Theory of change in developing agricultural policies and programs

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Outline of the presentation

- What is a theory of change?
- Conceptual understanding of TOC
- Application to development policies and programs
- Application to agricultural Policy development
- Review of Nepal agricultural policy
- Discussions

What does a policy maker want?

- Change the situation on the ground

- From a low level of a welfare indicator to a higher level

- What a road map to follow specific actions?

- Understand what the current conditions

- Who is doing what?

- How to intervene most effectively

- What level of intervention needed – public vs private

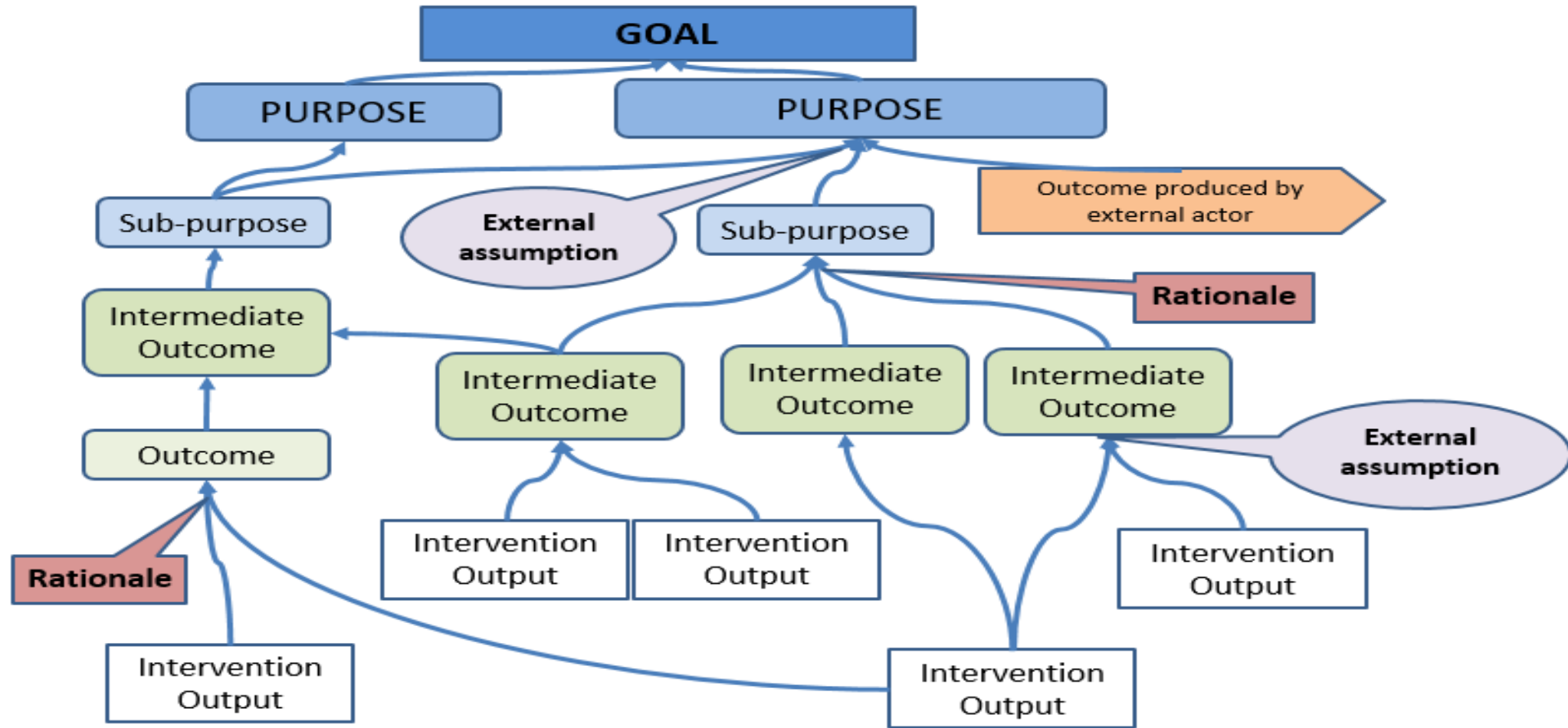- What can be expected when certain action is taken

Let us discuss a policy Scenario?

- What kind of policy needs a TOC?
- State a simple policy
- Identify the elements of theory of change?
- Who is the decision maker?
- Please enter your policy choices of interest in the Chat Area?
- Discussions

What is a Theory of change?

- A statement about what is expected to happen due to a decision
- An anticipated scenario for a program or policy change
- A Hypothesis about callus factors and final outcomes
- Prepared for a given context and local conditions
- Identifies specific actions that will lead to certain outcomes
- Gives the what happens – when something is changed – to meet certain goals
- Captures the interactions of variables
- Identifies the pathways for change

A TOC Diagram (source: USAID, TOPS, FSN Network)

Why study the theory of change?

- We want to build a policy consensus
- This requires general agreement on what needs to be done to achieve specific results
- But there are usually disagreements about what policy instruments to choose from
- Should it be a first best policy? Second best policy/ or Even a third best policy?

Why study the theory of change?

- What are the trade off in policy choices
- Eg: growth objective Vs Environmental sustainability
- Poverty reduction Vs inequality goals
- Productivity vs natural resource conservation

Why study the theory of change?

- How the bring the Proponents, neutral and the opponents together for consultation
- What is a common framework that all will understand and agree upon – even to come to the table.
- Develop a set of hypotheses one could test using qualitative and quantitative data
- Locality specific and context specific interventions identified
- Evidence and knowledge gaps could be identified with a TOC

Why study the theory of change?

- Identity the actors and player involved in the program design and implementation

- How are these players connected in a policy landscape

- How does the institutional architecture for the policy process look like?

- How could one intervene in the policy process to get desired outcomes?

TOC Process for policy development

What is the starting point?

- **Generating evidence for the policy debate and discussions**

- **Present the evidence on causation of variables – what causes what?**

- **Develop a set of pathways and interrelated outcomes from the interventions proposed**?

TOC Process for policy development

- Once the pathways are identified – verify various assumptions made to check if they are closer to reality
- Check the consequences when the assumptions go wrong
- Develop a priority set of interventions that will result in specific outputs

TOC Process – implementation stage

- Once the assumptions are verified, the TOC is translated in the specific actions needed
- These actions are listed in the work schedule or a log frame
- Being the process of tracking changes due to a policy
- This requires a MEAL system
- Further this will require a set of indicators to track and monitor
- Effective documentation of the TOC development is key for its use
- Revisit the TOC developed at regular intervals.

Take an example of a policy and draw out the Steps

Food and nutrition security policy

Achieve food security

Eliminate hunger

Eradicate malnutrition of all forms

Wasting

Stunting

Underweight

Micronutrient deficiency

Obesity

Step 1 - Evidence Generation for TOC

- Generate evidence that there is a problem?
- Is food insecurity a problem?
- How many people are food insecure in Nepal?
- How many people of malnourished?
- How many people are obese?
- How many people face micronutrient malnutrition?
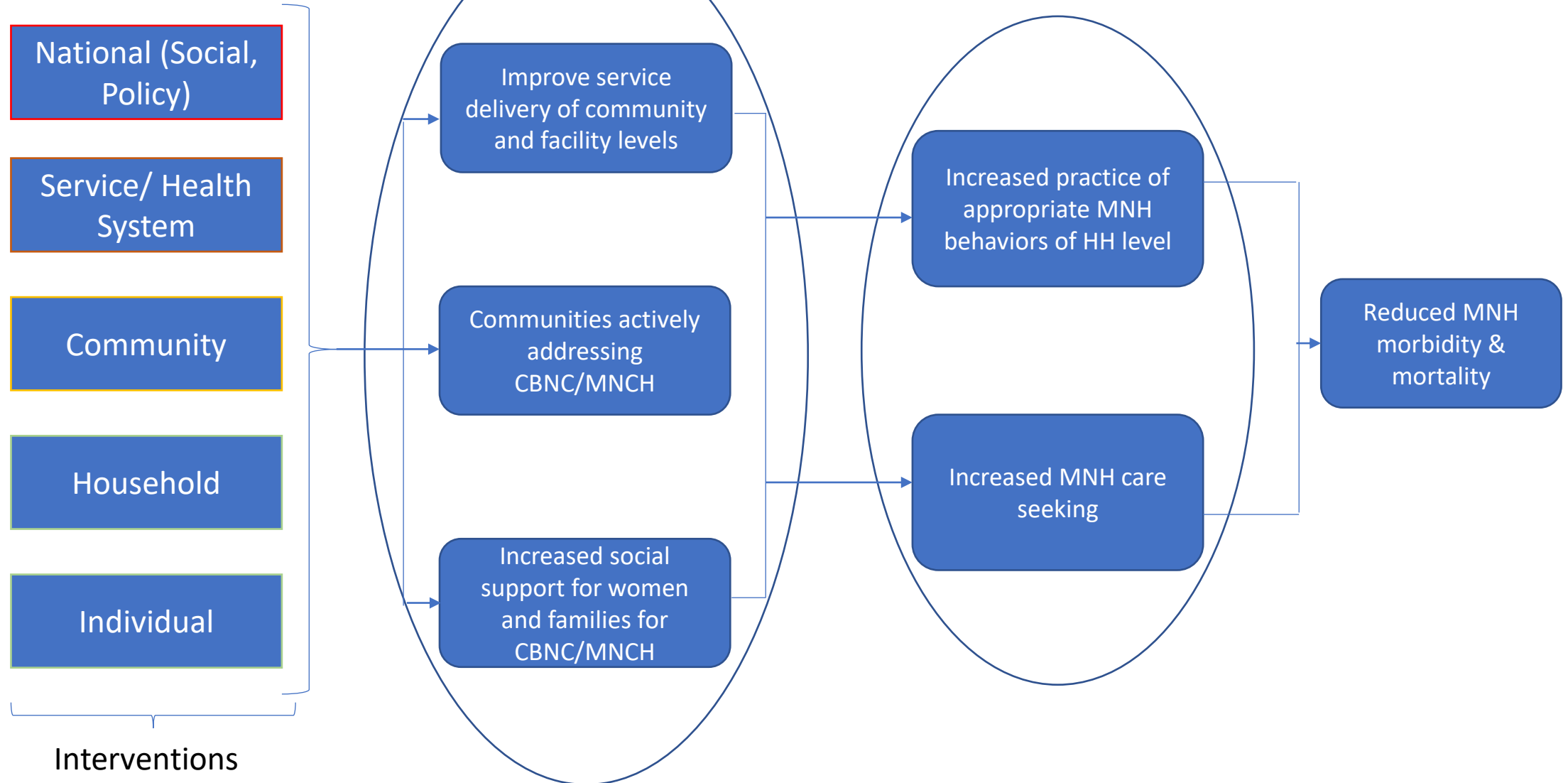
Step -2 Data and evidence sources

- Primary Vs secondary data sources

- Quantitative data Vs qualitative data

- Independent research Vs public sector research

- Donor sponsored research

- Policy specific research versus program-specific

- Academic exercise Vs Action research

- Community–based research Vs community involved research

Step -3 Analysis of Causality in TOC

- What are the main causal variables that the policy addresses?
- Food security – availability; accessibility and availability data
- Food price data; income of the population

- Nutritional status: demographic data; socio economic variables
  Care for mothers and children; health facilities; food intake; food diversity

- What is the pathway for policy – production – market – food process – food consumption – care – water – sanitation – nutritional status

- What is the missing links? What evidence is missing to establish the pathway?
- What is missing information to test hypothesis of the linkages?
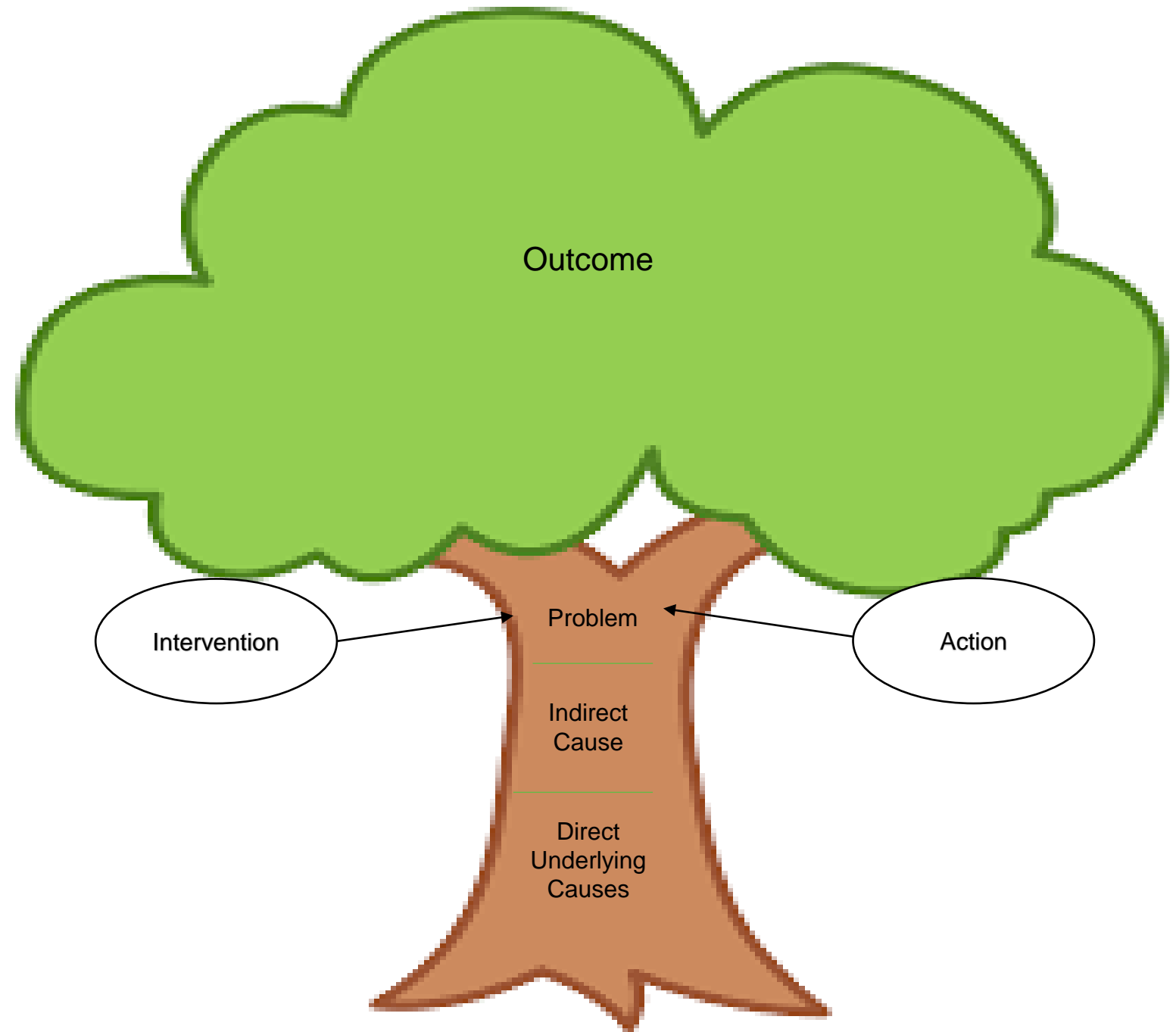
Theory of Change and Pathways of Causality

(Example from WATADA – Niger – SAVE the CHILDREN- A4NH Academy presentation)

National (Social, Policy)

Service/ Health System

Community

Household

Individual

Interventions

Improve service delivery of community and facility levels

Communities actively addressing CBNC/MNCH

Increased social support for women and families for CBNC/MNCH

Increased practice of appropriate MNH behaviors of HH level

Increased MNH care seeking

Reduced MNH morbidity & mortality

Step -4 Problem Tree Analysis

- Looks at a policy intervention and ask what does it contribute to – the needed change?
- It identifies the problem as conditioned that will be changed
- For each Problem tree there is a Solution tree

Mapping a problem tree

Step 5 How to use the TOC to identify the MEAL indicator?

- Indicator Development for implementing interventions from a TOC
- Once the TOC is tested with evidence
- Go back to modify the pathways
- With new pathways redefine the variables of interest – inputs, outputs, outcomes, and impact variables
- Redraw the problem tree and see what it reveals - new variables
- Convert the factors on the problem tree into specific indicators.

The TOC final Product (source: USAID, TOPS, FSN Network)

Step -6 Developing a log-frame from TOC

Interactive Plan					
Activity	Resources need	Who will do	Phase	Frequency	Who to reach

Conclusions

- TOC is one among several tools in the policy analysts tool-box
- Perhaps an easy tool for multidisciplinary discussion
- Requires mostly secondary data to verify
- Can use existing literature to justify the interventions
- Identify the evidence and knowledge gaps
- Conduct formative research and assessment studies
- Fill the knowledge gaps – guide interventions that are most impactful
- Monitor – evaluate – learn – adapt
- Revise TOC regularly.