

Module 3: Intervention performance monitoring

03

Articulating a results chain

Results chains are a visual tool to show what the programme is doing and why. They illustrate the chain of successive changes that link programme activities with intended outcomes and impacts.

Results chains should be developed for each intervention in a market systems programme, and should fit within its overall theory of change. Specifying a results chain is compulsory for programmes that want to comply with the DCED Standard.

Guidelines to the DCED Standard for results measurement

A suite of resources that enable practitioners to understand and apply the DCED Standard for measuring results in PSD

While results chains are commonly used in a wide range of development programmes, there are some specific issues to consider when using them in a market systems context. These include:

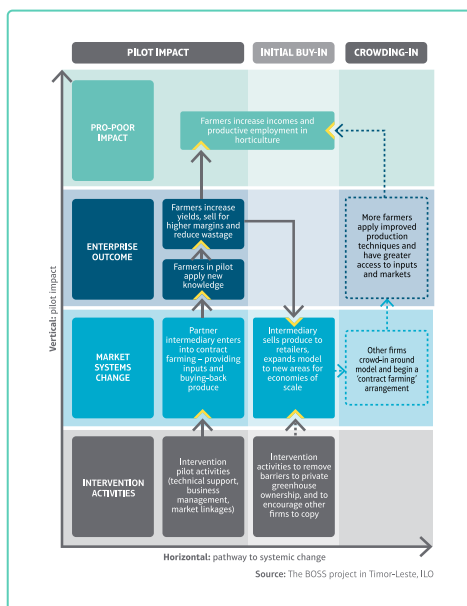
- Results chains specify linear pathways and therefore have limitations in dynamic situations where unintended results (both positive and negative) are likely. It is therefore important to be able to identify these.
- It is important to consider how far in advance it is possible to plan. The time frame for implementing and monitoring an intervention may vary, but could be six months, a year, or two years, depending on an initial guess about how long it should take the intervention to achieve change. Where there is considerable uncertainty, the horizon should be shorter.

- It is also important to frequently reconsider the logic for the intervention in light of what is happening in the field. This should include not only reflecting on the success of the intervention so far, but also to question whether the underlying assumptions are correct.

Most market systems approaches begin with the piloting of an innovation such as the introduction of a new product, technology or business model with a partner. If this proves promising, subsequent interventions look to scale up the innovation and encourage its diffusion into the wider market (crowding-in).

Results chains at intervention level should therefore be prepared while considering the incentives that different market players have to change their behaviour. It is also important that the mechanisms through which innovations and learning are expected to be transferred from one market actor to another are set out in advance and described in intervention planning documents. It is particularly important to consider the role of market players that are not directly supported by the programme and how they may react.

A good example of a results chain that captures this process of piloting and crowding-in is the Business Opportunities and Support Services (BOSS) project in Timor-Leste. This multi-layered results chain summarises both how the intervention is intended to work in the pilot stage, and in subsequent stages when piloted activities are taken up by other market actors.



Simplified horticulture results chain of the BOSS project