

## **Rwanda National ECD Program Strategic Plan 2018-2024, Theory of Change**

The overall desired impact of the NSP is to ensure that ‘Every child in Rwanda attains a healthy growth and full potential’. The NSP aims to realise this impact by increasing the coverage and quality of holistic, integrated ECD services, as well as increasing positive behaviors and practices by parents and caregivers. The NSP is structured around the sectors most important for ECD and organized under nine strategic directions (each with a related outcome) that respond to identified bottlenecks and gaps in accessing and utilizing ECD services. These strategic directions reflect the areas in which this strategy will invest.

The Theory of Change underlying the NSP outlines how incremental changes over the 6 years of the strategy cycle will combine to achieve concrete improvements in the quality and equitable coverage of an integrated package of ECD services, and empower parents and caregivers with the knowledge, skills and resources to fully adopt positive behaviours and practices. Figure 5 below provides an overarching view of how the intended outcomes across each sector will, in combination, be necessary and sufficient to achieve the overall impact. A more extensive set of diagrams are included in Annex 8, which elaborate in detail on the expected pathways to change for each outcome. This approach has been used to allow a visual representation of each of the outcome areas. However, showing each outcome separately should not be interpreted as minimizing the fact that there are important connections between the outcomes. For example, access to improved sanitation – or the lack of it – directly influences results in health and education. It is also important to note that Outcomes 6, 7, 8 and 9 are cross-cutting outcomes that are essential in creating an enabling environment for the achievement of outcomes 1 to 5. The arrows in the diagrams show how each change (be it at output or outcome level) contributes to another change (or changes).

**Outcomes:** To contribute to impact-level change, the NSP identifies nine strategic directions that orient the NSP. Within each Strategic Direction, the following outcomes will be necessary to achieve overall impact:

- Outcome 1. Increased access to ECD services for all children under 6 years and provision of nurturing care and stimulation by parents
- Outcome 2. Increased, equitable access to high impact, evidence-based health, nutrition, family planning and reproductive health services at primary and community level to children under 6 years, adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women (with a focus on the first 1,000 days), and improved positive IYCN practices
- Outcome 3. Improved and equitable access to safe drinking water, sanitation, environment and hygiene in ECD facilities, schools and targeted households, and improved WASH practices
- Outcome 4. Enhanced availability and accessibility of quality, nutrient-rich and diversified food in targeted households, and improved consumption practices
- Outcome 5. Increased access to and use of social protection services by targeted households to ensure adequate nutrition and access to IECD services
- Outcome 6. Improved coordination, planning, monitoring and reporting to deliver high priority multisectoral integrated ECD services with optimal convergence at the household level
- Outcome 7. Strengthened community-based platforms to enhance demand for and use of quality, integrated frontline ECD services
- Outcome 8. Increased and more efficient, equitable and sustainable financing of integrated ECD services
- Outcome 9. Increased demand for and use of integrated ECD services through improved knowledge, behaviours and practices of parents, carers and frontline workers

**Outputs:** High-level outputs have been identified that are considered essential and sufficient to achieve each of the nine outcomes. The outputs reflect the expected results from the full range of support that is covered by the NSP at national, district and community level, such as direct service provision, systems-strengthening, policy processes and normative work, and various types of support related to positive changes in social and cultural norms and beliefs.

**Implementation strategies and priority interventions:** A range of strategies and priority interventions have been identified that will be necessary to achieve the outputs in this Theory of Change. A more detailed, comprehensive set of activities for each of these strategies and priority interventions will be elaborated in the annual implementation plans for the NSP.

**Enablers of change:** There are several factors that are considered to be essential ‘enablers’ within the pathways to change. For example:

- While the Government has identified ECD as a national priority and will provide leadership across all the relevant sectors, the full momentum necessary to achieve significant change will only be enabled through the full commitment of partners and their alignment to the NSP, including government ministries, agencies and departments, civil society, the private sector, donors and other stakeholders.
- Strong, effective mechanisms for multi-sectoral coordination at national, district and community level will be essential to enable actors to work together to identify shared priorities, and to plan for, implement and monitor interventions in an integrated and systematic way.
- To enable the shift towards a fully integrated approach to service delivery, the necessary incentives should be provided to encourage and support service providers to coordinate and align their work. Strong frontline platforms will also be essential to facilitate this integration.
- Systems to enable timely and comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and learning from community level, through to district and national level, will be critical to guide implementation and strengthen ownership and accountability.

**Assumptions and risks:** A number of key assumptions underpin this Theory of Change. These assumptions represent the underlying beliefs and understanding about how change can be achieved, including that:

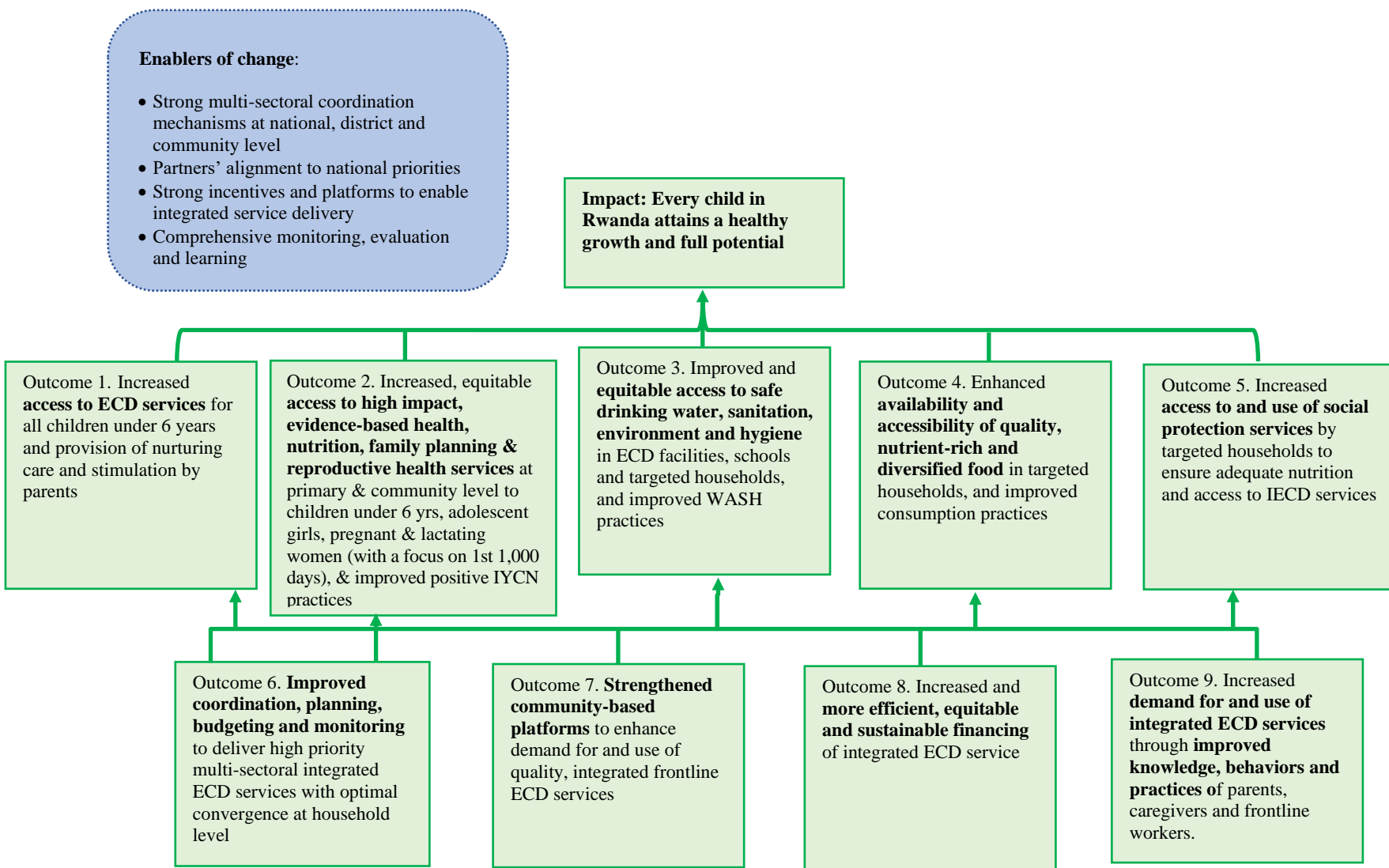
- an integrated approach will reduce duplication and increase entry-points for service delivery
- relevant sectors will be committed and have adequate human resources to provide integrated services
- strong leadership at national, district and community levels will be able to guide, motivate and hold stakeholders accountable
- if communities have adequate understanding, skills, tools and mentorship, they will demand access to and participate in delivering improved ECD services

A number of risks have been identified that could restrict or block necessary changes. Such risks should be monitored and mitigating actions identified and carried out if necessary. These include:

- a lack of time and resources at community level could mean that parents and community members are not able to engage in the support or provision of ECD services
- if expansion of coverage of ECD services occurs too quickly, it may not be possible to achieve adequate quality of services

**Monitoring and evaluation:** The NSP Results Framework has been developed based on this Theory of Change and includes indicators with corresponding baselines and targets to measure progress in achieving the outputs, outcomes and impact. The outputs and their indicators were selected based on whether they could be attributable to the implementation of the NSP. At outcome and impact level, it is recognized that there will be other factors that are beyond the scope of the NSP that contribute to and influence their ultimate realization. Where possible, efforts were made to use existing indicators (in existing national M&E systems) that are simple to measure and in many cases are already collected.

The Theory of Change should be a ‘live’ resource that is tested to see if the theory holds true in practice, and refined over the lifecycle of the strategy based on lessons learned through monitoring, evaluation and research.



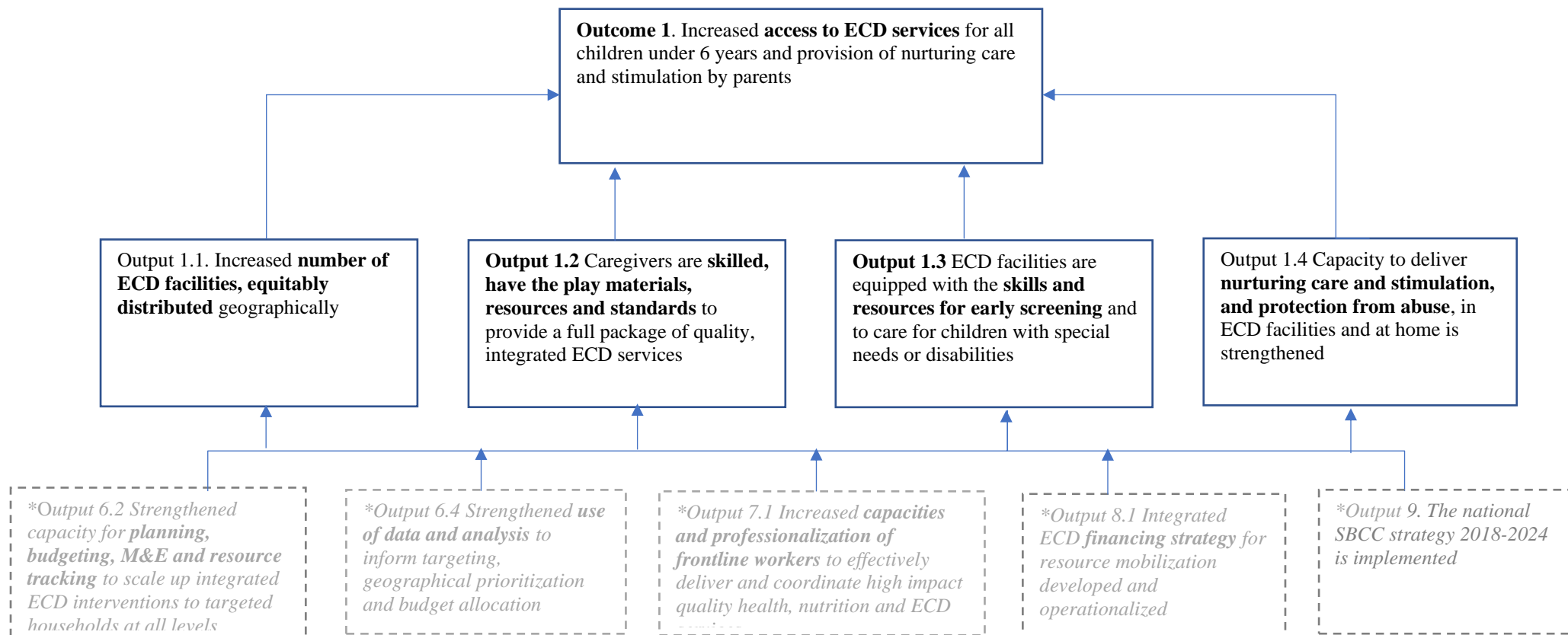
**Assumptions**

- Integrated approach will reduce duplication & increase entry-points for service delivery
- Relevant sectors will be committed & have adequate human resources to provide integrated services
- Strong leadership at national, district & community levels will guide, motivate & hold stakeholders accountable
- If communities have adequate understanding, skills, tools and mentorship, they will demand access to/participate in delivering improved ECD services

**Risks**

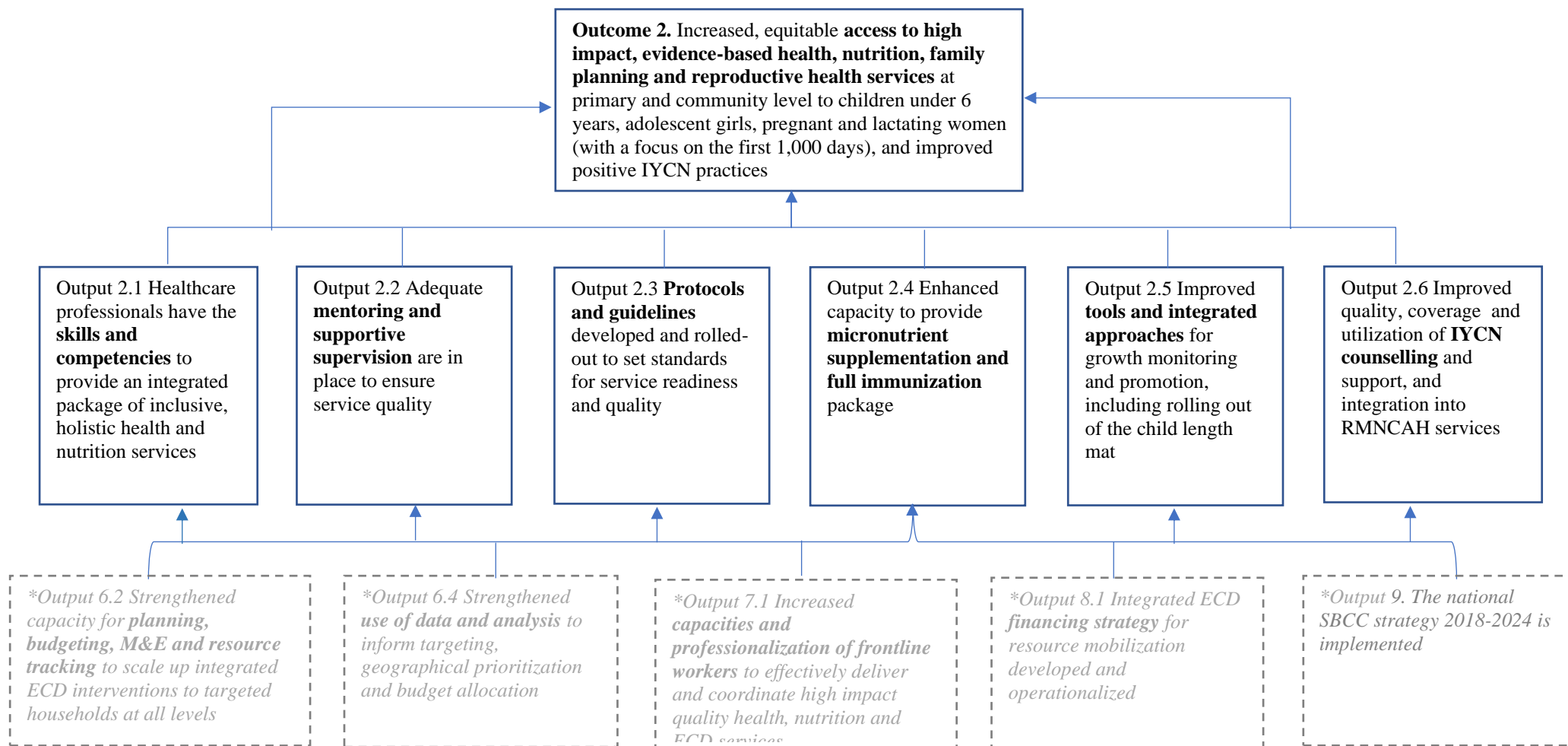
- Lack of time & resources at community level could mean that parents & community members are not able to engage in the support or provision of ECD services
- If expansion of coverage of ECD services occurs too quickly, it may not be possible to achieve adequate quality of services

**Strategic Direction 1. Increased equitable access to quality and inclusive integrated ECD services**



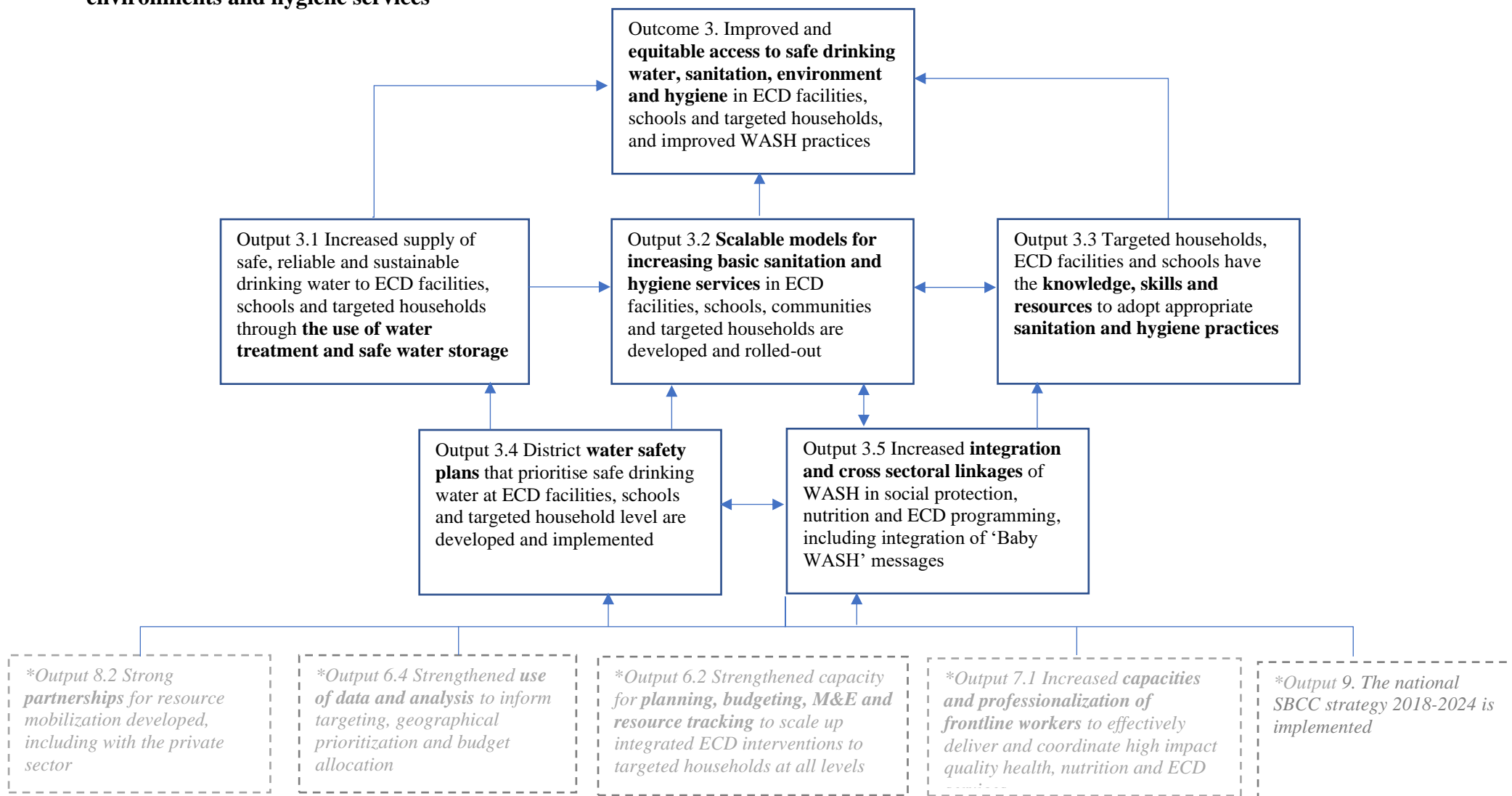
*\* All the changes in Strategic Directions 6, 7, 8 and 9 contribute to achieving the outputs and outcome above, but those outputs that are directly critical to this particular Strategic Direction are included here in the boxes with dotted lines*

**Strategic Direction 2. Improved and sustained quality health and nutrition status of infants and young children with a focus on the first 1,000 days of life**



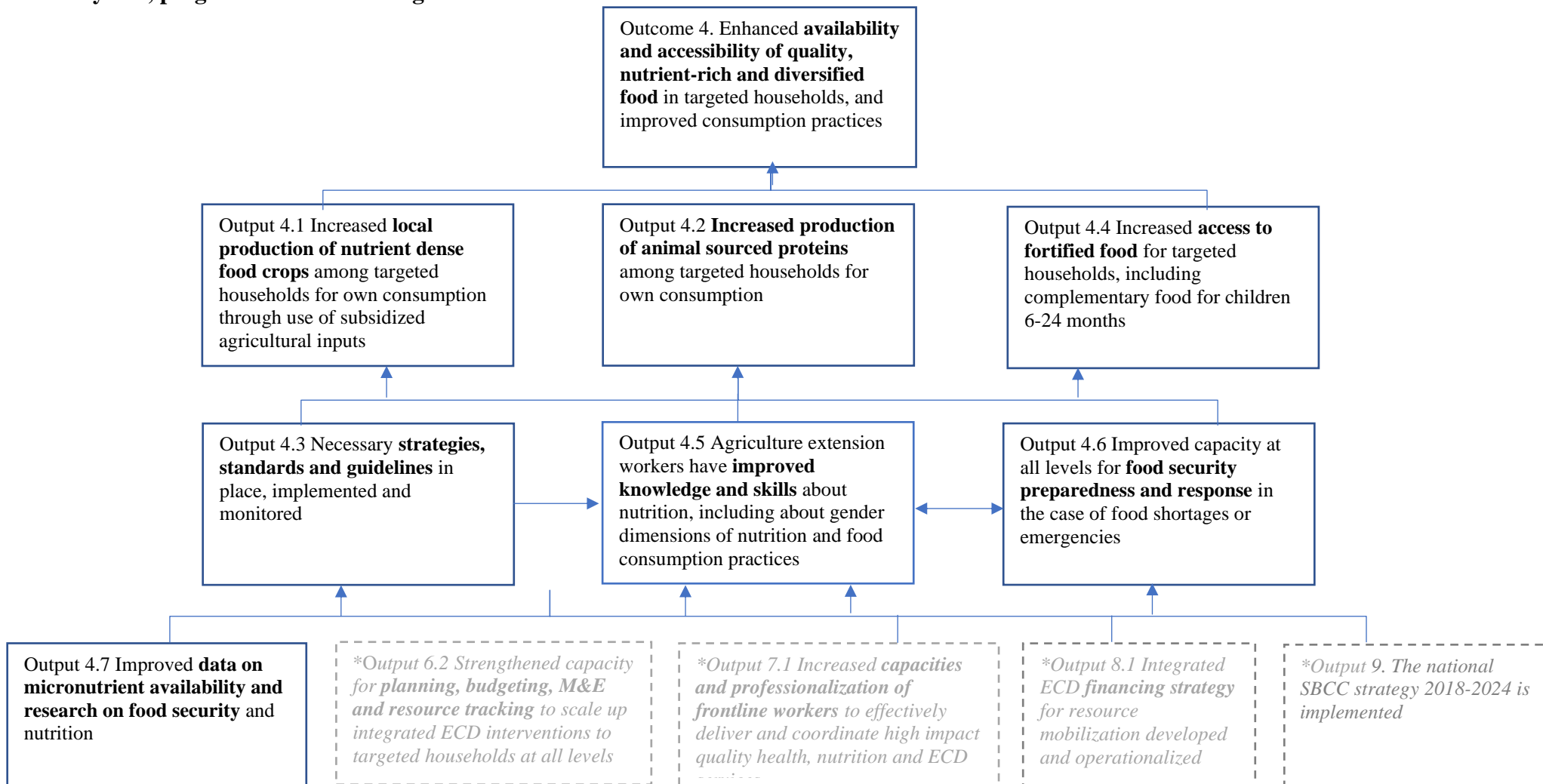
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**Strategic Direction 3: Enhanced national capacity to support targeted households with safe drinking water, basic sanitation, healthy environments and hygiene services**



\* All the changes in Strategic Directions 6, 7, 8 and 9 contribute to achieving the outputs and outcome above, but those outputs that are directly critical to this particular Strategic Direction are included here in the boxes with dotted lines

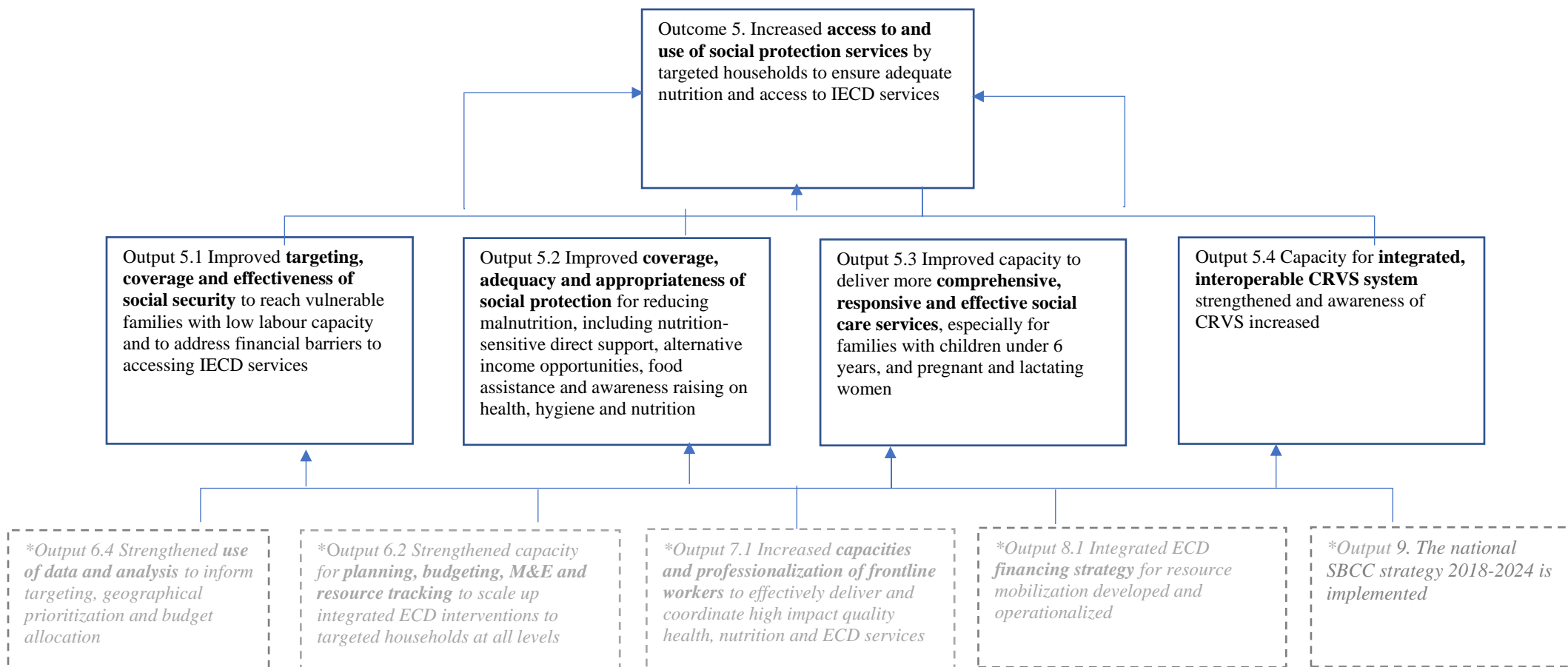
**Strategic Direction 4. Improved and sustained equitable food security for family health in targeted households with children under 5 years, pregnant and/or lactating women**



\* All the changes in Strategic Directions 6, 7, 8 and 9 contribute to achieving the outputs and outcome above, but those outputs that are directly critical to this particular Strategic Direction are included here in the boxes with dotted lines

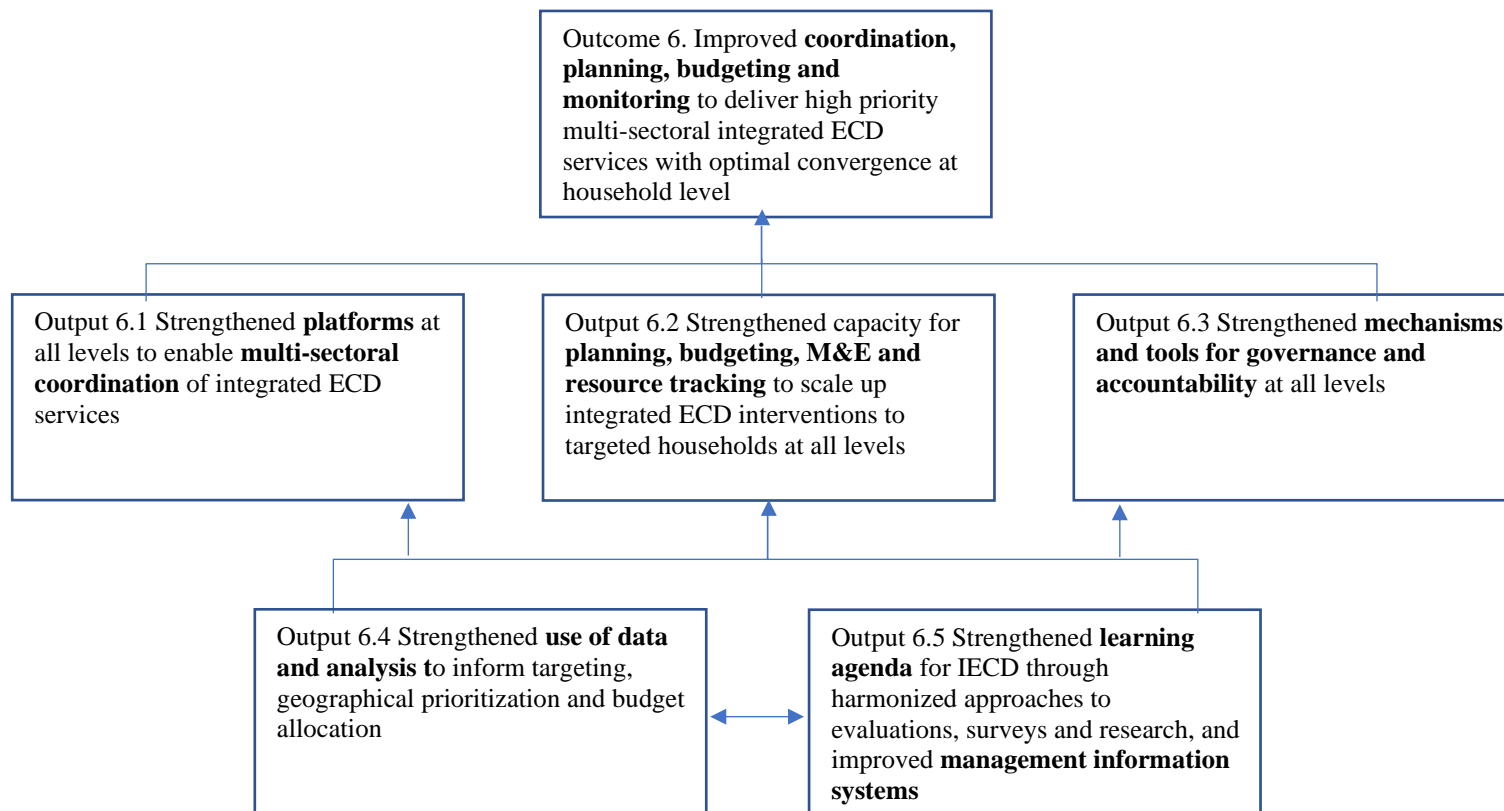


**Strategic Direction 5. Improved social protection systems for enhanced opportunities and delivery of child sensitive social protection services for targeted households targeted households**

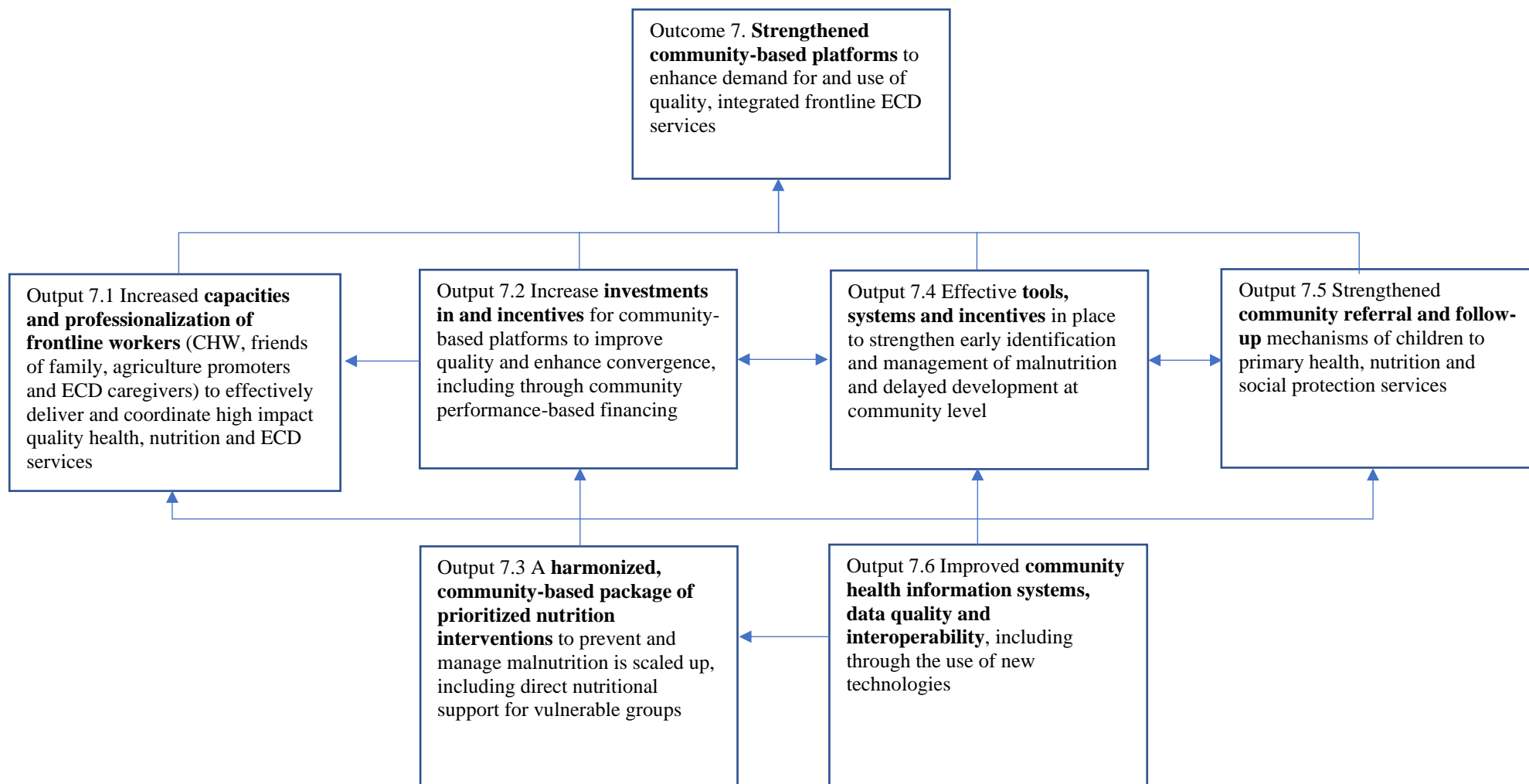


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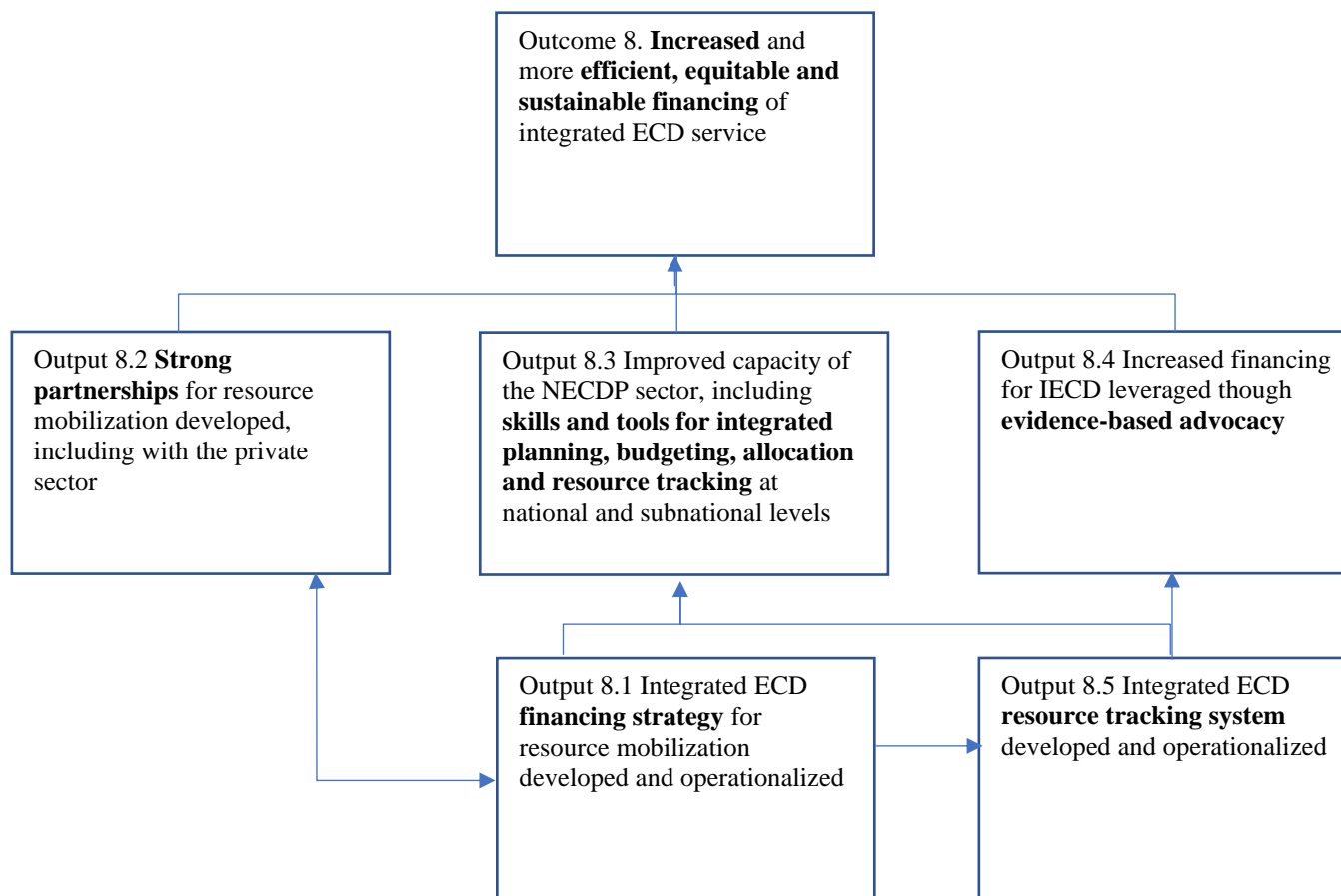
**Strategic Direction 6. Strengthened coordination, implementation capacity and governance to enhance quality delivery of integrated ECD interventions at all levels**



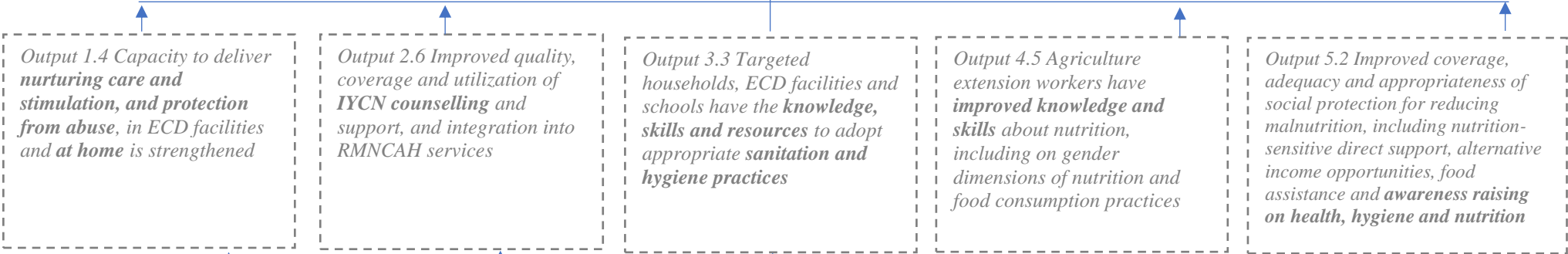
### Strategic Direction 7. Strengthened community-based platforms to enhance demand for and use of effective frontline service delivery systems of integrated quality high impact integrated ECD services



**Strategic Direction 8. Increased efficiency, equitability and sustainability of financing national ECD program**



Outcome 9. Increased **demand for and use of integrated ECD services** through **improved knowledge, behaviours and practices** of parents, carers and frontline workers



Output 9. The National Social Behavioural Change Communication Strategy (SBCC) for Integrated ECD, Nutrition and WASH 2018-2024 is implemented