

Developing a Theory of Change for Social Transformation

For the project: *Intersectionality-Informed Framework for Implementation of Effective Gender Integration in WSH*

Introduction

The current global and national initiatives towards Sustainable Development demand a transformation in the existing social tapestry and how access to basic services are planned and implemented. In this regard, planning exercises must align themselves to larger agendas of social inclusion and equity. The rise in efforts in this direction also means that there is a growing number of projects and programmes which must now strategise social transformation.

One widely-used method for developing such projects and programmes is the **Theory of Change (ToC)**. This method, based on the critical theory school of thought, advocates for outcome-oriented approach where the impact is first articulated and working backwards, outcomes, outputs and activities are defined. A generic flow for a theory of change is given in figure 1. ToCs are particularly popular in not-for-profit, philanthropy and government sectors, especially in areas of social development. A theory of change can not only help articulate the project methodology, but can also provide a structured process for soliciting multi-stakeholder participation as well as act as an evaluative tool to measure progress.

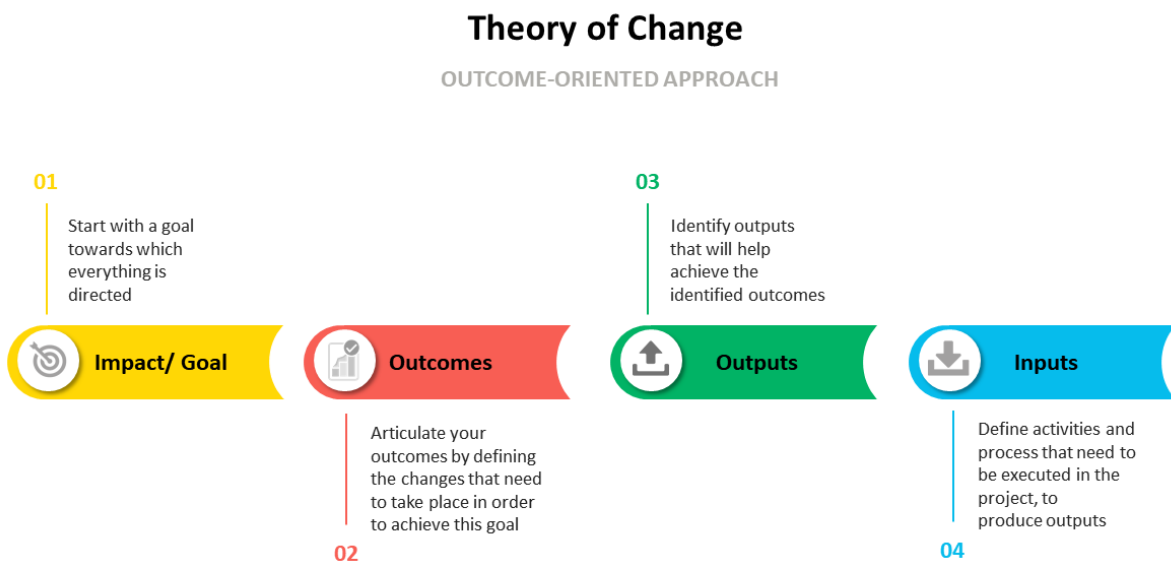


Figure 1: A schematic for a typical Theory of Change (ToC)

Features of a theory of change

A ToC primarily operates by linking the intentions of a project to the efforts envisaged in achieving them. Most ToCs feature certain goals, which are intended to show the eventual impact of the project. These goals can help position the work of the project in the larger ecosystem of social development. A set of long-term outcomes should then be defined with the assumption that these outcomes would eventually lead to achieving the defined goals. These long-term outcomes can be designed keeping the key causes of the existing problem (which the project is trying to solve) in mind.

The long-term outcomes can further be broken down to intermediate outcomes, which will provide more measurable and achievable targets for the project. Finally, the set of project outputs which will

lead to the defined outcomes need to be articulated. These outputs will provide direction to the key activities and processes that need to be executed in the project in order for it to be successful.

It should be kept in mind that ToCs are flexible and living entities, i.e. they interact with the process of implementation as it happens. ToCs should be adapted as and when necessary to reflect the changing realities of the project at hand.

Developing a Theory of Change for IIGMF

The Centre for Study of Science, Technology and Policy (CSTEP), the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) and Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR) are currently engaged in a collaborative project titled 'Intersectionality-Informed Framework for Implementation of Effective Gender Mainstreaming in WSH: Andhra Pradesh' supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF). The project aims to strengthen agencies and advance policies, regulations, and processes for increased accessibility to sanitation services. This will be done through the demonstration of an inclusive and implementable framework (the *Intersectionality-Informed Gender Mainstreaming Framework* or IIGMF) that looks at the cumulative impacts of different social factors such as gender, age, ability, socio-economic class etc. and their interactions on access to adequate sanitation across the value chain. This framework's principles and tenets are intended to be mainstreamed for policy interventions, opportunities for dialogue, legislative frameworks, sustainable agencies, resource allocation/use, planning tools, implementation guidelines and monitoring framework. This framework is being piloted in three towns of Andhra Pradesh (Anantapur, Kovvur and Narsapur).

At the project inception phase, there was a deeply felt need among the consortium members to develop a theory of change. This section elaborates on how this ToC was defined. The ToC itself is given in figure 2.

Defining a goal

The consortium believed that the ultimate goal of such socially-driven initiatives should be a positive and lasting impact on the population served. As sanitation is a vital basic service, the impact of equitable and adequate sanitation would have far-reaching effects on the quality of life of the people. It was thus decided that the goal for this project should be "high quality of life for all".

Envisioning outcomes

Once the goal was defined, the consortium deliberated on the changes that needed to take place in order to achieve this goal. In case of sanitation, the change needed to not only improve access to adequate sanitation for all groups, including the most marginalised – it also needed to set a new standard in how services and infrastructure are envisioned, planned and implemented. Two larger outcomes were therefore defined:

- a) Non-discriminatory and inclusive sanitation provision for all with active stakeholder involvement
- b) New rules of engagement on gender through policy reforms at the State level and the Council level

Defining conduits to achieve outcomes

The consortium then needed to define a set of activities and their outputs which would help realise the aforementioned outcomes. In this context, a key assumption was introduced: if there were

concentrated efforts in certain areas, they would provide the necessary push to achieve the defined outcomes. Through further discussion, the following areas pathways or “conduits” were defined with the intention on being as comprehensive as possible in planning project activities:

- **Evidence:** This conduit seeks to find qualitative and quantitative evidence for exclusion with regards to sanitation access.
- **Policy:** This conduit suggests policy directives that can help institutionalise inclusive sanitation planning and implementation.
- **Key Processes:** This conduit refers to mechanisms or processes that need to be either established or reformed to catalyse change in the rules of engagement.
- **Capacity Building:** This conduit includes development of institutional knowledge and skills in important topics such as leadership development, gender responsive budgeting, etc.
- **Monitoring:** This conduit refers to mechanisms to institute a participatory approach to sanitation monitoring and evaluation in the study cities

Specific outputs and associated activities (i.e. inputs) are given in the ToC flow (figure 2).

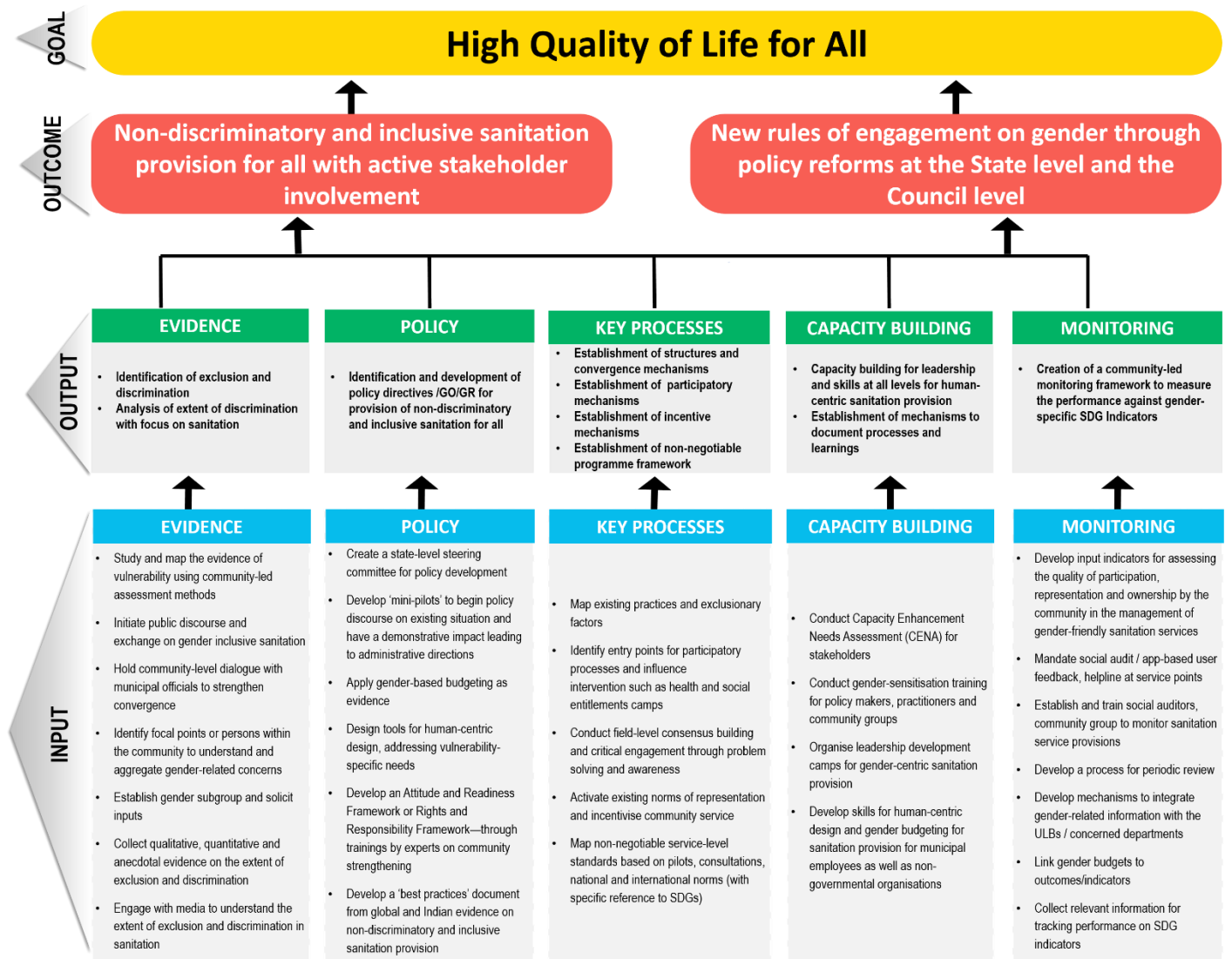


Figure 2: Theory of Change for the IIGMF Project

Impact of the Theory of Change for IIGMF

In the context of the IIGMF project, the ToC not only provided the opportunity for crystallising the necessary activities and outputs, it allowed the project to position itself in the larger social development ecosystem. The conduits identified by the ToC also lend themselves to the development to the framework, where the recommended interventions are categorised by the conduits they are intended to affect. Thus, the ToC exercise is not only important from a project management perspective, but can also help guide the tangible outputs of the project, such as the operational guidelines (in case of IIGMF).