

IPL GUIDE 2

Impact Planning and Learning



Developing a theory of change

A guide to developing a theory of change
as a framework for inclusive dialogue, learning and
accountability for social impact.

June 2008

Keystone operates on open source principles. We invite you to share your
experience and learning from use of this tool with us and other users
through our website at www.KeystoneAccountability.org

The complete IPL tool suite

Keystone has developed IPL for organizations seeking to improve the way that they can contribute to significant and lasting change.

The present tool is part of the IPL tool suite that helps organizations create a framework for developing strategies, building partnerships, planning interventions, gathering evidence of success or failure and, most importantly, analyzing and learning from this evidence through open generative dialogue among constituents and stakeholders who have a real interest in change.

1. IPL - An overview and service offering

- 1.1 The overview
- 1.2 The Keystone service offering

2. Developing a theory of change

A guide to developing a theory of change as a framework for inclusive dialogue, learning and accountability for social impact.

- 2.1 Imagining success
- 2.2 Pathways to outcomes
- 2.3 Becoming eco-intelligent
- 2.4 From theory to strategy

3. Learning with constituents

A guide to identifying, documenting and analyzing evidence of impact (planned or unplanned), and learning from this in dialogue with constituents.

Introduction to evidence and dialogue

- 3.1 Whose voices matter? - mapping constituents and stakeholders
- 3.2 Gathering and documenting evidence of impact - journals of change
- 3.3 Gathering and documenting evidence of impact - dialogue methods
- 3.4 Gathering and documenting evidence of impact - Feedback surveys

4. Validated impact reporting

A guide to communicating your effectiveness and your learning through public, constituency-validated reports.

5. Capabilities profiler

A guide to help organizations and their constituents assess and profile their potential to effectively bring about sustainable social change.

Contents

WHAT IS A THEORY OF CHANGE?	4
2.1 IMAGINING SUCCESS	7
What is a vision of success?	8
Activity 1: Creating an epitaph for the organization	9
Activity 2: Painting in the detail of what would success look like	10
2.2 MAPPING PATHWAYS TO OUTCOMES	14
Pathways to outcomes	15
Activity: Mapping 'pathways to outcomes'	16
2.3 BECOMING ECO-INTELLIGENT	20
Introduction	21
The focus is on outcomes, not mission or culture	22
Four simple principles of effective collaboration and partnership	23
Some activities	25
ACTIVITIES	26
1. Mapping the activity eco-system	26
2. Analyzing the dimensions of change	30
3. Thinking about collaboration - placing actors on a 'relationship continuum'	31
4. Analyzing individual actors and creating a 'collaboration profile'	32
Conclusion	33
SOME THEORY OF CHANGE PLANNING TEMPLATES	34
APPENDIX 1. GLOSSARY	37
APPENDIX 2. COMPARING 'LOGICAL FRAMEWORK' APPROACHES TO A 'THEORY OF CHANGE' APPROACH	39
APPENDIX 3. THE POWER OF GOOD THEORY AND CREATIVE DIALOGUE – A CASE STUDY OF A 'WHOLE SCHOOL' DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE IN SOUTH AFRICA	40

What is a theory of change?

Different people use the term “theory of change” to mean different things.

For some people, it is simply a tool to explain (make explicit) the logic of our existing strategies. Used in this way it can be useful, but it does not take us beyond the level of thinking that informed those strategies.

In IPL, the process of developing a theory of change is an exciting and often liberating process of interaction and discovery that helps organizations see beyond their familiar frames and habits (even if these were quite effective), understand the full complexity of the change they wish to see, and imagine new solutions in dialogue with others.

The process begins with a group of key staff and constituents of an organization coming together with a facilitator to imagine a **vision of success**. This is a short but specific picture in words of the sustainable future that they wish to help bring about. It describes real people, real relationships, institutions and cultures. It is not a remote, idealized and unachievable future. It must be a plausible picture of people behaving and experiencing life differently in a sustainable way that the organization, working alongside others, can meaningfully influence.

From this kind of vision of what success looks like, the participants explore the question: What needs to happen to make this vision a reality? For each element of the vision, the participants try to identify ALL the prior changes that they think are necessary if the vision of success is to be realized – NOT just what the organization can do on its own.

The theory of change *emerges or unfolds* through a facilitated **process** of open inquiry and dialogue. Participants may hold different views and perspectives, but should share a broad commitment to change. The more the group reflects the voices of all constituents, the richer the dialogue is likely to be. Slowly, the identified preconditions of success are arranged into a set of **pathways to outcomes**.

From here, we map the ‘**activity ecosystem**’ in which we work. This involves understanding where we are now and then identifying all the actors in our system who can influence our vision positively or negatively. We can then consider what kind of working relationships we can build with specific actors that will help us achieve our vision more effectively.

Most of us find it extremely difficult to think outside of the box of *what we do now*. The process of developing a theory of change takes us to a place where we can question our assumptions, see things through different eyes, and come to an exciting new shared understanding that reveals the full complexity of our context, but helps us begin to map the pathways that can lead us towards the outcomes we desire.

Through dialogue the participants emerge with a much clearer understanding of the way change happens in the context, and the range of strategic options that are open to the organization – and to the other actors in the ecosystem. It provides a shared framework for understanding the ecosystem, planning specific strategies, gathering and documenting evidence of success or failure, demonstrating their contribution to impact and turning this information into real knowledge for their own improvement and for society at large.

Once it has emerged, a theory of change is a bit like a road map. It provides us with an understanding of the landscape and the routes and distances that we need to travel to get to our destination. We use a road map to help us plot the journey (i.e. develop strategies) from where we are now to where we want to be.

In order to develop a good theory of change we need to think in terms of plausible OUTCOMES that we can realistically influence.

It is surprising how difficult most people find it to think and write OUTCOMES.

It takes most people quite a lot of conscious practice before they start thinking in terms of outcomes rather than outputs or needs or activities. An outcome statement describes a **result** – a change that has taken place, NOT as a need statement or an activity that is still in process. Until they have mastered this ability, a facilitator must constantly be reminding people to rephrase their statements as outcome.

Outputs: the products and activities that you do.

Outcomes: What we see as a result of our outputs.

For example:

Outcome statement: Women in the community have organized groups and support structures to protect themselves and children from violence.

Need statement: Women in the community need to protect each other and children from violence.

A simple test that you can apply is to ask these questions of every statement that you make:

1. Is it written as an outcome?
2. Does it describe changes that we can **plausibly enable or facilitate** in people, groups, institutions or environments?

When you have a good theory of change that incorporates the perspectives of all constituents, you have carefully explored all your assumptions that underpin your beliefs about what will work, and why, and what strategies are likely to be most effective in the short, medium and long term. You will have:

- A clear picture of what long term sustainable success looks like for core constituents.
- A clear and testable hypothesis about how you understand the context in which you work and what you think needs to happen to achieve success.
- Clear pathways of short term and intermediate changes (or outcomes) that you think are essential preconditions for success.
- Clear, achievable intermediate outcomes that can help you plan short term strategies and collaborations that contribute to long term impacts.
- A set of indicators of success that you can use to monitor and report on your increasing contribution to long term sustainable impacts.

You can use your theory as a framework for dialogue and learning:

- To identify particular outcomes from your pathways to success and develop a set of specific strategies for achieving them.
- To identify others who influence the outcomes and find ways of working together more effectively.
- To help you recognize and document evidence of success (or failure) whenever you see it.
- To frame learning dialogues with constituents and include their perspectives and feedback in your planning and reporting.
- To understand and share the lessons learned about what really works to achieve lasting change.
- To help you report clearly on your achievements and the lessons learnt and your contribution to lasting change.
- To help you share your learning and contribute to societal learning about how similar change can be achieved in other contexts.
- To persuade your donors to invest in longer term outcomes rather than only short projects.

The rest of this guide will take you through a set of activities designed to help you develop your own theory of change. It is recommended that organizations new to the process do this with the support of an experienced facilitator.

2.1 Imagining success

Developing a vision of success

What is a vision of success?

How we imagine success is critical.

A vision of success is a clear picture of the achievable and sustainable future that the organization would like to see in the context in which it works. It can still be aspirational. And the organization does not have to feel that it can achieve this vision on its own.

A vision of success should not be a static and unachievable perfect state –

The vision must be **plausible** – it must focus on changes in and between people, groups and institutions that the organization can realistically influence (not some idealized state that is unachievable).

It must be **dynamic** – it should be a snapshot of a complex and dynamic system in which people and institutions are working effectively in relationships with each other and with outside agencies to solve problems and enhance the well-being of citizens and the environment.

The organization is NOT the centre of this universe. It is only one of a number of constituents acting in and influencing the outcomes. Creating a vision of success involves identifying the key players (individuals, groups and institutions) and then describing the desired behaviors, attitudes, capabilities, values and the relationships between them in a situation where change is always happening.

We propose two activities below to help facilitate the process of creating creation of a vision of success.

Activity 1: Creating an epitaph for the organization (60 mins).

The purpose and “aha” moments we are seeking in this activity are:

Purpose

- *To shock people out of their fixation with their current activities and to make them think in terms of a clearly stated outcome - what they would like to be left behind once the organization has departed this earth.*
- *To capture in 15 words or less the essential transformation that the organization would like to see for a specific group or context.*

Aha!

- *The kind of clarity that comes when people realize that they can cut through the turgid ‘strategy-speak’ and really express this kind of clarity of purpose in a clear and every day way.*

This activity is a kind of shock tactic to shock people out of their complacency and satisfaction with what they do now, and think in terms of a bold long term outcome.

It is a fun and challenging activity that gets people thinking – and expressing themselves succinctly and clearly – getting to the core of their purpose and reason for being – but in lively every day speech – not the formal bureaucratic language of a mission statement.

Organizations are living things – they are born, they grow, they work and they die. Participants are asked to imagine, in the vast graveyard of dead CSOs, what they would like to have inscribed on their tombstone (or other non Christian equivalent where appropriate).

What would you like the world to remember you for? The epitaph should be a very, very brief statement that captures as briefly as possible the **essential transformation** they have made in the world. They could start by brainstorming some of the changes that they would like to see in their community.

The facilitator should capture whatever people blurt out on cards or on a flip chart. For each statement they could ask things like:

- If you read this on a gravestone, would you stop and want to know more?
- Is it powerful and snappy enough to be on a grave stone?
- Does it really say what you’d like to be remembered for?

An epitaph needs to be a short, striking, memorable statement - one that would grab the interest of a passer-by in the cemetery and make them stop and think “This sounds like a really interesting organization - I wonder what its story is?”

After a while the facilitator should begin to draw the different thoughts together into a single coherent statement.

Note: This activity does reflect a certain Christian-centrism – but we have found that people in cultures that do not have the same tradition, are able to suggest an alternative or else understand and accept it for the purpose.

Case example: An epitaph for the Cartwheel Foundation (a small organization working with indigenous communities in the Philippines)

Some of the ‘brainstorming’ ideas that emerged in the discussion. These are mostly still stuck on what the organization does:

- That we were their first organization in the area
- We empowered 1,000 young people
- We helped indigenous people stand on their own
- We brought them into the modern world
- We helped empower indigenous people through education to stand up on their own (What would it look like when they are standing on their own?)
- Helped them attain cultural richness
- Helped them have control of their own future
- Live a good life free from poverty, violence, ignorance

CARTWHEEL’S EPITAPH

The Cartwheel Foundation helped to empower indigenous people to live healthy, productive and fulfilling lives as full and active citizens of the Philippines.

Just for fun, as a concluding activity to show the value of this, ask them to choose one project or activity and assess whether or not it is really contributing optimally to this outcome.

Possible resources: A wall poster of a blank tombstone (or other culturally acceptable alternative)

Activity 2: Painting in the detail of what would success look like (2 - 3 hrs)

The purpose and “aha” moments we are seeking in this activity are:

Purpose

- *To paint a picture in words of the sustainable, plausible and dynamic future that the organization and its constituents want to see*
- *A picture of what success would look like if they could achieve everything they wanted to achieve*

Aha!

- *The kind of clarity that comes when people clearly describe a set of specific, plausible and measurable long term ‘outcomes’ at which they can aim their interventions.*

This activity continues the epitaph brainstorm, and elaborates on the essential transformation outlined on the tombstone. It describes in words, and also in a picture if the facilitator thinks this will be useful, what you would see in your context if you had achieved everything that you wanted to achieve.

Define the range and scope (10 mins)

What is sufficiently long time to be able to see the long term social change you are working on? What would you like to see that will indicate that you have succeeded?

Choose a **time** horizon. It could be, say, five or ten or twenty years.

Define the geographical **range** of your work. This could be within a specific community, region, or sector.

Brainstorm the vision (2 hours)

Now try to imagine and describe what success **would look like** for you as an organization, if you had all the resources you needed and there were no major disasters to derail you from your path. If the visitor who was fascinated by your epitaph went to visit your community, what would you want them to see?

A variation of this activity is called the helicopter activity. Participants are asked to imagine they are flying above the community in a helicopter. They are asked to imagine the changes they would see on the ground if they had been completely successful.

Remember, the vision should not be a static and unachievable perfect state – it should be a snapshot of a complex and dynamic system in which actors are working optimally and accountably – effectively solving problems and enhancing the well-being of citizens and the environment.

The vision must be **plausible** – it must focus on changes in and between people, groups and institutions that the organization can realistically influence (not some idealized state that is unachievable).

It must be **dynamic** – it must identify people and institutions still acting in relationships with each other to sustain and improve well-being.

This involves identifying the key players (individuals, groups and institutions) and then describing the desired behaviors, attitudes, capabilities, values and the relationships between them in a situation where change is always happening. How has their world changed and who is doing what differently?

Here are some questions that will help participants describe the changes they would see in specific detail. It is important that the changes are always written in the form of **outcomes** or **results**.

1. Which individuals, groups or institutions are essential parts of this future picture? Keep the list short, but make sure that it is a complete picture that includes relevant citizen groups (like women, workers, small farmers, children or youth) as well as appropriate government departments and businesses.
2. How might the physical and social conditions in which people live be different?
3. How would each of these groups or institutions be thinking, acting or relating to each other?
4. What attitudes and values would people have?
5. What might the public policies that affect them look like?
6. What new capabilities would specific groups have?
7. What new opportunities exist for whom?
8. To what extent have the vulnerable become active participants in their own development rather than just 'beneficiaries'?

Do not be satisfied with vague and general goals.

Describe the changes specifically in terms of specific constituents. Each statement must be written in the form of an **outcome**: a changed situation that could be recognized, described and measured.

After a period of brainstorming, all the thoughts should be brought together into a statement – which is recorded. This statement must be written in the form of a specific **outcome**: a changed situation that can be described and measured. The role of the facilitator in this activity is to constantly ask: 'Is this plausible?' and 'Is this measurable – what evidence would tell us that we have succeeded?'

Example: This is how one of Keystone's first pilot organizations, the Cartwheel Foundation from the Philippines, expressed its vision of what success would look like 10-15 years from now.

Empowered indigenous communities in which:

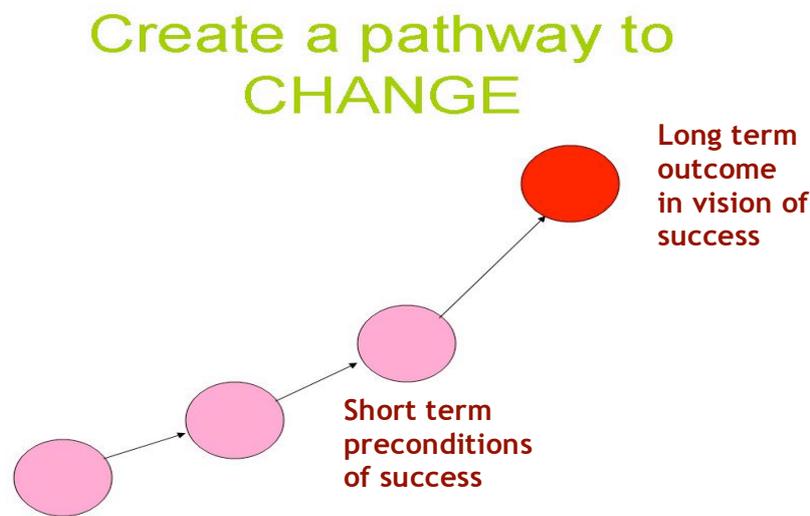
- Community leaders and community representatives engage confidently and effectively with government, commercial companies and other outside agencies to promote the interests of their communities.
- Community leaders inspire their citizens to participate actively in their own development.
- Local mining and plantation companies employ indigenous citizens at fair wages and conditions.
- Children and young people have access to quality, culturally responsive education close to where they live.
- Indigenous communities enjoy the same rights and public services as other sectors of Filipino society.
- Traditional and modern rights and values are in balance.
- Indigenous people are fully represented in the different sectors of society.
- Indigenous communities are adequately represented in public decision-making and policy-making bodies - especially those that affect them directly.
- The right of indigenous communities to land is guaranteed.

The process of creating a vision of success exercise often forces an organization to begin thinking outside of itself and into seeing itself as one actor in a wider activity eco-system. Real and lasting social change seldom comes about as a result of a single organization working in isolation – it is usually the result of complex interrelated interventions.

2.2 Mapping pathways to outcomes

Pathways to outcomes

Examining our assumptions about change, and 'emerging' a new understanding of how change happens.



This is the second step in creating your theory of change.

Having developed a shared vision of success (or impact) and then understood the main actors and change processes in the activity ecosystem, the organization can begin to map *pathways to outcomes*. These are all the changes that the organization believe **must take place** in the context in order to achieve lasting success.

For each element in the vision of success, the organization seeks to define the changes, however small, in the conditions, institutions, relationships, capabilities, attitudes and behaviours that are considered **essential for long term success**.

Some pre-conditions might be hard, tangible changes in conditions (such as access to vaccinations), but many will be intangible process outcomes (like changes in confidence, skills, capabilities, relationships, attitudes etc.) that are just as important if changes are to be made and sustained.

This learning framework makes it possible to plan activities and reflect on performance. It helps people notice evidence of success that they might not notice otherwise using easy-to-collect data on short-term and intermediate *process outcomes* – changes that the organization can influence on its own or with others, that **contribute** to ultimate success. A good theory of change makes complexity manageable without oversimplification.

The guiding question is: What MUST happen in our context if our vision of success is to be realized?

NOTE: It is essential in this activity to free yourself from what you do now. Think only of the vision and what needs to happen for it to become reality. Focus on the whole system – not your existing programs.

REMEMBER: You are not designing a strategy. You are deepening your understanding of your context and making explicit your assumptions and understanding of how sustainable change takes place.

Activity: Mapping ‘pathways to outcomes’:

The purpose and “aha” moments we are seeking in this activity are:

Purpose

- *To map, designing back from the vision of success, the necessary preconditions for success. This means all the changes that must take place in and among the actors of our ecosystem in order to realize our vision of success.*

Aha!

- *When participants ‘see’ a clear pathway of short term and intermediate changes that lead to the long term outcomes in the vision - where the long-term outcome can be achieved by bringing about a number of prior, more easily achieved and measured, outcomes.*
- *When they see themselves in relation to other actors in an activity system and can identify strategies and relationships between actors that can bring about more effective interventions and more lasting results.*
- *When they recognize that changes in relationships and capabilities and other ‘intangible outcomes’ are as important, or even more important, than changes in material conditions alone.*
- *When they see their theory as the basis for planning and learning with constituents as well as for communicating success (ongoing contributions to long term sustainable change).*

There are two separate parts to this activity .

1. Brainstorming preconditions (30 minutes)

The group now works systematically backwards from the long term strategic vision of success and identifies the changes and processes that you believe are **absolutely necessary preconditions** to achieving each element of your vision of success. In other words, these are changes that you believe MUST HAPPEN if we hope to achieve the outcomes in our vision.

For example, if the organization wants to achieve improved school performance among a group of children in a community, it might identify the following as necessary preconditions for success:

- The knowledge and skills of teachers is improved
- Learners have access to better learning materials.
- Parents take a more active role in supporting their children’s education in the home.
- Parents are trained how to support early literacy.

Participants should brainstorm **all** the preconditions that they can think of that are **necessary** for the long-term change to take place. These are written onto cards and stuck on the wall.

As they are presented, test the pre-condition by asking: Does this statement describe **clear and achievable outcomes**. Also, you must have a clear rationale or explanation for **why** each outcome is necessary and **how** it contributes to your long term goals.

We are looking for changes in:

- conditions
- institutions
- relationships
- capabilities
- attitudes
- behaviors

Preconditions and indicators should be as specific as possible and could describe:

- What change?
- For whom?
- How good?
- By when?

A simple test that you can apply is to ask these questions of every statement that you make:

3. Is it written as an outcome?
4. Does it describe changes that we can **plausibly enable or facilitate** in people, groups, institutions or environments?

2. Grouping the preconditions for success and mapping pathways to outcomes (2 – 4 hours)

Participants should now attempt to arrange related ideas into groups and then try to come up with a single statement that covers the most important points in each group.

The idea is to develop a set of short term and intermediate outcomes that can be listed as necessary and sufficient **secondary preconditions** in the change pathways map. However, as the organization works and develops its theory of change, it may choose to break down some of these further, or elevate a secondary precondition to become a primary one.

The facilitator's role here is to ensure that

- the preconditions are also written as **outcomes** that are plausible, achievable and measurable
- there is a clear, logical link between the pre-condition and the long-term outcome
- The outcome really is a **necessary precondition**. Preconditions are not nice-to-haves. They are essential to success – so that it is difficult to imagine long term sustainable success if the precondition is not there.

In the initial workshop itself, it may not be possible to map all the preconditions of success. In most cases, completing the social change pathways will be done by the organization outside of the induction workshop. A smaller group should be tasked with completing the pathways map.

Over time, the organization should discuss the emerging theory of change and to refine it. In particular, it will require time to identify the indicators of success that will help them in the planning and monitoring of their strategies and programs as they slowly align these to their theory of change.

Road maps and indicators of success

The basic statement of a theory of change can take two forms:

- One is a '*pathways to outcomes*' *diagram*. There is an example of the Cartwheel Foundation's pathways diagram on the next page.
- The other is a '*bulleted list*'. If you do not have the graphics capability, you can simply create a set of bulleted lists which list the preconditions under each of the outcomes in your vision. There is an example of this in **Appendix 3**.

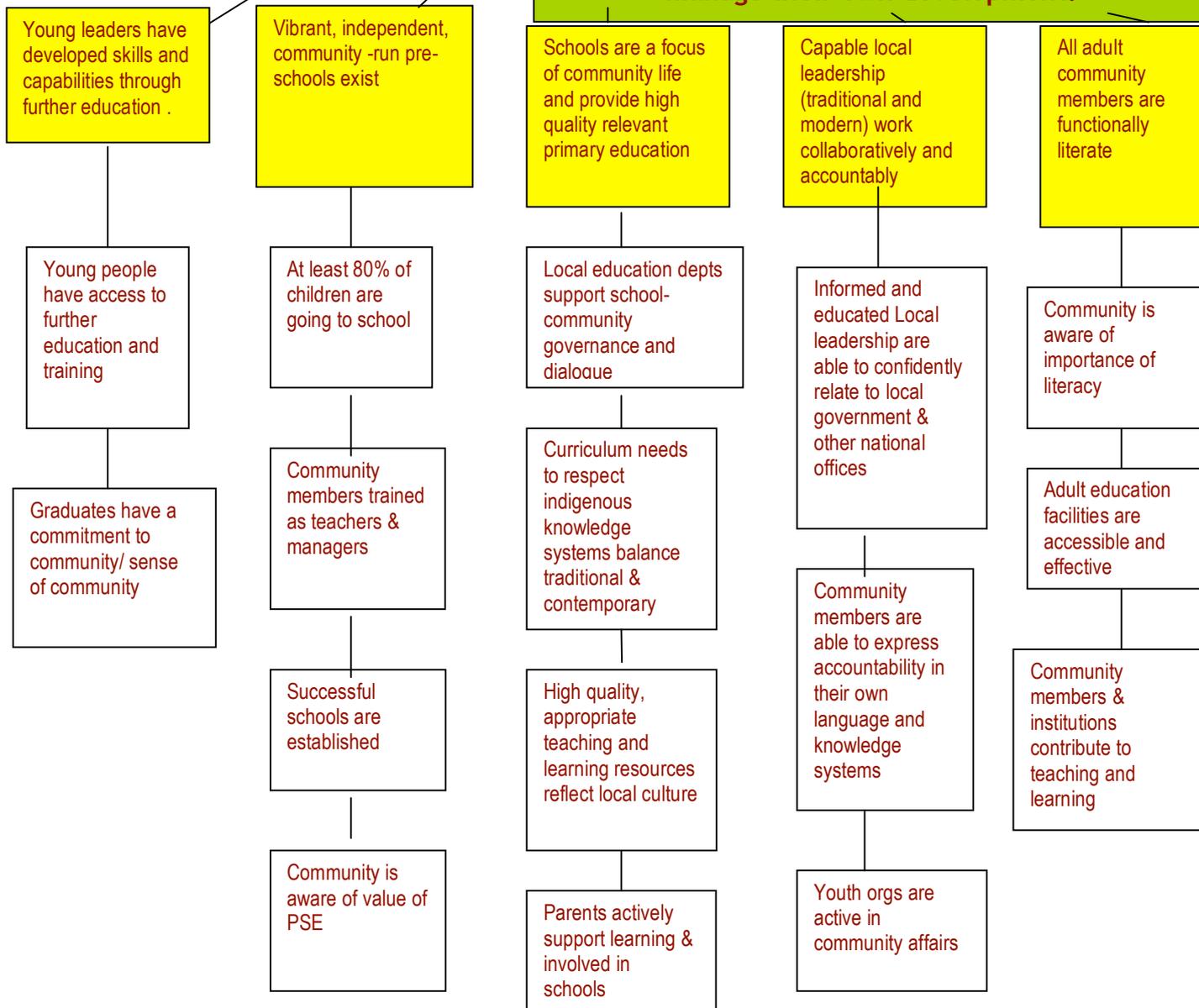
When this is complete, it functions as a clear and accessible set of short term outcomes that the organization can realistically hope to influence and help bring about in the context that they are working in.

As such, progress made towards achieving any of these outcomes can be seen as progress towards the long term vision of success. So the organization can devise specific strategies and interventions aimed at achieving these outcomes and know that success here can also be seen as success towards the long term vision or impact.

Remember, a theory of change should always be seen as a working hypothesis, which should be adapted and changed as you learn from experience.

Cartwheel's pathways of change diagram

Empowered indigenous communities
 Indigenous communities have the individual capabilities and the collective community capacity (through education) to enable them to independently take meaningful control of and manage their own development.



This change pathways map is a graphic representation of the key outcomes they identified as pre-conditions for success. The elements of the vision of success are in yellow. The preconditions identified for each of these elements are in white.

Note that each of the statements is written as an outcome in its own right, and reflects a change that they can plausibly assist or facilitate in a group or institution in the community. As such, it is possible to plan specific strategies aimed at achieving each of these or any combination of them - alone or in partnership with other actors.

It should also be fairly easy to think of the kind of evidence that would suggest success for each of the outcomes.

2.3 Becoming eco-intelligent

Enhancing social outcomes by bringing about |
better alignment, collaboration and partnership
among actors in an activity ecosystem

**A Keystone guide to mapping the activity eco-system and
planning and managing collaborations**

Introduction

Development is usually a long term, complex process involving many actors and interdependent processes. A single organization working on its own can seldom achieve all the changes required by its theory of change. But when different agencies align their work towards a shared outcome or vision of success, the power of an entire ecosystem is unleashed.

When organizations, including donors, begin to think of themselves as working in an ecology of actors towards shared **outcomes**, they can plan and act collaboratively without losing their individual focus or identity. Such an ecological approach preserves the individual creativity and responsiveness of diverse actors while enabling practical synergies that lead to social learning and more effective solutions.

For any outcome that an organization is working towards, there are usually a number of other actors or social forces that influence the outcome positively or negatively. In other words, it is important to understand **the system** of forces and actors that is at work in your context. The change you want to bring about is most likely to be significant and sustainable if you can influence the actors in the system to support it.

Looked at from the other side, the change you want to see is less likely to be sustainable unless the attitudes, relationships, values and actions of the other actors in the system support the change you want to see.

Once you have identified the actors, and the ways in which they influence the system, it is possible to

- Identify those who are working for similar outcomes to yours.
- Plan collaborative interventions that will enable you to achieve more together than you could alone.
- Identify those actors who might negatively influence the system and plan strategies to change their attitudes and practices or reduce the negative influence they might have.

In any system, building effective working relationships among actors for a change they all desire is likely to produce the most effective results.

There can be many different kinds of alignment and collaborative relationships. At one end of the spectrum, you can simply agree to work separately but talk to each other to reduce competition, duplication or conflicting interventions. Alternatively, it is possible to build short term collaborations for specific outcomes. At the other end you might want to establish a formal long term working partnership.

Eco-intelligence brings to consciousness what many effective organizations do anyway, and makes it a conscious part of their **theory of change** and their strategy.

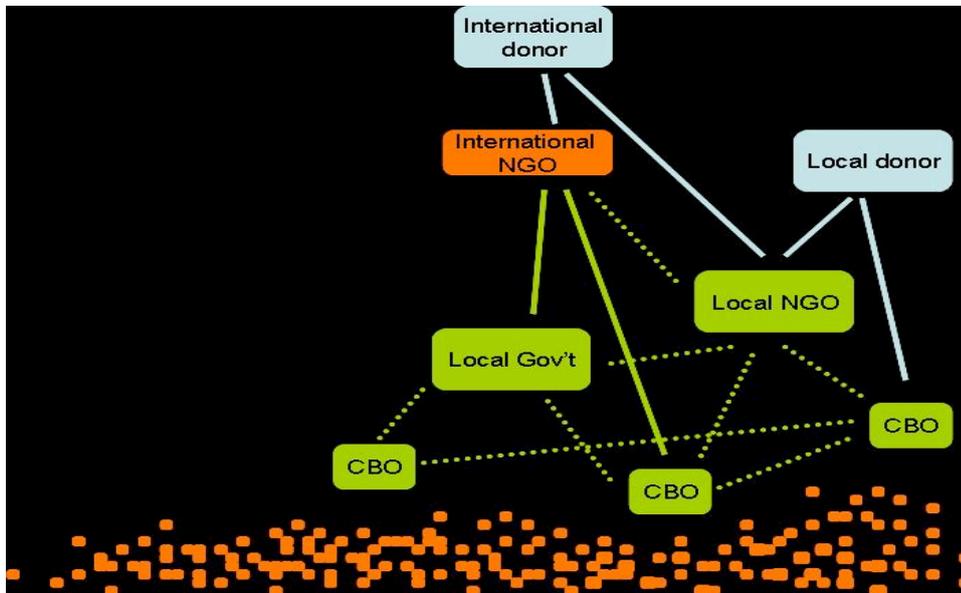
Bringing about greater alignment in a system can itself be a crucial pre-condition for success. Relationship building is, therefore, often a strategic objective and indicator that you are indeed making progress towards your long term, sustainable outcomes.

As such, building alignment and collaborative relationships within an activity eco-system can be an important intermediate outcome in your theory of change.

The focus is on outcomes, not mission or culture

An activity ecosystem is a network of actors in a defined context who, consciously or unconsciously, influence what happens in that context.

In any system we are only one of a number of different actors that can influence the way change happens in the system. There could be a government department here, an NGO there and a private sector organization over there. And then there could be those who are just passing through.



And many of these actors might have very different missions and purposes, yet be able to collaborate successfully to bring about some change that they all would like to see. Agreeing on shared outcomes is more important than absolute agreement on mission and values – although it will obviously be difficult to collaborate with an organization whose mission and values are directly opposed to your own.

Successful collaborations can be short term and focused on a single specific objective. Others can be long term and focus on bringing about complex social change. It all depends on the context. But every successful outcome that contributes to your long term social change pathway takes you, and the activity system as a whole, one step closer to achieving the long term sustainable change that you all want to see.

While short term, once-off collaborations around limited objectives can be organized quite quickly, longer term relationships and successful partnerships depend on building mutual confidence and trust, and often evolve slowly over time. The strategies adopted should be appropriate to the context and the outcomes involved.

So, eco-intelligence is a capability that an organization develops over time too. There is no single 'off-the-shelf' technique or methodology that you can instantly apply.

Like learning to ride a bicycle, it depends on an attitude of mind, careful experimentation and learning – with a number of bumps and bruises on the way. But when you can do it, all destinations look that much closer.

When you think about it, you don't need to agree on every matter of value or taste in order to share a home with someone, you only need to agree about how some things will get done around the house. It is the same with development organizations. In fact, ironically, it is often those organizations that are most closely aligned in terms of their mission that find collaboration difficult because they also often compete for resources and for support.

Four simple principles of effective collaboration and partnership

1. Social purpose partnerships are not like marriage

The first essential principle is that you do not have to love each other or be compatible in every respect to form a good collaboration or partnership.

Certainly it helps if you like each other, think in similar ways and agree on most things. But this is not a necessary condition for a good partnership.

What is necessary is that you have a **common purpose** that is expressed in **clear outcomes** and a common understanding that you can achieve this better by acting together than on your own.

You might well achieve your outcomes more effectively by building relationships with people and institutions that may not have exactly the same primary mission as yourself. For example, collaborating with a private company in some situations might achieve more than one with an ineffective NGO.

2. Be clear on roles, responsibilities, timeframes and resources

Establish clear roles and responsibilities and what skills, networks, relationships and resources each party will commit up front before any work begins.

3. Values matter

While the point above holds, it is also difficult to imagine a successful collaboration between organizations that have sharply opposing values. For example, it might be difficult for an organization working in the health field to partner with a cigarette company.

It is important that parties commit to the same approach to listening and responding to constituents, documenting and sharing their learning, transparent public communication of their failure as well as success.

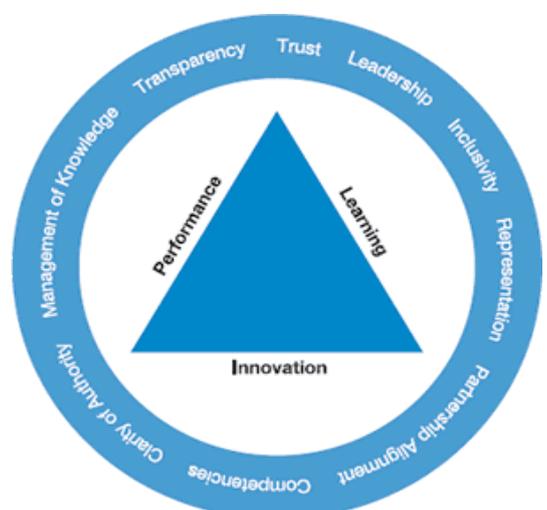
4. Agree on how the collaboration will be governed

Short term collaborations with limited objectives are relatively easy to manage provided there are clear agreements on the outcome and the respective roles of the parties.

Your MOU might only need to set out how strategic decisions will be taken and what mechanisms you will use to assess each one's performance and hold each other accountable.

Long term partnerships are a different matter. Here it is essential to agree on the governance principles, roles and responsibilities in advance.

It is not the purpose of this guide to enter this complex field. Instead, we refer readers who are considering entering into partnerships for social change to AccountAbility's **Partnership Governance and Accountability (PGA) Framework** for the management of partnerships for sustainable development.



You can access it at www.pgaframework.org. It also has a very

useful online self-assessment tool with which you can assess the quality of governance and accountability of any partnership according to the PGA 'principal enabling characteristics.

Here are some other resources that will be helpful.

1. The Copenhagen Centre publishes a journal called **Partnership Matters**. See www.copenhagencentre.org for further details.
2. The Asian Development Bank has a set of case studies on NGO private sector partnerships against poverty. See www.adb.org.
3. Steve Waddell has written a wonderful book of case studies entitled **Societal Learning and Change**. *Greenleaf Publishing*, Sheffield, 2005.

Some activities

We suggest three activities that will help an organization become eco-intelligent:

1. Map the activity eco-system
2. Analyze individual actors and assessing their collaboration potential
3. Develop appropriate governance and management systems for partnerships

This approach will be new for many organizations, and they will have to learn their way into this way of thinking slowly and incrementally. Collaborations and partnerships can be difficult things to develop and to manage. But where organizations have managed to form strategic collaborations, the rewards more than justify the challenges.

Ecosystem mapping explores the questions:

1. Who else is working in our context that could influence the outcomes we seek to bring about?
2. What change processes are already underway in our ecosystem, and how do they influence the outcomes that we want to achieve?

Moving from mapping to analyzing the ecosystem with a view to identifying possible alignments, collaborations and partnerships explores the questions:

3. What common interests in social change outcomes do we share?
 4. What are the common and complementary capabilities that we each possess?
 5. How can we best work alongside or in collaboration with each other to achieve social outcomes more effectively than we could on our own?
- How should our collaborations and partnerships be governed and managed?

Activities

There are two activities we suggest to begin with. One is to help map the activity eco-system and the other is to help understand the potential for collaboration with the actors in the system that you think are most important.

At the end of the guide are a few more references that will help plan and manage specific kinds of collaborations and partnerships.

1. Mapping the activity eco-system (2-3 hrs)

This activity could be done in two to three hours. It is important that you try and involve people who have a wide range of experience and perspectives of the system you are trying to influence. At the least, you should try and involve a representative group of the organization's management and field staff, as well as other constituents who might bring valuable experience and perspective.

You can use the activity in smaller scaled down versions whenever you plan a specific activity or intervention.

The purpose and “aha” moments we are seeking in this activity are:

Purpose

- *To better understand the ways in which different actors can contribute towards achieving specific outcomes, and to see whether it is possible, over time, to bring about greater alignment and collaboration between actors in the system.*
- *To help an organization map the actors in an activity ecosystem that influences an outcome it wishes to achieve. It will help identify four kinds of actors in the system:*
 - *Those who are very influential in the system and who share a strong interest in achieving the outcome, and who have a similar mission and culture to the organization.*
 - *Those who are very influential in the system and who share a strong interest in achieving the outcome, but who may have a very different mission and culture (such as a business or government department).*
 - *Those who are currently not very influential, but who could become positive allies.*
 - *Those who have a negative influence in the system - and with whom collaboration is unlikely to work. Here you would think of strategies to counter or minimize their influence.*

Aha!

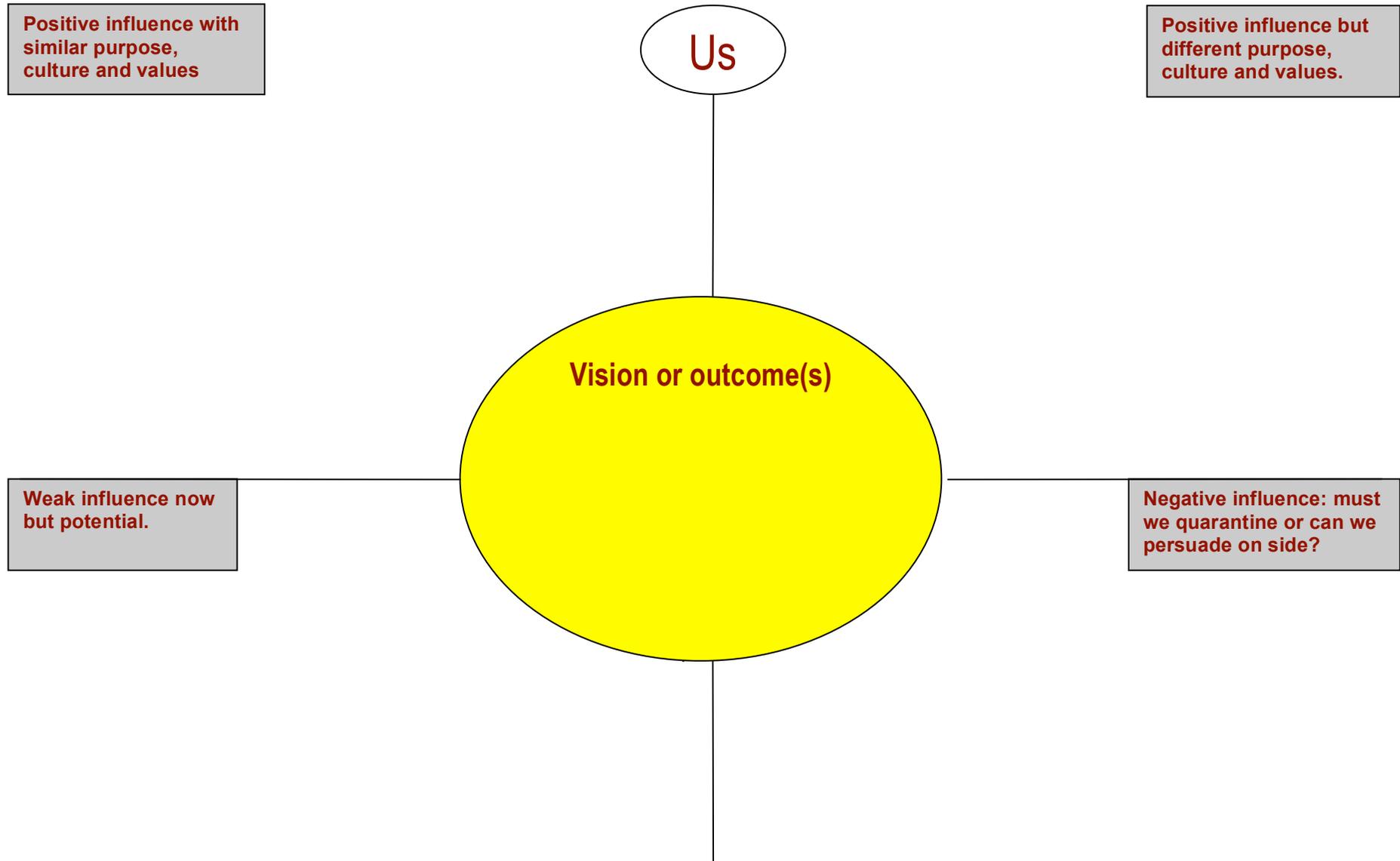
- *When people understand that lasting change also involves changing the ecosystem - and possible ways of doing this.*

Process

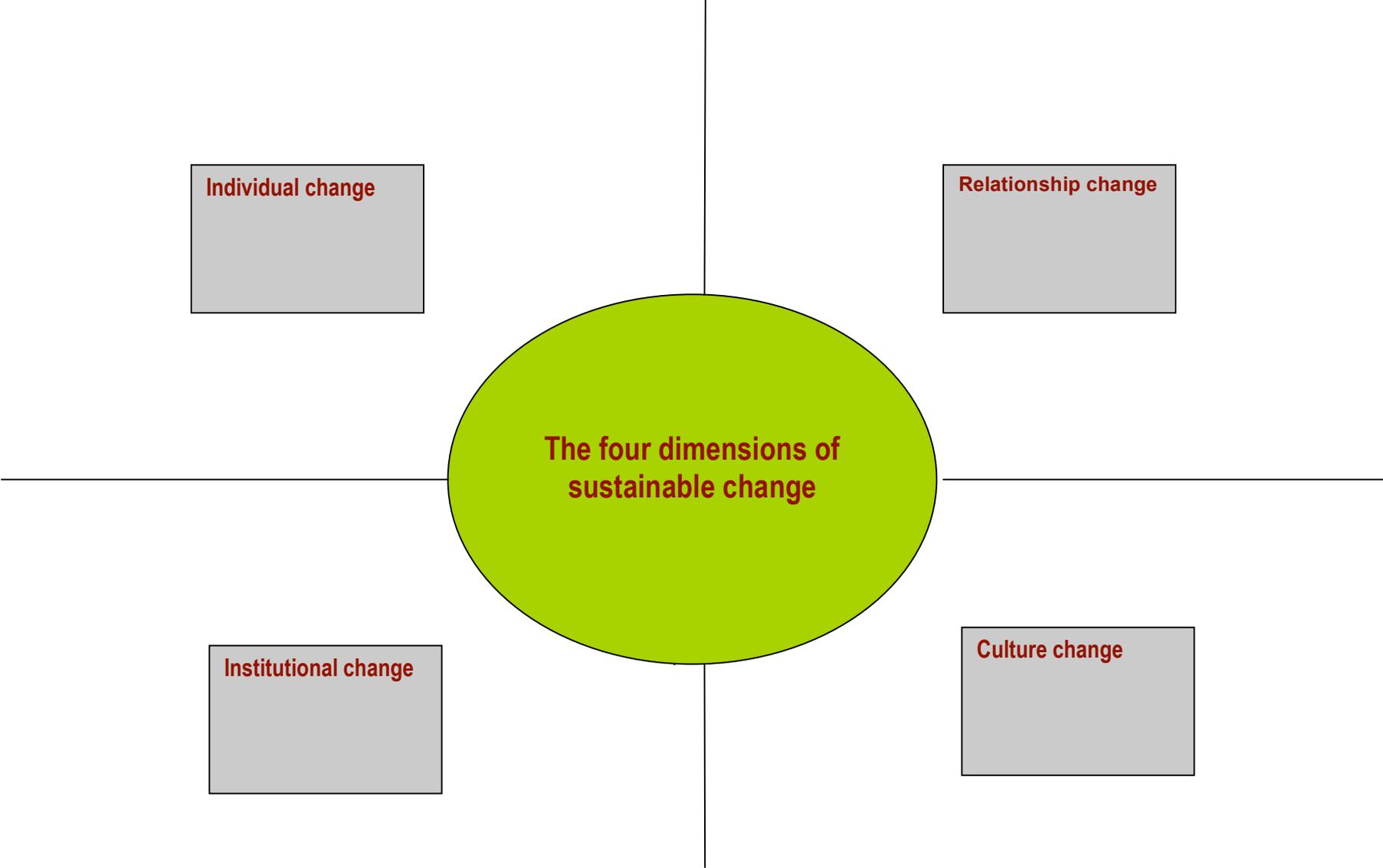
Identify someone from within or outside the organization to facilitate the process. The facilitator should have good facilitation skills, but does not have to be expert in ecosystem mapping. They will follow this broad process:

1. Explain the purpose of the activity. If possible, discuss one or two case studies of ecosystem mapping.
2. Draw a large diagram on a whiteboard or a number of flip chart sheets stuck together. Or use the Ecosystem mapping template below.
3. In the circle at the centre, discuss and write the desired outcome or outcomes the organization seeks to achieve. You could begin by writing your vision of success into the circle. Or you could choose an outcome that is much more specific and short term. It depends entirely on your context and what you feel is most important at the time.
4. The diagram outside the circle is divided into 4 equal segments:
 - a. Positive influence and similar primary purpose, culture and values to ours.
 - b. Positive influence but with a different primary purpose and culture to ours.
 - c. Neutral - weak or little influence now, but could become a positive influence.
 - d. Negative influence. Perhaps two sub-categories would be useful here:
 - Negative influence now but could change to neutral or positive.
 - Negative interest and dangerous – whose influence needs to be minimized.
5. In pairs, get participants to identify all actors in their ecosystem and write on cards. When ready, groups come up and pin cards into the quadrants that they think best describes the actor. Closer to the centre circle indicates an existing **strong relationship** or connection. Further away indicates a **weak relationship**. The placing of actors is discussed and agreed.
6. Other symbols can then be introduced: Green arrows, for example, could indicate where in the system you would like to shift a particular actor. A red cross might indicate an actor that you consider is a serious threat.
7. Try to analyze and describe what emerges – what are the main features and lessons of this map? These should be recorded.
8. Explore the strategic implications of this – What relationships are we happy with? Where can we make them more effective? What specific steps should be taken, by who and when?

Ecosystem mapping template (how can we achieve more together than we can alone)



Analysing ourselves and others in terms of what dimensions of sustainable change we address



2. Analyzing the dimensions of change

Philip Thomas of the Generative Change Community (see www.generativechange.org) has designed an activity that helps organizations to examine their own assumptions and practice and distinguish the different dimensions of change that they currently address. The technique can be used to analyse other actors in the activity ecosystem as well. It can help an organization identify essential preconditions for success that it might otherwise overlook, and it can help as a frame for collaborative relationships.

With masking tape, Philip delineated a four-quadrant box on the floor. He named and described each quadrant as a distinct approach to change focusing on changing individuals, relationships, structures, or culture (see diagram below). Thomas then invited the workshop participants to step into the quadrant that best represents the approach they are taking in their current work. The small groups within each quadrant then talked about the characteristics of their work that placed them there, why they believed that approach to be an effective one for bringing about societal change, and how it differs from the approaches in the other three quadrants. Other GC Community members and coordinators have since worked with and continued to develop this learning module.

For more information, please see www.generativechange.org.

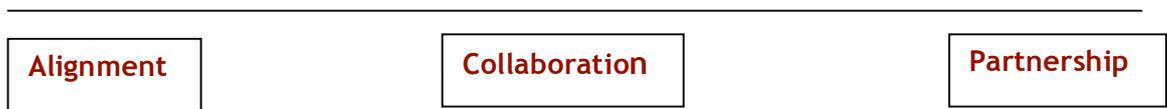
Four Dimensions of Broad, Sustainable Change¹

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Individual</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal transformation • Help individuals grow and develop greater self-awareness • Education to broaden knowledge base • Training to broaden competency base • Attention to mental and spiritual health and growth • Make explicit and examine assumptions, mindsets, mental models <p>Transformations not only in “<i>what</i>” one knows, but “<i>how</i>” one knows (epistemology)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Relationships</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transforming relationships • Reconciliation / Conflict transformation • Building trust • Promoting respect and recognition • Increasing knowledge and awareness of interdependence • Changing patterns of dysfunctional relations
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Culture</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transforming collective patterns of thinking and acting • Changing the “rules” and values that sustain patterns of exclusion • Exploring and transforming taken-for-granted collective habits of thinking and behavior • Promoting more inclusive, participatory culture of “civic engagement” • Transforming patterns of overly simplistic and distorted discourse 	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Structures / Systems</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transforming structures, processes, mechanisms • Lobbying for more just policies, greater transparency and accountability, institutional rearrangements • Just and equitable allocation of resources and services • Reforming processes

¹ This table captures the framework developed by Philip Thomas for the Workshop on Democratic Dialogue in Manila, September 24-25, 2007. It represents an integration of two important streams of work. One stream is the literature on social conflict and conflict transformation, which identifies four dimensions in which conflict creates change and where change must occur for conflict to be transformed to lasting peace (see Lederach, J. P., R. Neufeldt, et al. (2007). *Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring, and Learning Toolkit*. The Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame). The other is Ken Wilber’s Integral Theory (see Wilber, K. (2003). *Introduction to Integral Theory and Practice: IOS Basic and the AQAL Map.*)

3. Thinking about collaboration - placing actors on a 'relationship continuum' (30 minutes)

Once you have completed the ecosystem map, and you have identified certain specific organizations for special attention, you can create a 'relationship map' or 'alignment map' in which you place the actors on a 'relationship continuum' from alignment to partnership.



For each actor on this line, you should then consider what kind of relationship would be appropriate in relation to the specific outcomes you want to achieve.

There are an infinite number of possibilities here, and the right one will be determined by what helps you achieve your outcomes most effectively. You may try one, find it does not work, and need to try another.

The most simple is to plan your interventions separately, but talking to each other so to ensure that there is minimal overlap, duplication or conflict in the situations. From this kind of simple alignment, you can consider a wide range of collaborations in which you agree to work together to achieve some specific short term or long term objective. Collaborations can be for a day or for a longer period.

At the far end of this continuum, you can think about formal partnerships in which you share resources, plan together, define your roles together and work in a much closer relationship, often also measuring your impact and reporting together. Again, there are many different possibilities here.

As you place your actors on this map, you should discuss what kind of relationship would be the most appropriate. Here are some questions to help you:

1. What skills, contacts or resources do you each bring to the relationship?
2. What should your respective roles be?
3. What advantages would be gained in this relationship?
4. What problems might arise?

4. Analyzing individual actors and creating a 'collaboration profile' (20-30 minutes per actor)

The purpose and “aha” moments we are seeking in this activity are:

Purpose

- *To analyze the actors in the ecosystem in terms of possible collaborative relationships would work best for specific relationships.*

Aha!

- *When people see the range of relationships that are possible and how these might be managed.*

When you are ready to think more concretely about establishing relationships, here are some questions that may help you create a 'collaboration potential profile' of a specific potential partner:

1. What specific outcomes would the collaboration focus on?
2. What is the organization's interest in achieving these outcomes?
3. Is there a direct alignment with our mission? (Does this really matter?)
4. What are our respective capabilities? (resources, skills, networks, etc)
5. What is our current relationship with this actor?
6. What would we like this relationship to be in the future? (Alignment, occasional or specific issue collaboration or partnership?)
7. What advantages would collaboration offer us both?
8. What risks might there be to collaboration (What are possible threats to an effective relationship – conflicting interests, capacity gaps, behaviors, etc.)
9. How would we need to govern and manage the relationship (accountability, values, learning, reporting, etc.)?
10. When/How would we seek to review and evaluate the relationship?

Conclusion

Moving from your theory of change to planning strategies

Once it has a basic theory of change the organization will proceed to do two things:

1. Begin to refine its theory of change in dialogue with its constituents and other stakeholders. Keystone's guide to stakeholder dialogue, "Learning with Stakeholders", provides detailed guidance as to how this can be approached.
2. Begin to bring its strategies and programs into line with its theory of change. This will most likely be a process of adaptation rather than sudden change, and will emerge out of the organization's current planning processes. In doing so, the organization may wish to deepen its understanding of how it may work with others also affecting the problem it addresses.

The social change pathways may include many outcomes that the organization cannot hope to achieve directly or on its own. But if they are really preconditions of success, the organization must consider them seriously – because unless all the preconditions are achieved, there is little chance of achieving long term sustainable change.

Sometimes an organization can organize others to achieve these outcomes. At other times it may have to develop new capacity itself. Or it can try to mobilize collaborations and partnerships that might achieve the preconditions that the organization itself cannot realize.

So, there are often two kinds of strategy that an organisation will consider:

1. Strategies for changes that it can bring about by working directly with constituents.
2. Strategies for changes that it can bring about laterally in the ecosystem – perhaps influencing other actors in certain ways, trying to build relationships and partnerships for change, etc.

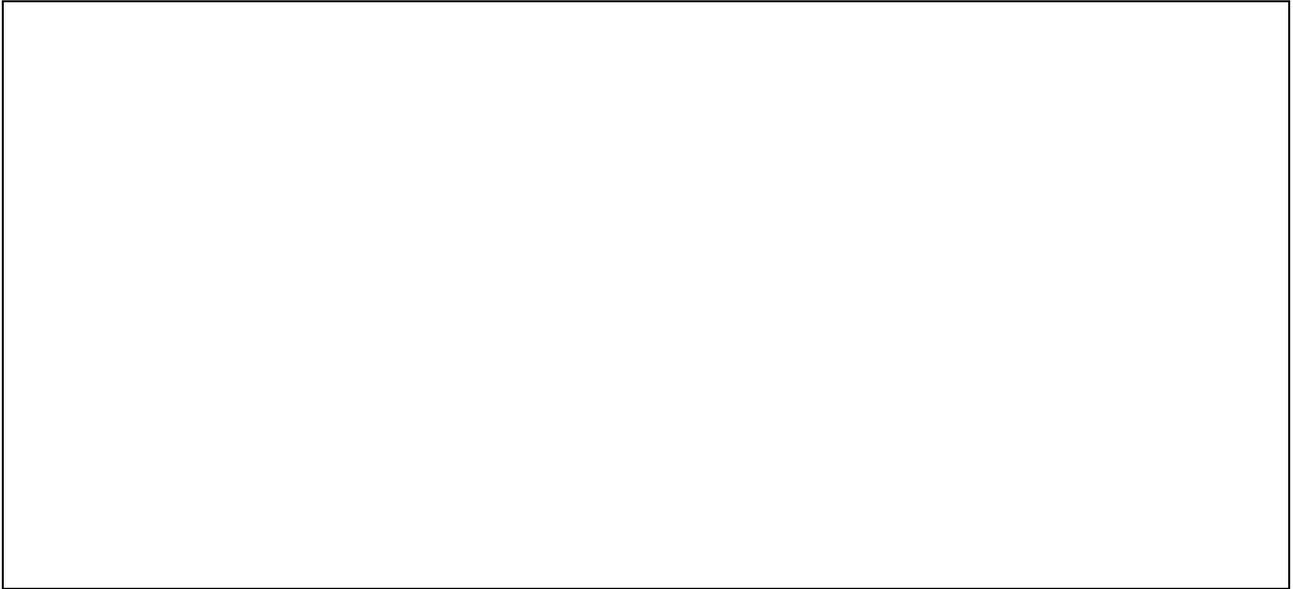
Armed with this kind of theory it can plan a wide range of strategies: some working directly with beneficiaries and some working laterally with other groups and institutions; some lasting a few weeks and focusing on a particular progress marker, and some lasting many years and focusing on long term outcomes. With this kind of theory underlying our strategies and providing a frame for learning and reporting, it can be flexible and adaptive with its strategies.

This kind of theory of change honors and indeed brings into view better than before, the complexity of sustainable change processes, and offers a framework for

- planning (flexible, multifaceted and diverse and collaborative) strategies,
- learning and adapting, through dialogues,
- building effective and mutually accountable relationships and partnerships around shared outcomes,
- new kinds of reporting,
- better stakeholder feedback.,

Some theory of change planning templates

Our Epitaph



Our vision of success



The pathways to change

(the preconditions for success)

The element from our vision

Appendix 1. Glossary

Theory of change: A theory of change is an explanation of how the organization thinks social change can be brought about in the context within which it works. The organization first develops a clear vision of success and then identifies the essential preconditions that are needed for success to be achieved. These preconditions enable the organization to map a number of 'outcome pathways': visible and measurable short- and medium-term outcomes that will contribute to its long term vision of success. These intermediate outcomes also work as progress markers or indicators of success in an impact planning and monitoring system based on the theory of change. A theory of change also includes how the organization understands the contribution of other actors working in parallel and complementary ways, and how these efforts can be aligned to achieve outcomes more effectively.

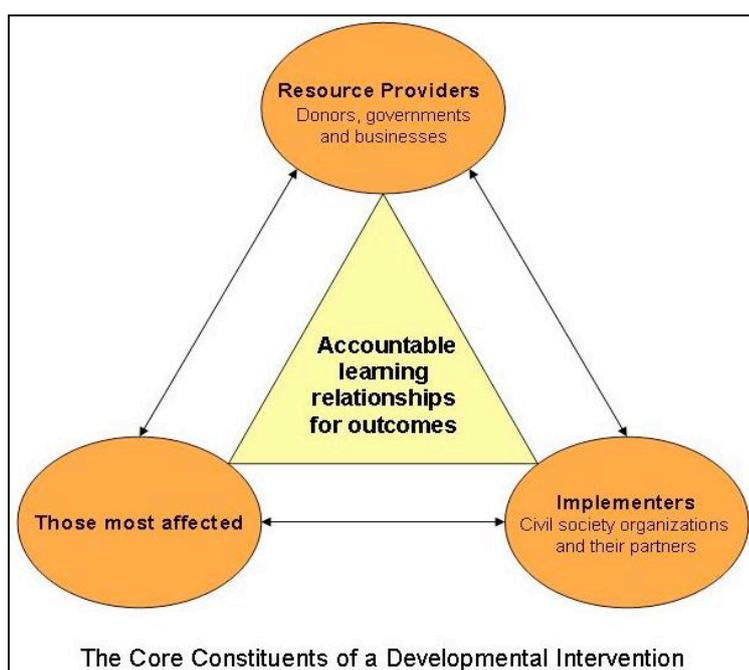
Outcomes: Outcomes are **actual changes** that an organisation achieves as a **result** of their activities. Outcomes are the reason why the organization exists.

Outputs: Outputs are the activities, products and services that an organization **does** (workshops, shelters, training programmes and materials, ARVs, advice, etc.) in order to achieve its intended outcomes.

Impact: Impact may be the word most often used in different and confusing ways! In the language of logical frameworks, impact is used to mean long-term, sustainable system-wide change. We use it in its more general everyday sense of any lasting change (or outcome) that an organization can show that it has played an important part in bringing about. Specific short-term impacts (e.g., new jobs created) can lead to long-term system-wide impact over time (e.g., a new and growing business enterprise, or even industry) – but it is more difficult to claim that this is attributable to the work of any single organization.

Accountability: How organizations hold themselves to account externally, especially to those they affect most, and internally to their values and their mission. Our understanding of accountability goes beyond simply complying with the demands of those with the power to demand accountability. It involves developing mutually accountable learning relationships among all constituents that enhance developmental processes and outcomes.

Developmental performance and developmental impact: Applying a developmental approach to social change – not simply 'doing for people' or 'transferring resources', but working alongside and maximizing people's ability, especially the vulnerable and marginalized, to influence and shape the conditions, institutions, systems and relationships that impact on the quality of their lives.



Stakeholders: all people and institutions that are affected positively or negatively by its decisions and actions.

Constituents: There can be different notions of which groups can claim to be core constituents of a developmental intervention. Most often there are three core constituents: those that provide resources (funders), those that implement programs (often CSOs or partnerships), and those most affected by the interventions.

Primary Constituents: Those groups or communities that are **most affected** by the organization and in whose name the organization defines its mission. A commonly used term is 'beneficiary' – but the passivity that this term implies makes it unsuitable in developmental processes.

Dialogue: Dialogue is an inclusive form of communication that is different from debate (where one view seeks to ‘win’ over another) or consultation (which is essentially ‘extractive’ - where one group seeks the views of another, but retains the power to act on its own). Real dialogue involves an **open and equitable** exchange of views and opinion. It seeks to explore different perspectives and create a **new shared understanding** on which to base collaborative action with all actors feeling that their views and interests have been listened to and taken into account as far as possible. It aims for balance rather than one view dominating another. No participant should have to give up their individual views or feel defeated. Dialogue requires transparency and trust. It requires all parties to be willing to listen, learn, and then act in good faith. The language and form of the dialogue should empower vulnerable stakeholders rather than exclude them. In development, dialogue between constituents – the grantmakers, implementers and those most affected – is the most effective way of building collaborative learning relationships for impact.

Activity ecosystem: The system of actors that influence the outcomes (positively or negatively) that the organization wishes to achieve. All organizations work within a complex and dynamic ecosystem of people and organizations acting simultaneously. Current reporting and funding practices often reinforce competition and insular mindset among actors working on the same problem. The ASI method seeks to encourage the opposite: to reward actors who seek ways of building alignment and collaboration within an ecosystem.

Ecosystem thinking and the collaboration capability: the understanding that complex and sustainable social change is seldom brought about by one organization acting in isolation. The capability to think systemically and collaborate effectively will enhance both the impact of the organization itself and the activity ecosystem as a whole. It implies mapping actors (people and institutions) that form part of an organization’s space of activity, and developing strategic alignments and collaborations that enhance overall impact of all parties.

Appendix 2. Comparing ‘logical framework’ approaches to a ‘theory of change’ approach

Method	Long term change <i>processes</i> or short term <i>projects</i> ?	Results and indicators of success (qualitative or quantitative)	How it fosters collaboration.	How it fosters accountability.	Does it yield comparative data?
Logframe	Ideally suited to short-term projects with limited, clearly defined objectives, indicators and outcomes. Works best where there is a simple linear logic - activities cause result. Rather rigid - not very flexible or adaptive - or sensitive to changes that might only become visible over time.	Tends to work best with quantitative indicators based on specific outputs (e.g. the results of a particular activity) and short term outcomes. Good for proving rather than improving.	Really focuses on the specific outputs of a single organization. Not really useful for identifying shared outcomes and assessing the contribution of collaborative relationships to shared long term outcomes.	Works best as a tool for reporting upwards to donors - and for assessing whether an organization has carried out the activities that it was required to do. Most often created internally. Not really useful for reporting to all constituents.	Tends to work best for single organizations with very specific activities. Outputs and outcomes tend to be very specific too. It is difficult to compare the performance of organizations with this kind of data.
Theory of change	Reflects and makes explicit the deeper understanding of context that informs strategies and relationships. It helps inform flexible and diverse strategies and can be used to track contribution to complex change processes. It provides indicators for measuring an organization’s contribution to long term social change over time. Tends to support flexible and adaptive strategies better in complex situations.	Makes use of long term and short term, quantitative and qualitative indicators of success within a framework of a pathway to change. Tracks changes in behavior, attitudes, relationships and capabilities that contribute to success.	Promotes identification of shared outcomes, and allows different actors to plan and track their collaborative contributions to shared outcomes.	Rooted firmly in inclusive stakeholder dialogue around shared outcomes. Enables public reporting that reflects shared learning.	Allows organizations to monitor their growing capability to influence change. Can yield data that allows us to compare the effectiveness of different approaches and organizations.

Appendix 3. The power of good theory and creative dialogue – a case study of a ‘whole school’ development initiative in South Africa

In December 2006, a group of 12 leading educational change practitioners and NGOs working across different sectors of school development invited Keystone to facilitate a strategy. Participants shared three main assumptions:

- Schools are the critical institutional element underpinning the entire education system and the society.
- They function as complex micro-systems within the wider systems of society.
- Current school development interventions are not having the impact they could.

The workshop sought to develop a theory of change (based initially on the experience of the participants) based on:

- A shared vision of success: Identifying the critical elements and features of a successful and effective school.
- An analysis of the current change environment: Who are the leading actors in the change ecosystem, and what the existing enablers and inhibitors of success are.
- Identifying the preconditions of success and map ‘pathways of change’ – what short and medium term outcomes are necessary in order to achieve ultimate success?
- What kind of intervention would be likely to be most effective in this context?

Participants called themselves the ‘Together Schools’ Initiative. Only a part of this dialogue are summarised below to illustrate the process. The full record was to be discussed widely and then turned into a funding proposal for support to develop a proper business plan.

Their epitaph

Every school in South Africa is a safe, healthy, happy and effective place of learning.

Then there followed a deep and detailed discussion of what ‘success’ would look like?

What would one expect to see in a school that the Together Schools Initiative has successfully engaged with? In other words, what would a ‘safe, happy, healthy and effective place of learning’ look like?

Safe

A safe school ensures both physical and emotional security.

- The premises are secure and access is controlled, and learners can get to school safely.
- The school is free of drugs and weapons.
- At least one member of staff has specialised skills to identify and address safety related problems; including abuse, bullying, conflict etc.
- The school promotes supportive and caring relationships and employs creative and effective mechanisms to resolve conflicts.

Happy

Characteristics of a happy school include:

- The school is a bright, clean and warm place – the physical premises of the school are maintained and inspire pride in the school.
- The school community celebrates diversity and tolerance.
- The school affirms different qualities and skills amongst learners and teachers and rewards achievement in many fields.
- The school leadership is inspirational.

Healthy

A healthy school also has a range of tangible and intangible characteristics. These include physical, value-based and skills-based features like:

- The school has clean water and sanitation, and the premises are kept clean and beautiful.
- Primary health care services are provided – dental examinations, eye tests etc.
- No learner is hungry at school, and the school promotes awareness of health and nutrition.
- The school encourages sport and physical activity in a way that is sensitive to individual needs and preferences.
- The school provides reproductive health education and supports learners.
- At least one member of staff has the skills to identify and provide support for physical and emotional health issues.

Effective

Both tangible and intangible factors encourage optimal learning:

- The educators are competent and passionate. Educator development is encouraged.
- Teachers have access to appropriate and high quality materials and resources – both in terms of content and methodology.
- The school provides a varied, resource-rich learning environment, including access to libraries and information technology and outings, practical work etc.
- The school provides a physical environment that is conducive to learning; this includes ergonomics, adequate light, desks and chairs, shelter, temperature.
- The school provides a relevant and broad education that prepares learners for life.
- The school promotes and rewards creativity, innovation and experimentation.

Cross-cutting

There are several cross-cutting of a successful school as well:

- Leadership is visionary, inspirational and competent
 - Competent: sound financial and administrative systems, strong management practices, good marketing and fundraising skills
 - Visionary: has a clear vision for the school, understands the schools needs, understands how best to achieve development/vision
 - Inspirational: motivating others, committed, responsive, accountable
- School governance is inclusive, representative, active and accountable. Members of the governance body are motivated, understand their role and have a broad range of skills to fulfil their responsibilities.
- The school establishes relationships with government departments, local government, other service providers and the community to access relevant services and resources (human, skills, financial).

These could form the basis for an indicator framework for the monitoring, evaluating and reporting. It could form the basis of a school 'self-profiling tool' that could be used to establish a baseline profile, and then to track progress and reflect improvement over time.

The existing change environment

Participants then discussed why, given the large number of initiatives – many of them excellent – working to address these problems², there was so little evidence of significant and lasting impact on schools. Factors identified from their own experience included:

- The competitive environment among service providers discourages sharing of learning and best practice.
- Interventions are planned and implemented as fragmentary short-term projects – often by outsiders; rather than holistic longer term developmental processes planned and controlled by schools themselves.
- Success is measured in terms of outputs (e.g. number of training workshops etc), rather than outcomes (changes in behaviour, capabilities, conditions and relationships etc). There is little real effort to measure impact and build on it in an incremental and integrated way.
- School leaders do not know what services are on offer and are unable to assess the quality of the service provider.

² The Johns Hopkins NGO study found that 5 691 NGOs work in the research and education category in South Africa.

Towards a theory of change

The workshop then developed the following Theory of Change to frame its strategies and its learning. Please note: This remains a work in progress to be developed further.

The vision of success

Every school in South Africa is a safe, healthy, happy and effective place of learning.

1. Schools have strong, capable and involved governance structures
2. School leadership is inspirational and effective, and is supported by effective management structures and systems.
3. Schools are vibrant learning communities consciously managing their own development in partnership with government, business and community.
4. Educators inspire, motivate and facilitate real learning both in the classroom and beyond.
5. Learners are active participants in learning and school life.
6. The physical environment of schools is safe and supports, inspires and enables learning.

The preconditions of success (only the first three preconditions are broken down here)

1. Schools have strong, capable and involved governance structures

- a. The governing body complies with legal requirements
- b. The governing body is representative of key stakeholders (including learners, parents and community) and accountable and responsive to them for its decisions and actions.
- c. The governing body contains relevant skills and understands its role
- d. The governing body is motivated and committed
- e. School governing bodies actively involves parents and other stakeholders in debate and decision-making.

2. School leadership is inspirational and effective, and is supported by effective management structures and systems.

- a. School leadership promotes a clear vision for the school's development that reflects input of key stakeholders.
- b. School management motivates staff, educators, parents and learners
- c. School management promotes a nurturing and progressive approach to education
- d. School management has competent management and administration skills
- e. Systems support long term developmental processes
- f. Reporting and accountability systems support creative innovation, learning and build confidence and trust
- g. Schools are able to plan and track their progress in relation to outcomes over time

3. Educators inspire, motivate and facilitate learning both in the classroom and beyond.

- a. Educators have relevant knowledge, skills and values to facilitate learning within their subject areas

- b. Educators have access to the resources and facilities they need to facilitate learning – includes learning spaces and materials.
- c. Educators have extra-curricular competence in counselling, sports, arts and culture
- d. Educators have access to and incentives for further professional development

Towards a strategy for Together Schools.

Participants agreed that the Together Schools Initiative should see its role in terms of:

1. Helping schools build the capacity and the systems for taking control of their own development.
2. Facilitating effective school level partnerships for holistic and integrated development.
3. Facilitating linkages between schools and resource providers (e.g. business) and service providers (e.g. NGOs and professional consultants).
4. Ensuring accountability to constituents and quality standards.

A tentative operational strategy emerged

1. Interested schools would approach Together Schools.
2. At an initial meeting with school leadership and other key stakeholders, schools would be assisted to develop their own vision of success and theory of change.
3. Schools would map their assets and identify priority needs in an inclusive dialogue process.
4. Together schools would assist schools to identify appropriate funders, service providers and broker the appropriate relationships.
5. Together schools would evaluate interventions by service providers based on carefully directed feedback from schools, and maintain some kind of quality assurance or rating system for providers. This would make providers more accountable to their customers and raise their game. Schools resource providers could make more informed choices.

What unique value might such an initiative offer the different constituents?

For Schools:

- Builds the capacity and systems of schools to plan and manage a holistic and integrated long-term strategy for their own development together with key constituents.
- Provides access to resources and service providers.
- Provides a system for schools to evaluate service providers so that all can better select those that provide real quality.
- Assists to develop long term relationships for sustainability.
- Provides a framework for comparative outcome-based monitoring and evaluation – schools can measure their progress against their own benchmarks and against similar schools.

For Service Providers:

- Provides the opportunity for collaborative interventions leading to more effective impact.
- Provides access to resources and work opportunities.
- Provides lower transaction costs for income received i.e. less dependence on time consuming fundraising and reporting to multiple donors; also long-term engagements.
- Facilitates sharing of resources, experience, learning and practice.

For Resource Providers:

- Maximises social return on investments by demonstrating actual change and the real cost of this change.
- Assures the quality of the interventions and reduces risk.
- Facilitates long-term relationships that are responsive to the needs of the company/funder such as reputation, opportunities for staff volunteering, morale building etc.
- Contributes to the achievement of BBEE Charter compliance.

For Government:

- Facilitates effective social partnerships and inter-departmental co-operation.
- Provides information on what works that can inform policy.
- Provides access to skills.