USE OF TOC IN AND FOR EVALUATIONS OF RESEARCH PROGRAMS

A TOC is by its nature non-static and will need to be reviewed during the life of the project. The process of developing and revising a TOC, with all necessary stakeholders, is part of the change process. Though it may be costly, a consultative process will give value for money.

A TOC can contribute to the design of the evaluation by framing the evaluation questions, identifying issues that may have affected progress towards outcomes, reviewing the program’s progress towards impact, and identifying stakeholders.

A TOC should include:
- A description of the program along the impact pathway, and the types of change expected, how it is connected to benefits, and who will need to be active for the change to occur.
- Useful tools for program planning, implementation, and review.

SPHERES OF INFLUENCE AND NON-LINEAR PROGRESSION FROM PRODUCTION TO USE
Impact pathways for a research program start one or more steps back as compared to development programs. This adds to the uncertainty of outcomes, since the effective use of research outputs partly relies on the relationship between research organizations, development and private sector institutions and end users.

DESIRABLE CHARACTERISTICS FOR A GOOD TOC

- A simple TOC is not sufficient for a large program, instead “nested” TOCs are needed at different levels, each developed for clearly defined purposes (research design, planning, managing, evaluating, communicating with external stakeholders).
- A research program TOC is not a production of impact – it is a description of what will need to be done to achieve a desired impact, and what might prevent that from happening.
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CHALLENGES FOR RESEARCH PROGRAMS

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01
- Prosocial steps, intended direct outcomes, typically in some linear manner.

02
- Clearly stated assumptions that indicate factors beyond the control of the program and ensure that the program aims are realistic.

03
- A description of the program along the impact pathway, and the types of change expected, how it is connected to benefits, and who will need to be active for the change to occur.

04
- Prosocial steps, intended direct outcomes, typically in some linear manner.

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- Useful tools for program planning, implementation, and review.

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