



Nikat Charitable Association (NCA)

A Brief Note about the Theory of Change and Logical Framework Models for NCA

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1. Theory of change and logical framework models, an overview

In program/project planning, monitoring and evaluation, two key frameworks are often used – **Theory of Change (ToC)** and **Logical Framework (logframe)**, often also referred to as **Results Frame**. The theory of change and logical framework are both tools used in project planning, monitoring, and evaluation, but they serve different purposes. While these approaches share similarities, they differ significantly in their underlying principles, planning processes, and evaluation methods. Understanding the practical differences between Theory of Change and Logical Framework is essential for effective project management.

A ToC is a diagram or written description of the strategies, actions, conditions and resources that facilitate change and achieve outcomes. It has 'explanatory power' (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020) in that it should explain why you think particular activities or actions will lead to particular outcomes. Sometimes a narrative ToC is used to explain the theory or logic underlying a program logic model.

A program logic model (logframe) is a simpler (often linear) visual representation of how a program or project is supposed to work. It shows the actions and the particular outcomes expected from them. It can be based on the same information used in a theory of change; however, it doesn't explain how or why the program will achieve the desired outcomes or bring about change.

1.1. Key Differences between Theory of Change and Logical Framework

This section will help you understand the actual differences between these two popular methods for project planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

1.1.1. Philosophy

At their core, theory of change and logical framework have different philosophical foundations. ToC is based on the idea that complex social change is brought about by interconnected and often unpredictable elements acting in a non-linear fashion. Logframe, on the other hand, assumes that change results from a linear cause-and-effect relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes. While ToC models social change as a dynamic and adaptive process, logframe focuses on how inputs and activities lead to predefined and measurable outputs and outcomes.

1.1.2. Planning Process

The two approaches also differ in terms of how they transform ideas and goals into actionable plans. ToC emphasizes a participatory and collaborative approach that involves stakeholders in an ongoing process of inquiry and reflection. This process aims to identify the underlying assumptions and causal pathways that connect inputs to long-term outcomes and to develop a set of strategies and indicators for tracking progress and results. Logframe, in contrast, starts with preconceived goals and works backward to identify the activities, inputs, and outputs needed to achieve them. The process is typically more top-down and may involve less stakeholder engagement or adaptivity than ToC.

1.1.3. Monitoring and Evaluation Methods

Finally, the two approaches differ in terms of how they evaluate project or program outcomes. ToC emphasises a continuous learning and adaptive management process that requires ongoing

feedback and reflection from stakeholders as well as a commitment to long-term goals. Its evaluation methods are therefore often qualitative, participatory, and context-specific, focusing on how and why change happened and how it can be sustained over time. Logframe evaluations, in contrast, are often quantitative and based on predefined indicators and benchmarks. They aim to measure whether specific outputs and outcomes have been achieved and to what extent, rather than to explore the underlying mechanisms or impacts of the project.

1.2. Summary of the main difference between a ToC and a Logframe

Theory of change (ToC)	Logical Framework (lograme)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A ToC is a conceptual framework that describes how and why a project or intervention is expected to lead to desired results. • ToC emphasizes a more holistic and dynamic perspective by focusing on long-term impact and underlying assumptions. • It is more narrative-driven (but may also be presented in a diagram form) and focuses on the assumptions behind the relationships among various elements in a program. • A ToC outlines the causal pathways from activities to outcomes, detailing how and why a desired change is expected to happen. • It helps project managers and stakeholders to clearly define the intended impact, map out the preconditions and assumptions necessary for success, and develop strategic interventions to achieve the desired outcomes. • ToC also emphasises stakeholder engagement and adaptive management, allowing for continuous learning and refinement throughout the project lifecycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A logframe is a tool used to plan, monitor and evaluate projects. It delineates the linkages between a project's activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. • Logical framework follows a more linear and structured approach to define project objectives, outcomes, outputs and activities. • A logic model is a structured, grid-like tool that lays out the project goals, objectives, outputs, activities, and indicators for assessing success. It is often used for M&E and is more prescriptive in nature. • A logframe describes a logical sequence showing what the intervention's intended outcomes are. • It helps project managers to identify key inputs, establish indicators for measuring progress, and define the logical relationships between project components. • It provides a framework for developing project plans, monitoring progress, and evaluating project success. It is often used in projects with more defined objectives and activities.

Both methodologies can complement each other, with the theory of change providing the conceptual basis and the logical framework offering a practical implementation guide. Always ensure to verify and adapt these tools to your specific context.

2. Benefits of Theory of Change over Logical Framework

When it comes to project planning and evaluation, the theory of change approach offers several unique benefits compared to the traditional logical framework. Here are some of the advantages:

1. *Encourages a more holistic and dynamic perspective:* Unlike the linear and static approach of the logical framework, theory of change takes a more holistic and dynamic view of projects by exploring the underlying assumptions (in particular how a project moved from activities/inputs/outputs to achieving the immediate outcomes), external factors, and long-term outcomes.

2. *Promotes stakeholder engagement:* ToC emphasizes stakeholder engagement throughout the project cycle, encouraging collaboration and shared ownership. This involvement can help create a more comprehensive and meaningful understanding of the project and its outcomes.
3. *Facilitates adaptive management:* ToC encourages a flexible and adaptive approach to project planning and evaluation, enabling teams to respond to changing circumstances and incorporate new insights or feedback as they emerge. This iterative process can lead to more effective implementation and improved outcomes.

By leveraging these advantages, the ToC approach can help NCA better plan, manage, and evaluate projects, generating more meaningful insights and outcomes. (A sample ToC template is provided in Section 6.1)

3. Benefits of using Logical Framework over Theory of Change

While ToC offers certain advantages, Logical Framework also has its merits. The structured nature of logframe allows for clear objective-setting, detailed activity planning, and straightforward monitoring and evaluation. It is particularly useful for projects with more defined objectives and activities, where a more structured approach is required. Logical Framework also provides a systematic framework for communicating project plans and progress to stakeholders, making it easier to align and coordinate efforts.

A logframe matrix is the output of a program or project design process where you work out how the program activities will lead to the immediate outputs, and how these will lead to the outcomes or objectives and goal. In an ideal world, a logframe should be flexible and updated frequently.

Unfortunately, these days most donors require you to complete a logframe in their own rigid format, and this then becomes an unchangeable standard against which your program is assessed. In many cases logframes are treated more like an accounting tool than a program design tool.

However, whether you love them or loath them, logframes are here to stay. So, that means you need to be able to write one. In most cases the donor will provide their own logframe template (all of them are different). But if they don't provide one then you can use the example provided in Section 6.2 below as a starting point.

4. When to Use Each Framework

Whether you choose to use theory of change or the logical framework depends on your project goals, the level of complexity, and the available resources. Theory of change is often suitable for projects that involve complex social and environmental issues, where there are many stakeholders involved, and where the solutions require a long-term perspective. The logical framework approach is often suitable for projects where there is a clear causal relationship between inputs, activities, and outputs, and where the resources are limited.

By integrating theory of change and the logical framework, you can harness the strengths of both approaches and create a more comprehensive framework for planning and evaluating your projects. This will help you to achieve greater impact and ensure that your projects are meeting the needs of your stakeholders.

Summary of the main strengths and weaknesses of the two approaches

	Theory of Change	Logical Framework
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages stakeholder engagement • Promotes adaptive management • Emphasizes underlying causes of problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides a structured framework for tracking progress • Offers a clear definition of inputs, activities, and outputs • Helps to identify areas for improvement
Weaknesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May oversimplify complex problems • May lack clarity or specificity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May overlook complexity or underlying causes • May be too rigid or linear

5. Steps of Each Framework

5.1. Basic Steps to Develop a Theory of Change

To develop a Theory of Change, you may follow these steps:

1. **Identify the Long-Term Goals:** Define the ultimate outcomes you wish to achieve.
2. **Backtrack from the Goals:** Determine the preconditions or necessary outcomes that must occur to reach the long-term goals.
3. **Map Out the Pathways:** Create a visual representation of how change will happen, linking activities to outcomes.
4. **Identify Assumptions:** Note the assumptions underlying the connections between actions and outcomes.
5. **Engage Stakeholders:** Involve key stakeholders in discussions to refine and validate the theory.
6. **Select Indicators:** Choose measurable indicators to assess progress and success.
7. **Review and Revise:** Continuously review and adapt the Theory of Change based on findings and feedback.

5.2. Basic Steps to Develop a Logical Framework

The “logframe” is a practical management system that helps to plan and execute programs, projects, and strategic initiatives. Based on *If-Then* logic, the 4x4 logframe matrix aligns project objectives into a measurable and testable strategic hypothesis. The logframe helps teams answer these four critical strategic or programmatic questions:

	INDICATORS	MEANS OF VERIFICATION	ASSUMPTIONS / RISKS
Goal			
Objectives / Outcomes			
Outputs			
Activities / Inputs			

- 1. What are we trying to accomplish and why?
- 2. How will we measure success?
- 3. What other conditions must exist?
- 4. How do we get there?

The answers to these questions populate the interactive cells of the logframe matrix with critical information. Logframes offer stakeholders a common language to communicate productively, formulate effective solutions, and collaborate across boundaries. Proven in multiple settings, the approach readily scales and adapts to efforts of all types.

To develop a logical framework, you may follow the following steps:

1. Define immediate outcomes which mostly are the same as the desired change. Define indicators.
2. Identify which outputs are required to achieve the immediate outcome and their indicators.
3. Identify the activities required to achieve the outputs (we don't use indicators for activities).
4. Determine the inputs (or resources) needed to achieve the objectives.

6. Sample ToC and Logframe templates for NCA

6.1. A sample Theory of Change template for NCA

As discussed above, ToC can be presented as a narrative description or diagram. A sample ToC template for NCA is provided in both options. The narrative ToC could be as follows:

NCA believes that by **empowering FSWs with knowledge, skills, and resources**, they can **reduce their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), violence, and exploitation**, while **improving their health, safety, economic well-being, and social inclusion**.

We envision a future where:

1. **FSWs have increased access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services (SRHS), including HIV prevention and treatment, STI testing and treatment, and family planning.** This will be achieved by:
 - **Strengthening partnerships with health facilities** to provide FSW-friendly services.
 - **Conducting outreach programs** to raise awareness about available services and reduce stigma.
 - **Providing peer education and support** to FSWs on health issues.
2. **FSWs are able to exercise their rights and participate meaningfully in decision-making processes that affect their lives.** This will be achieved by:
 - **Advocating for policy changes** that protect the rights and reduce the criminalization of FSWs.
 - **Empowering FSWs to organize and advocate for their own rights.**
 - **Building alliances with other civil society organizations** to strengthen advocacy efforts.
3. **FSWs have access to diverse and sustainable livelihood options.** This will be achieved by:
 - **Providing skills training and vocational education** to FSWs in areas such as entrepreneurship, crafts, and other income-generating activities.

- **Facilitating access to microfinance and other financial services** to support income-generating activities.
- **Linking FSWs with market opportunities** and providing support for business development.
- 4. **Stigma and discrimination against FSWs are reduced within communities.** This will be achieved by:
 - **Conducting community outreach and education programs** to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS, STIs, and the rights of FSWs.
 - **Challenging harmful stereotypes and promoting respectful attitudes towards FSWs.**
 - **Building bridges between FSWs and the broader community** through dialogue and collaborative activities.

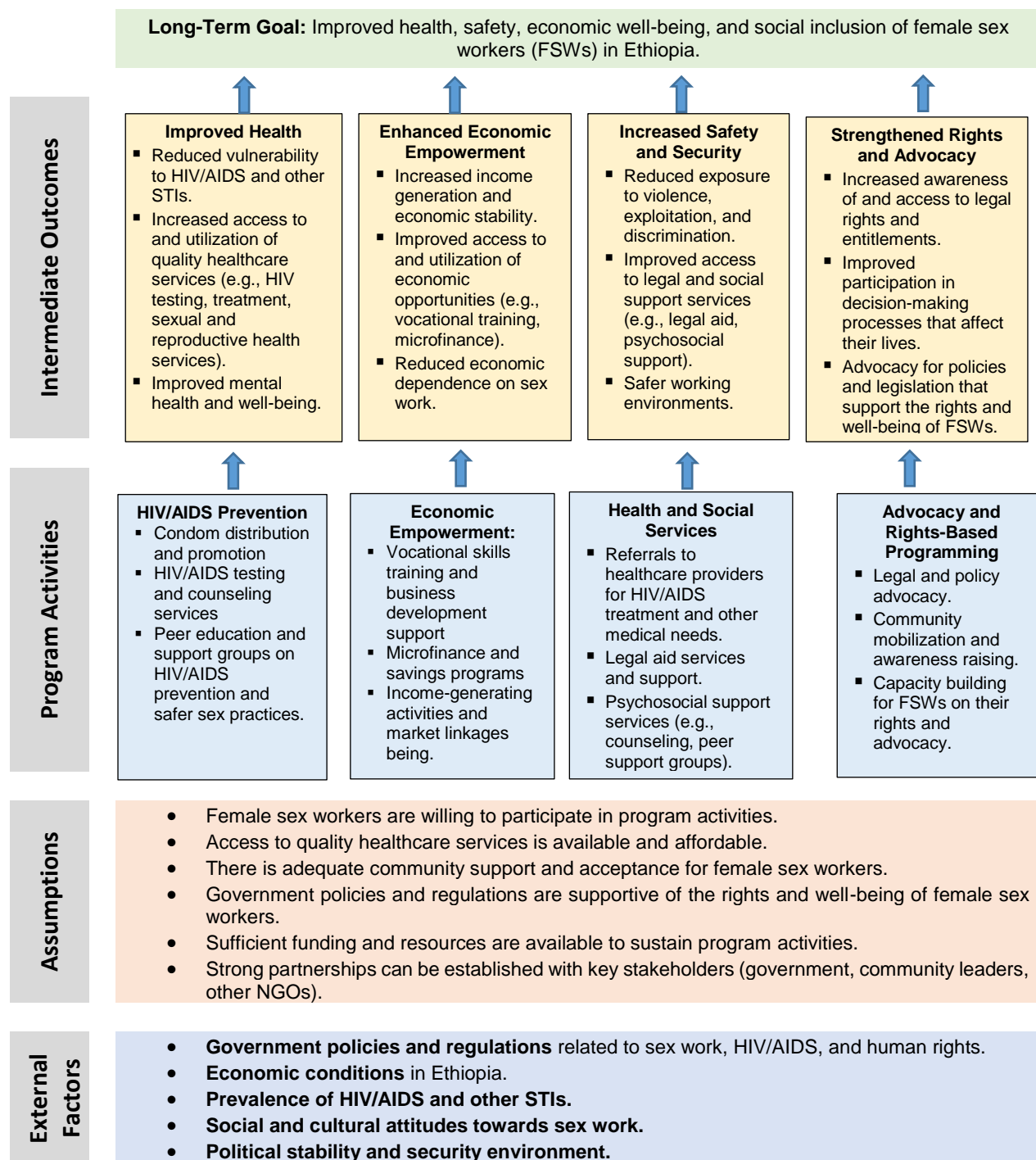
By implementing these strategies, NCA believes that FSWs will be empowered to make informed decisions about their health and lives, reduce their vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other risks, and live with dignity and respect within their communities.

This ToC emphasizes the importance of:

- **Empowerment:** Focusing on empowering FSWs to make their own choices and take control of their lives.
- **Human Rights:** Recognizing and upholding the human rights of FSWs.
- **Community Engagement:** Engaging with both FSWs and the broader community to address stigma and promote social inclusion.
- **Sustainability:** Focusing on long-term solutions that promote the sustainable health and well-being of FSWs.

The above is just one example of a narrative ToC. NCA should create a ToC that is more appropriate to their specific context, target population, and available resources. By regularly reviewing and adapting its ToC based on program experiences and the evolving context, NCA can ensure that its interventions remain relevant, effective, and impactful.

Below is an example of how narrative ToC template may also be presented diagrammatically:



6.2. A sample Logframe template for NCA's program/project

Logical Framework				
Intervention Logic	Project Summary	Indicators	Sources of Verification	Assumptions / Risks
Goal:	e.g., "Empowering Female Sex Workers (FSWs) in Addis Ababa"]		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact evaluation report 	N/A
Objectives: (Objective is sometimes called the Purpose or Immediate Outcome)	1. By [Date], [Percentage] of FSWs participating in the program/project will have increased their knowledge and practice of safer sex practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of participants reporting consistent condom use. Percentage of participants reporting correct condom use. Knowledge of HIV/AIDS and STIs among participants (measured through pre- and post-tests). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey of FSWs re condom use (if consistent / correct) Survey of FSWs (pre-and post-tests) M&E reports 	Assumptions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate funding will be available throughout the implementation period. Key stakeholders (government, community leaders) will be supportive of the program/project. FSWs will actively participate in project activities. There will be sufficient access to qualified service providers (e.g., healthcare workers, trainers). Risks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changes in government policies or regulations. Economic crises or instability.
	2. By [Date], [Percentage] of FSWs participating in the program/project will have increased their income economic stability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average monthly income of participants before and after project intervention. Percentage of participants successfully completing vocational and skills training. Number of participants who have started their own businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey of FSWs (pre- and post-implementation) Vocational training report M&E reports 	
	3. By [Date], [Percentage] of FSWs participating in the program/project will have improved their access to and utilization of health and social services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of participants who have accessed treatment for STIs. Percentage of participants who have received legal assistance. Number of referrals made to other support services (e.g., mental health, substance abuse treatment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Healthcare service reports Comparison with baseline Legal assistance service records Referral records M&E reports 	
	4. By [Date], [Percentage] of FSWs participating in the program/project will report increased levels of self-esteem, confidence, and empowerment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results from client satisfaction surveys. Qualitative data from focus group discussions and key informant interviews. Case studies documenting individual success stories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client satisfaction survey reports FGD and KII reports Case stories M&E reports 	
Outputs:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of condoms distributed. No. of participants in training programs, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of PE sessions held and clients. Number of vocational and business skills trainings delivered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service delivery records 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No. of legal consultations provided • No. of referrals made, • No. of FSWs associations formed • No. of partnerships established with local healthcare providers. • No. of legal aid workshops and consultations conducted. • No. of FSWs who received safe space/DIC service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of local healthcare providers partnered with. • Number of legal aid workshops and consultations held. • Number of safe spaces/DICs established. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project review records • MOUs with local service providers • Training records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outbreaks of infectious diseases. • Social and political unrest.
Activities:	<p>HIV/AIDS Prevention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Condom distribution • HIV/AIDS testing and counselling • Peer education sessions on HIV/AIDS prevention and safer sex practices <p>Economic Empowerment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational skills training (e.g., tailoring, hairdressing, beauty therapy, business development skill (BDS) training) • Business development support (e.g., microfinance loans, business planning assistance) • Microfinance and savings programs (incl. strategies for effective money management) • Income-generating activities and market linkages <p>Health and Social Services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referrals to healthcare providers for HIV/AIDS treatment and other medical needs, incl. safe abortion services, cervical cancer screening, and contraceptive services • Legal aid services (e.g., legal consultations, assistance with legal cases) • Referrals to mental health and psychosocial support services <p>Safe Space Provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment and operation of a safe space for female sex workers to access basic needs (e.g., rest, meals, hygiene facilities). • Provision of psychosocial support services within the safe space. 		Budget	

Please note that the sample templates Theory of Change and Logical Framework matrix shown above are not meant to represent an actual program or project of NCA. They are just examples that are supposed to indicate some basic elements of the models. Hence, they shouldn't be considered as prescriptions, but they need to be adapted to reflect the actual strategy and the specific context, programs or projects, and objectives of NCA.

Annex

Additional resources

For guidance on how to develop a theory of change, see:

- [Roadmap to social impact: your step-by-step guide to planning, measuring and communicating social impact](#) (p. 16)
- [Thinking big: How to use theory of change for systems change](#)
- [W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide](#) (chapter 3)
- [Patricia Rogers discussing theory of change for impact evaluation](#)
- [Better evaluation](#)

For templates on creating a theory of change diagram, see:

- [Nesta's theory of change toolkit](#)
- [W.K. Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Development Guide](#) (chapter 3)

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