

Theory of Change

(INTRAC for Civil Society, Maureen O’Flynn & Clare Moberly, 2017)

This resource defines and summarizes the Theory of Change (TOC) approach. TOCs articulate how change is expected to happen in a particular context, clarify an organization’s role in contributing to change, and define and test critical assumptions underpinning an expected process of change.

A TOC typically takes the form of a diagram combined with a narrative. This approach can be used at the organizational, programme, or project level and, while not a planning tool, can be helpful in developing effective plans and for translating programme logic into work plans (e.g., with use of planning tools such as Logical Frameworks or strategic plans) and for the assessment of long-term change.

The resource is split into 5 main sections.

- 1) **Elements of a Theory of Change:** The INTRAC resource offers several examples for how to develop a conceptual pathway, which do not need to be explored in order. These are:
 - a. Identifying how change happens;
 - b. Identifying your own role;
 - c. Developing a conceptual pathway;
 - d. Identifying assumptions;
 - e. Ongoing monitoring of change;
 - f. Critically reflecting.
- 2) **Links to Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation, and Impact Assessment:** Provides guidance for how TOCs may connect with project and programme management processes, monitoring processes, and evaluation and impact assessment processes.
- 3) **Theory of Change Debates:** provides a breakdown of some discussions around the value and risks associated with use of TOCs.
- 4) **Summary:** This provides a breakdown of the core advisory points.
 - a. Ensure there is appetite and buy-in within the organisation;
 - b. Build on what is already in place;
 - c. Don’t skip core analyses;
 - d. Be supported by external facilitator where possible.

This resource also links and references further resources on TOCs.