Module 2: Developing a theory of systemic change

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Making sure that a theory of change can be evaluated

It is essential to make sure that the theory of change can be evaluated. Testing its 'evaluability' during a programme's design phase also provides an important check that the theory is coherent.

Evaluability assessment for impact evaluation

ODI, DFAT and BetterEvaluation guidance for planning and doing evaluability assessments.

The list below provides a useful set of criteria for assessing evaluability, and provides a check list of the issues that the theory of change document should cover.

Clarity: Are the long-term impacts and outcomes clearly identified and are the proposed steps towards achieving these clearly defined?

Plausibility: Is it likely that the project objective could be achieved, given the planned interventions, within the project lifespan? Is there evidence from elsewhere that it could be achieved?

Validity and reliability: Are there valid indicators for each expected event (output, outcome and impact levels)? Are there valid indicators for each expected event (output, outcome and impact levels)? Will they capture what is expected to happen? Are they reliable indicators? Will observations by different observers find the same thing?
**Testability:** Is it possible to identify which linkages in the causal chain will be most critical to the success of the programme, and thus should be the focus of evaluation questions?

**Contextualisation:** Have assumptions about the roles of other actors outside the programme been made explicit (both enablers and constrainers)? Are there plausible plans to monitor these?

**Complexity:** Are there expected to be multiple interactions between different programme components (complicating attribution of causes and identification of effects)? How clearly defined are the expected interactions?

**Agreement:** To what extent do different stakeholders hold different views about the project objectives and how they will be achieved? Note that a diversity of views is to be expected for a market systems programme; what is important is that the views of stakeholders who have a different perspective are visible.

### Planning evaluability assessments

The main issues to consider when planning an Evaluability Assessment.

*Go to Module 3 next or return to the Monitoring Guidance.*