



HOW TO DEVELOP A THEORY OF CHANGE ON RMNCAH FOR GFF-SUPPORTED COUNTRIES

Presentation Outline

1. Clarifying the objectives of developing a TOC
2. Defining the scope and focus
3. Deciding who should be involved
4. Key steps for developing a TOC

1a. Clarifying the objectives of developing a TOC

The objectives of developing a TOC will vary depending on the stage of IC development and implementation, and the specific country needs. For example, they may include some or all the following:

- Building clarity and understanding about which strategies and results will be necessary and sufficient to achieve sustainable change
- Identifying how stakeholders can contribute to strategies
- Providing the basis for developing a strong results framework
- Strengthening the design of the IC, based on weaknesses that have emerged in the logic for an IC that is already underway
- Fostering buy-in and communicating the IC as whole
- Evaluating an IC at the end of its cycle, to draw lessons about how the theory played out in practice during implementation

1b. Objectives – developing a new TOC

Questions to consider when clarifying your objectives:

- Has an initial set of high-impact interventions and / or strategies already been selected?
- If yes, is there an implicit logic behind this selection that could form the basis of developing a TOC?
- Is there strong country/government leadership of the process or could the TOC development process be an opportunity to strengthen this leadership?
- Is there strong buy-in from stakeholders to the GFF model or could this TOC development process be an opportunity to strengthen this buy-in?
- Are there national strategies and plans for RMNCAH-N that already have explicit or implicit TOCs?
- Is it clear how the TOC process will fit into and strengthen the broader process of developing/implementing the IC?

1c. Objectives – reviewing an existing TOC

If there is already an explicit TOC, questions to consider when reviewing it:

- Does the TOC have a clear and coherent logic of how change will be achieved, which addresses key bottlenecks?
- Have core assumptions and risks been articulated?
- Were key stakeholders involved in developing the TOC?
- Does the TOC highlight any significant gaps in evidence and understanding that warrant further research?
- Has IC implementation highlighted any flaws in TOC logic that need to be addressed?
- **Are there lessons that can be learned and disseminated in country and beyond?**

2. Scope and focus

- The **scope** of the TOC should include the whole IC. It should cover all actors and sectors involved with or impacting on RMNCAH-N.
- You may choose to **focus** more attention within the TOC process on particular areas of the IC that are more complex, challenging or innovative.
- In some cases, you may consider developing in-depth TOCs for specific areas of the IC. In this case, they will still need to fit within in a broader TOC for the entire IC.

2. Scope and focus

Questions to consider when defining the scope and focus of the TOC:

- If national strategies and plans for RMNCAH-N already have explicit or implicit TOCs, how will this TOC complement them?
- Has a bottleneck analysis been conducted yet? If yes, are there major bottlenecks that require more in-depth analysis as part of the TOC process?
- Are there likely to be parts of the theory of change that are particularly complex and warrant deeper analysis?
- Are there likely to be significant gaps in evidence or knowledge required to inform the development/refinement of the theory of change?
- Is there a particular regional or other focus that should be addressed?
- How will cross-sectoral issues be addressed during the process?

3. Who should be involved?

- The TOC process should be iterative, engaging relevant stakeholders at appropriate moments over time.
- Stakeholder engagement is important because it enables you to:
- Build a strong, realistic TOC grounded in a wide range of knowledge, experience and perspectives
- Surface different assumptions about how change will happen
- Build consensus about the most effective way forward
- Clarify how different actors can play a role in achieving this change

3. Who should be involved?

- Who you engage will depend partly on the objectives, scope and focus that you have identified.
- It may vary from high-level engagement to garner buy-in and strategic direction to more technical level input for in-depth, evidence-based analysis of how change can be achieved.
- It is essential to engage key stakeholders who participate in the Country Platform in some form during the TOC development process. You may also want to engage with other stakeholders who are likely to play a key role in implementing IC strategies.

4. Key steps for developing a TOC

Step A

- Identify the impact that you want to achieve

Step B

- Identify the key bottlenecks to achieving this change and their underlying causes

Step C

- Map out causal pathway to achieve impact

Step D

- Identify assumptions and risks

Step E

- Identify next steps

Step A. Identify impact

- During the early stages of developing the IC, high level RMNCAH-N impact indicators will be identified, in line with the SDGs
- These impact indicators provide the starting point for the TOC, articulating the long-term impact to be achieved through the IC
- The TOC process involves mapping backwards from this impact, to identify outcome-level and output-level changes that are necessary to achieve it.

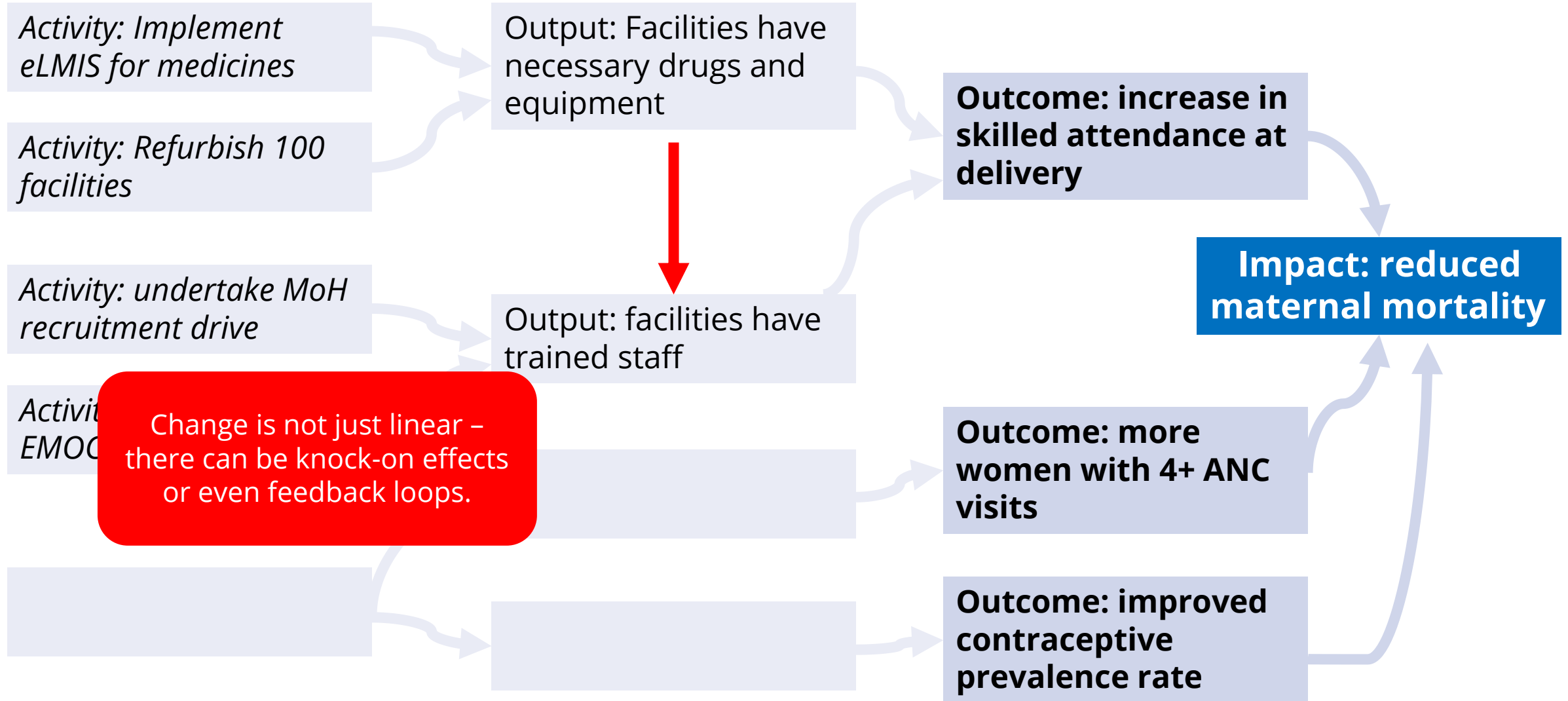
Step C. Map causal pathways

- Using the impact indicators for the IC, map out the outcome- and output-level changes that are needed to achieve impact.
- Identify the causal pathways between these changes i.e. which changes will contribute to which other changes. Note that changes are not always linear; they may include feedback loops and sideways linkages (use the if / then logic)
- Once these changes are mapped, review them to ensure they will be **necessary** and **sufficient** to address the key barriers and bottlenecks that have been identified.

Step B. Identify bottlenecks

- To develop your theory about how to achieve change, you need to first understand the key bottlenecks that are hindering progress and their underlying causes
- This may be done as a separate stage prior to developing the TOC, or may be done as part of the TOC development process
- The TOC should articulate what changes will be needed to address in order to achieve the desired impact
- These changes may include both specific IC strategies and external changes that are critical to the success of the IC

A simple example: Theory of Change



Step D. Identify assumptions and risks

- Assumptions are our beliefs or opinions of how and why proposed actions will bring about change.
- It is important to surface and test these assumptions, particularly if there is limited or no evidence available to back them up.
- Risks are events or actions that may interrupt the causal chain. By recognizing these risks it is possible to identify mitigating actions or develop alternative scenarios in the case that they materialize.

A simple example: Theory of Change

Activity: Implement eLMIS for medicines

Activity: Refurbish 100 facilities

Activity: undertake MoH recruitment drive

Activity: roll out basic EMOC training

Output: Facilities have necessary drugs and equipment

Output: facilities have trained staff

Causal link:
implementing electronic stock control will ensure facilities do not have drug stock-outs.

Outcome: increase in skilled attendance at delivery

Impact: reduced maternal mortality

Outcome: more women with 4+ ANC visits

Outcome: improved contraceptive prevalence rate

Is this an evidence-based assumption? Is electronic stock control **sufficient** to eliminate stock-outs?

Step E. Identify next steps, including processes for TOC review and course correction

- Use the TOC as the basis for developing the IC Results Framework
- Identify concrete processes for reviewing the TOC and feeding into program design
- Identify operational research and other evidence needs that will contribute to strengthening understanding of the change process