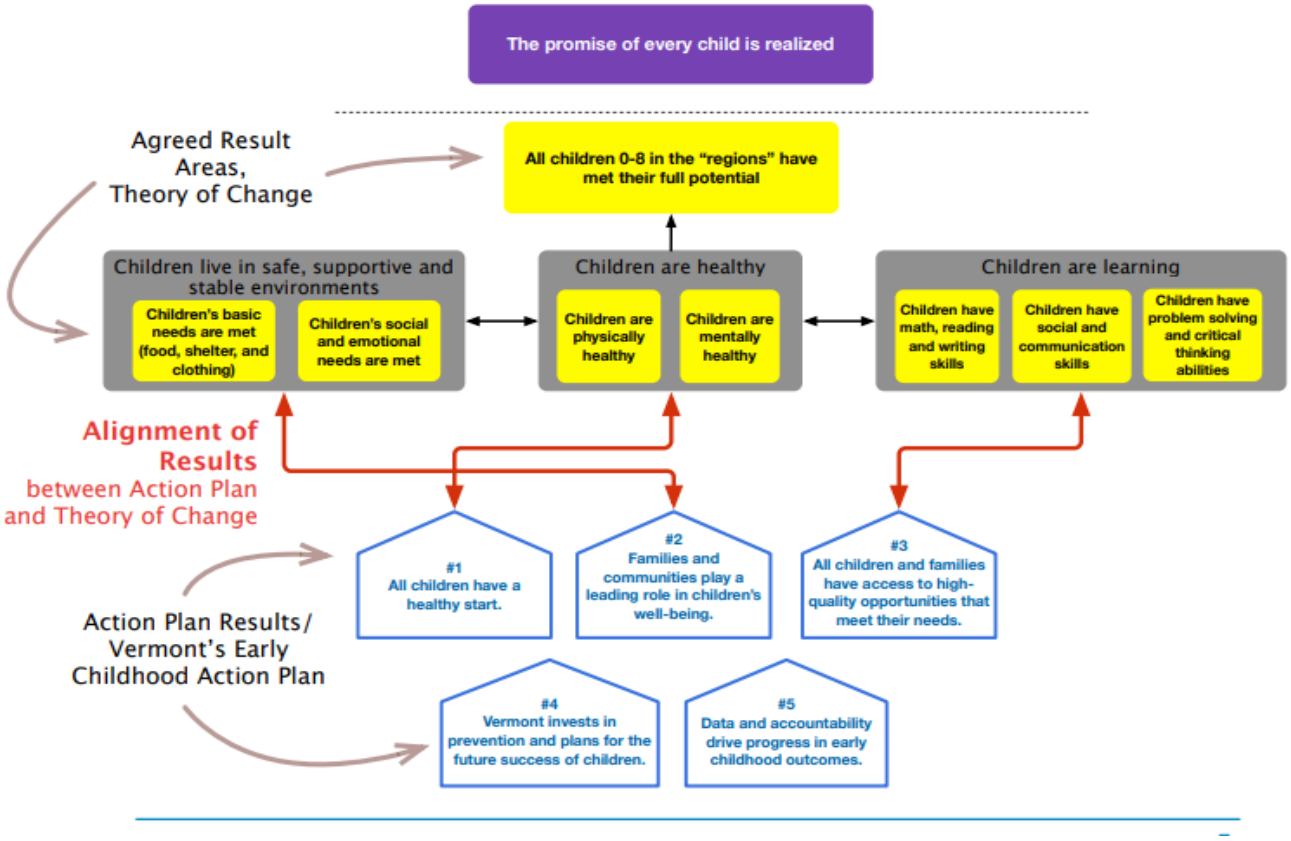
- It is important to engage stakeholders and the various project members in the development of the ToC. This will support buy-in and relevance once implementing the ToC.
- There may be several iterations in creating the ToC.
- Make use of platforms for engagement such as webinars, shared documents, and online discussions to disseminate drafts of the ToC. Pose questions to stakeholders such as, "**Are there any missing results and assumptions?"/ "Does the wording comprehensively articulate the expected results?"**

STEP 8: GET READY TO USE YOUR THEORY OF CHANGE

- A ToC helps one plan for the project accordingly and help our project feed into your organization's main goal/ objective.
- Through a ToC you will be able to communicate your project thoroughly and see the changes you are making.
- You will also use the ToC to design indicators and targets relevant to each result.

Examples of ToC Diagrams





Source: http://www.actknowledge.org/PDFs/BBFFinal1-20-16-2.pdf

Useful resources

- https://www.theoryofchange.org/
- https://betterevaluation.org/en/resources/guide/theory_of_change