



WORKING PAPER SERIES

1. A THEORY OF CHANGE FOR TRAINING FOR GENDER EQUALITY



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Acknowledgement

This paper was prepared by Dr. Lucy Ferguson as commissioned by the UN Women Training Centre. The UN Women Training Centre recognizes the good work and expertise of Dr. Ferguson. The paper is considered as a working document which can be further strengthened. It serves to facilitate discussions and generate reflections on training for gender equality. As a working paper, it will continue to evolve for the gender training knowledge and practices continue to evolve.

Executive Summary

A “Theory of Change” articulates a hypothesis on how change happens over time. In terms of training for gender equality, it helps us set more realistic expectations about the role of training in broader gender mainstreaming processes. It also identifies the type of support for the dimensions being planned or evaluated and for the contexts and dynamics at play among drivers of change, thereby justifying resource allocations. The objective of this paper is to **develop some core principles for theories of change in training for gender equality, and sketch a proposal for what such a theory of change might look like.**

It is important to note that training by itself cannot bring change. In order for training to be able to contribute to change, it must be embedded in a broader set of measures and actions to influence change, and should be part of a long-term continuous process. This should be taken into account when designing theory of change models for training for gender equality.

The paper addresses four key themes:

Understanding change from a feminist perspective

This first section of the paper draws out some key points from a range of fields in order to further our understanding of change in training for gender equality - behavioural studies; a Knowledge Desire Ability approach; feminist institutionalism; and gender mainstreaming. Taken together, these insights give us a conceptual grounding for developing a Theory of Change for training for gender equality.

Lessons from practice about Theory of Change approaches

To date, there have been very few explicit attempts to develop a Theory of Change in the field of training for gender equality. However, lessons can be learned to inform such an approach from two broad areas of practice: the experiences of UN Women and other UN agencies; and the field of training, capacity development and education. Key insights from these fields are highlighted here. One of the most important overall arguments is that theories of change for education and training are highly specific, relating to the specific learning objectives of a particular education or training programme. General or broad-sweeping theories of change are not appropriate for this field.

Guidelines for developing a Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality

In this section, the **key issues involved in developing a Theory of Change for training for gender equality** are elaborated, drawing on the previous work of Myra Marx Ferree, as well as from the field more broadly, such as:

- Understanding **what training can realistically achieve**
- Clarity about the **goals and aims** of training
- The importance of **context**
- The centrality of **reflexivity**
- The need for **measuring** change

The process of developing a Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality should be guided by feminist pedagogical principles, as set out in the Pedagogies working paper: participatory learning; validation of personal experience; encouragement of social justice, activism and accountability; and development of critical thinking and open-mindedness.

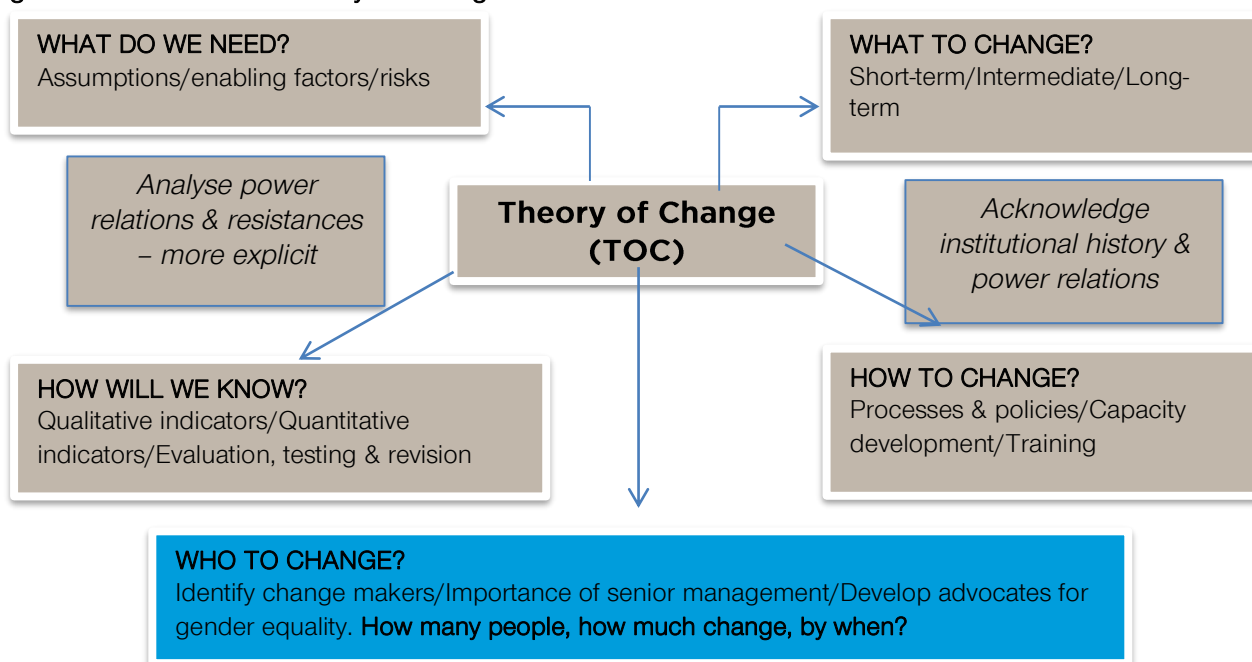
A Theory of Change should be considered as both process - the process of working out the theory, mainly in group sessions of practitioners and stakeholders led by a capable facilitator - *and* product - a document of the change model showing how and why a goal will be reached.¹ Both aspects are equally important, especially in the context of training for gender equality.

A proposed Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality

Drawing on both the conceptual work by Marx Ferree and guidelines for good practice set out in Section 3, the paper next proposes a specific methodology for developing a Theory of Change for Gender Equality. **This should not be considered a blueprint for such a process, but rather some key points for thinking and reflecting on this by practitioners, commissioners and researchers.** In practice, developing a Theory of Change involves asking a series of questions, such as: What do we want to change? How can we change it? How will we know? and What do we need?

A theory of change also requires explicitly setting out the assumptions and logic, as well as identifying potential risks and stumbling blocks. These elements are then mapped out graphically in causal pathways to develop a flow diagram, including explanations for what is expected to change in the short-term, intermediate and long-term, as reflected in the figure below.

Figure 3: Elements of a Theory of Change



¹ Taplin, D. H., Clark, H., Collins, E. and Colby, D. C. (2013) *Theory of Change Technical Papers: A Series of Papers to Support Development of Theories of Change Based on Practice in the Field*. New York: ActKnowledge, p.2, Available: http://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/ToC-Tech-Papers.pdf

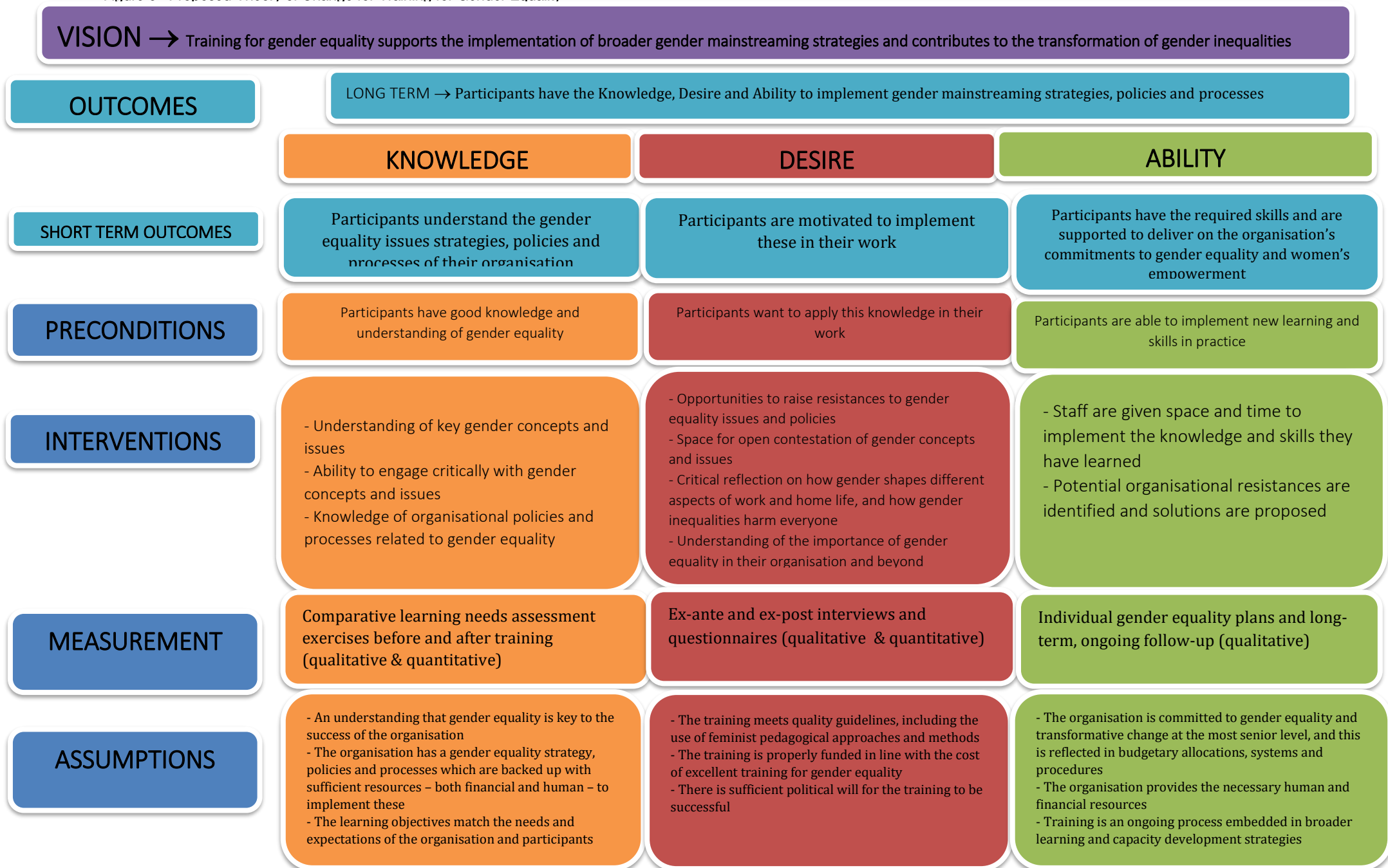
More concretely, a number of steps can be taken, as set out in the figure below. **This differs from other approaches to analysing change in gendered power relations as it does not begin with the assumptions, but rather identifies the desired change and works backwards from there, rather than the other way round. However, this is not an entirely linear process comprised of a series of self-contained steps. Many steps may overlap and need to be revisited during the process.** Nevertheless, it is useful to identify these steps as a solid practical basis for constructing a theory of change for training for gender equality.



As argued throughout this paper, it is not possible to create a singular, overarching theory of change for training for gender equality. **Training for gender equality is both a process and a strategy and therefore is always bound to a particular context and content. Any Theory of Change should therefore take as its starting point the particular context and content of the training scenario.**

The Theory of Change is depicted graphically in the figure below. In the paper, an overarching change narrative elaborates the how the different elements of the Theory of Change work together to create pathways to change, and the key assumptions on which the Theory of Change is premised.

Figure 5 - Proposed Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality



The paper closes with a Statement from the UN Women Training Centre:

Statement on Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality

The UN Women Training Centre believes that theories of change are valuable for training for gender equality and should be integrated into the practice and processes of training, as they help to articulate realistic ideas about what training can achieve, and what is required in order for this to happen.

Two key points should be taken into account when developing a Theory of Change for training for gender equality. First, **training by itself cannot bring change, and should be considered a long-term continuous process embedded in a broader set of measures and actions to influence change.** Second, **there cannot be a singular Theory of Change for training for gender equality due to the highly specific and context-bound nature of the process.** As such, the Theory of Change exercise needs to be conducted for different kinds of trainings and organisations.

The UN Women Training Centre has developed template or model for Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality which can be modified and adapted to different contexts (see Figure 6). This requires a degree of abstraction and over-simplification, but nevertheless serves to demonstrate how training is understood to contribute to gender equality. The UN Women Training Centre's Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality can be summarised as follows:

- The Theory of Change is underpinned by a Vision: that **Training for gender equality supports the implementation of broader gender mainstreaming strategies and contributes to the transformation of gender inequalities.**
- This Vision is then accompanied by two sets of **Outcomes**, both *long-term* (training participants have the **Knowledge, Desire and Ability** to implement gender mainstreaming strategies, policies and processes) and *short-term* (participants understand the gender equality issues, strategies, policies and processes of their organisation (**Knowledge**); participants are motivated to implement these in their work (**Desire**); and participants have the required skills and are supported to deliver on the organisation's commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment (**Ability**)).
- The Theory of Change is driven by a number of **Assumptions**, which aim to capture the tensions, power asymmetries and contestations that are inherent in training for gender equality. This makes clear the importance of a range of factors for the success of training for gender equality, and also serves to explain why training may not always reach the change expected or anticipated. That is, if these assumptions do not hold true, aspects of the pathway to change will not be completed, and further analysis will need to be done in order to address these issues.
- The Theory of Change is based upon a **Knowledge Desire Ability approach**, with the expected pathways to change mapped out in these three areas, in order to demonstrate clear lines of influence.
- Within the Theory of Change, each aspect of training for gender equality – Knowledge, Desire and Ability - has its own set of **Outcomes (short-term), Preconditions, Interventions,**

Measurement and Assumptions. This demonstrates how the different aspects of training for gender equality work together to contribute to transformative change, always in a **context-bound approach embedded in a broader change project**.

In order for the Theory of Change methodology to become a more systematic part of the training process, the UN Women Training Centre proposes the following recommendations:

1. Ensure that theories of change are considered from the very inception of initiatives, and include in preliminary negotiations with commissioners
2. Build the exercise of developing a theory of change into all training programmes and make this a systematic component of the training cycle
3. Engage external practitioners in the process of developing theories of change
4. Advocate for the importance of theory of change as a key tool for demonstrating the expected impact of training for gender equality
5. Continue to reflect critically on the relationship between training, individual change, institutional change and transformation
6. Facilitate collective discussion and debate among academics, practitioners and commissioners over the value of theory of change approaches to training for gender equality

The Theory of Change proposed in this paper maps out how different aspects and processes of training for gender equality support the impact of training in achieving the long-term goals and broader vision of transformation. It serves to demonstrate the ongoing value of training for gender equality, whilst at the same time advocating for adequate funding and resources, as well as political will at the highest level.

Introduction

A “Theory of Change” articulates a hypothesis on how change happens over time. In terms of training for gender equality, it helps us set more realistic expectations about the role of training in broader gender mainstreaming processes. It also identifies the type of support for the dimensions being planned or evaluated and for the contexts and dynamics at play among drivers of change, thereby justifying resource allocations.² It provides a “clearly articulated description of the rationale for an initiative and an explanation of how it is expected to achieve its outcomes and impact. It makes explicit the underlying assumptions and surfaces the factors that are likely to affect the achievement of outcomes.”³ The objective of this paper is to **develop some core principles for theories of change in training for gender equality, and sketch a proposal for what such a theory of change might look like.** It is argued that it is not possible to create a singular, overarching theory of change for training for gender equality since such a process must be conducted in different contexts. However, here we propose a set of principles that should guide this process, and explore one possibility of a theory of change for training for gender equality.

Adopting or developing a theory of change is an important first step in ‘mapping out’ what is known, assumed and envisaged as part of the design process of a holistic and multidimensional strategy, and can help in the prioritisation of investment and action, the definition of roles and responsibilities, and the building of robust performance monitoring frameworks (Fergus, 2012).³

While “Theory of Change” approaches are becoming more commonplace in the overall field of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, to date this methodology has not been applied to training in any substantive way. As such, we currently lack arguments – and evidence – for demonstrating *how, for whom, why* and *when* training contributes to change in gendered power relations.⁵ This paper is one of a series of Working Papers commissioned by the Training Centre. It can either be read as a stand-alone paper or in conjunction with the papers on Quality, Pedagogies and Evaluation.

² Cohen, S. I., Sachdeva, N., Taylor, S. J. and Cortes, P. (2013) *Expert Group Meeting: Gender mainstreaming approaches in development programming: being strategic and achieving results in an evolving development context*. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 30 April – 3 May 2013. Santo Domingo: UN Women. Available: <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/How%20We%20Work/UNSystemCoordination/FINAL%20EGM%20REPORT%201%20NOV%20version%20pdf.pdf>

³ Hoy, Caroline (2015) What can drive an effective Theory of Change approach? The DFID experience. Department for International Development, UK. Available: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/events-presentations/1710.pdf>

⁴ Fergus, Lara (2012) *Prevention of violence against women and girls: Background paper*. UN Women in cooperation with ESCAP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO, “Expert Group Meeting: Prevention of violence against women and girls”, Bangkok, Thailand, 17-20 September, 2012. EGM/PVAWG/2012/BP1, p. 25. Available: <http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/57/EGM/cs557-EGM-prevention-background-paper%20pdf.pdf>

⁵ Bustelo, M., Ferguson, L. and Forest, M. (2016) “Introduction”, in M. Bustelo, F. Ferguson and M. Forest (eds.) *The Politics of Feminist Knowledge Transfer: Gender Training and Gender Expertise*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Joint Statement of the UN Women Training Centre Expert Group Meeting 2015 “A theory of change on training for gender equality should be embedded within a vision of a broader change project. This should take into account strategically both short-term and long-term goals and pay attention to what can be achieved in different contexts, institutions and locations.”⁶

Why develop a Theory of Change for training for gender equality?

The need to develop theories of change for training for gender equality has been highlighted in a number of different ways in the work of the UN Women Training Centre. For example, the paper *Training for Gender Equality: Twenty Years On* (2015) which reviews how training for gender equality has evolved from Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 found that “despite the proliferation and institutionalisation of training for gender equality in many areas, there is a concerning lack of information on the impact and evaluation of such training.”⁷ The PFA, for instance, provided no clear discussion of the rationale and expected impact of training activities. This is an issue which is raised repeatedly in the different review processes, suggesting that the key issue of the expected impact of gender equality training has not been substantively addressed over time. Embedding training within broader change projects through developing a theory of change would allow for better tools for demonstrating how training contributes to longer term transformation or change projects.

The ten cases included in the Training Centre’s *Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality* highlight the importance of understanding how training for gender equality is located within broader change projects. A comparative analysis of the featured practices demonstrates the ways in which the theory of change which each case adopted – whether

Above all else, training for gender equality is about “transformation”. All types of such training involve questioning the power dynamics at play in society that give rise to gender inequality. At its core, “training concerns participants developing the knowledge, desire and abilities to transform their daily lives, communities, and institutions into more gender equitable spaces. It also involves changes in their attitudes, behaviours, and practices in relation to gender norms, roles, and relations.”⁸ (Typology of Training for Gender Equality, UN Women Training Centre)

explicitly or implicitly – profoundly shapes the objectives and outcomes of training. Moreover, the *Compendium* reveals the ways in which the embeddedness of training in long-term change projects substantively affects the outcomes and impact of training. For example, “participants must feel that there is space to implement what they are learning during a training in their institutional settings”.⁹

⁶ UN Women Training Centre (2015) *Joint Statement from Expert Group Meeting on Training for Gender Equality*. Available: http://gtcop.unwomen.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=459%3Adeclaracion-conjunta-grupo-de-expertos-de-capitacion-para-la-igualdad-de-genero-&catid=1%3Anoticias&Itemid=36&lang=en

⁷ UN Women Training Centre (2015) *Training For Gender Equality: Twenty Years On*. Santo Domingo, p. 41. Available: [https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/pluginfile.php/72/mod_data/content/18873/Paper_TrainingForGenderEquality%2B20-B%20\(8\).pdf](https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/pluginfile.php/72/mod_data/content/18873/Paper_TrainingForGenderEquality%2B20-B%20(8).pdf)

⁸ UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Typology of Training for Gender Equality*. Santo Domingo. Available: <http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2016/typology-on-training-for-gender-equality-en.pdf?v=1&d=20160503T200520>

⁹ UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality*. Santo Domingo: UN Women Training Centre, p. 17. Available: https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/pluginfile.php/72/mod_data/content/26773/COMPENDIO_ONU-M-WEB.pdf

Moreover, training should be seen as “one of a number of key gender strategies but insufficient by itself.”¹⁰

It is important to note that training by itself cannot bring change. In order for training to be able to contribute to change, it must be embedded in a broader set of measures and actions to influence change, and should be part of a long-term continuous process. This should be taken into account when designing theory of change models for training for gender equality.

“Impact comes not in the short-term, but in the longer term. [...] it's not with a one-off initiative that you will change a situation, there has to be a coherent approach [at a higher level]. Then the training will contribute something that makes sense. Because if there is no strategy in place and if the institutional preconditions are not fulfilled [...] then the training will not make a difference.”

– Lut Mergaert, Yellow Window¹¹

Theory of change methodologies can contribute to the effectiveness of training for gender equality in three key ways:

- By clarifying assumptions and “identifying the intermediary steps” and “specific outputs that a programme or intervention can realistically anticipate.”¹²
- By identifying “entry points, risks and opportunities” specific to the institutional context and “proposing an explicit Theory of Change that explains how [gender mainstreaming] interventions could contribute to the organisational goals.”¹³
- By developing “hypotheses and consensus on how [gender mainstreaming] is supposed to work in a specific programme or intervention; how stakeholders view the need for change; and how they perceive the actual changes.”¹⁴

A theory of change – or multiple theories of change - for training for gender equality would provide a more solid base from which to demonstrate and elaborate the ways in which training for gender equality contributes to broader change project. As a first step in such a process, this paper addresses four key areas:

- Understanding change from a feminist perspective
- Lessons from practice about Theory of Change approaches
- Guidelines for a developing a Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality

¹⁰ Mukhopadhyay, M. and F. Wong (2007) “Introduction: Revisiting gender training. The making and remaking of gender knowledge”, *Revisiting Gender Training: The Making and Remaking of Gender Knowledge – A Global Sourcebook*. Amsterdam: KIT Royal Tropical Institute, The Netherlands, p. 13. Available: http://213ou636shOptphd141fqi1.wpengine.netdna-cdn.com/gender/wp-content/uploads/publications/1031_Gender-revisiting-web2.pdf

¹¹ Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality, p. 18.

¹² Cohen, S. I., Sachdeva, N., Taylor, S. J. and Cortes, P. (2013) *Expert Group Meeting: Gender mainstreaming approaches in development programming: being strategic and achieving results in an evolving development context*. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, 30 April – 3 May 2013. Santo Domingo: UN Women, p. 14. Available:

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/How%20We%20Work/UNSystemCoordination/FINAL%20EGM%20REPORT%201%20NOV%20version%20pdf.pdf>

¹³ Cohen et al. (2013) *Expert Group Meeting*, UN Women, p. 30

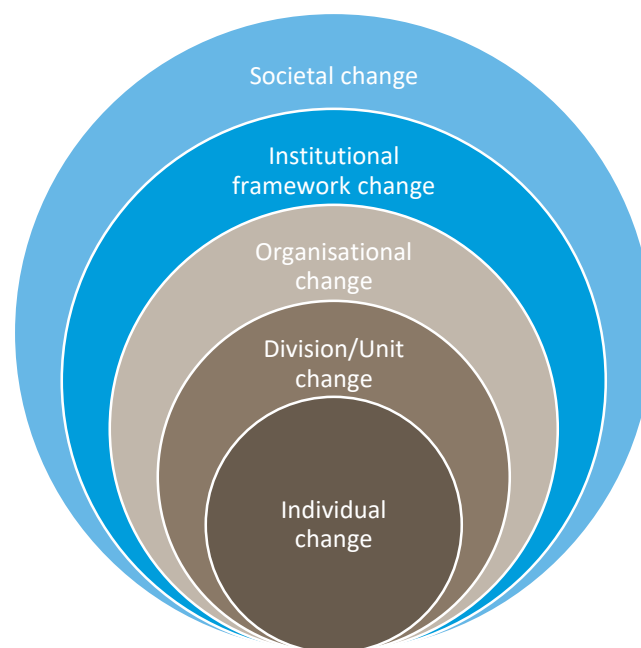
¹⁴ Cohen et al. (2013) *Expert Group Meeting*, UN Women, p. 32

➤ A proposed Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality

The paper is structured in four key sections, each of which tackles one of these key questions. In the Conclusions, some broad recommendations are offered regarding how best to develop theories of change across the field of training for gender equality.

Understanding change from a feminist perspective

Training for gender equality aims to contribute to change at two key levels – individual and institutional. Challenging and transforming political institutions has long been recognised as central to feminist projects of change,¹⁵ and training for gender equality can be located broadly within such a political project.



Here we briefly review how conceptualisations of change from different fields can enhance our understandings of training for gender equality. Four sets of insights can be drawn on from the literature in order to understand change from a feminist perspective: behavioural studies; the KDA approach; feminist institutionalism; and gender mainstreaming.

Individual/behavioural change

Research from the field of behavioural studies demonstrates that successful change must be guided through social interaction - “change is more sustainable when it is driven by conditions that invite people to engage in social learning”.¹⁶ Thus training for gender equality can be understood as a site of ‘social learning’, in which trainers “facilitate the conversations that invite others to own the desired change”.¹⁷

¹⁵ Mackay and Waylen (2014) “Introduction: Gendering ‘New’ Institutions”, *Politics & Gender*, 10, 489–494.

¹⁶ Hord, S. M. and Roussin, J. L. (2013) “Introduction”, in S. M. Hord and J. L. Roussin (Eds.) *Implementing Change Through Learning: Concerns-Based Concepts, Tools, and Strategies for Guiding Change* 1st Edition, Thousand Oaks: Corwin, p. 3.

¹⁷ Ibid.

A number of different approaches are used to understanding what triggers individual behavioural change, as summarised here by the UN End Violence against Women Now Campaign¹⁸:

- **Theory of reasoned action.** Behaviour is understood as a result of the person's intention to perform that behaviour. That intention is influenced by (i) the person's own attitude towards the behaviour, or (ii) the belief that people important to the person think she/ he should or should not perform the behaviour. *Example: showing that VAW is a crime that must be stopped; making change to end VAW appear attractive and rewarding. In Training for gender Equality, this could mean demonstrating the benefits of mainstreaming gender; making change to address inequalities appear attractive and rewarding.*
- **Social cognitive theory.** Self-efficacy—the belief that one has the skills and abilities necessary to perform the behaviour — and motivation are necessary for behaviour change. In other words, a person has to believe s/he can perform the behaviour in various circumstances and, s/he has an incentive (positive or negative) to do it. *Example: making VAW survivors aware of solutions and encouraging them to take action. In Training for gender Equality, this could mean making trainees aware of how they can engage as active participants to bring about change in their daily lives, organisations and communities*
- **Health belief model.** Identifies two factors that influence health protective behaviour: (i) the feeling of being personally threatened by disease, and (ii) the belief that the benefits of adopting the protective health behaviour will outweigh the perceived costs of it. *In Training for gender Equality, this could mean participants exploring how gender inequality affects them personally and appreciating how furthering equality will have positive outcomes.*
- **Stages of change model.** Behaviour change as a sequenced learning process in five main stages (pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, maintenance). The model holds that to get people to change their behaviour, it is necessary to determine at which stage they are and then to develop interventions that move them to the following stages.¹⁹ *In Training for gender Equality, this could mean training that assesses to which stage of the learning process trainees belong and develops targeted, contextualised interventions to move them through each stage.*
- **Diffusion of innovations theory** traces the process by which a new idea or practice is communicated in society, and which factors influence people's thoughts and activities in view of adopting new ideas.²⁰ *In Training for gender Equality, this could mean identifying the factors that influence trainees' thoughts and actions during exercises in which they reflect critically on gender relations.*
- **Input/output persuasion model.** Emphasises the hierarchy of communication effects and considers how certain aspects, e.g. message design, source and channel, as well as audience characteristics, influence behavioural outcomes of the communication.²¹ *In Training for gender*

¹⁸ Jewkes, R. (n.d.) *Theories of behaviour change*. Available:

http://partners4prevention.org/sites/default/files/documents/08_theories_of_behaviour_change.pdf

¹⁹ UN Women (n.d.) *Campaigns for Behaviour Change*. Available: <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1192-campaigns-for-behaviour-change.html> (Adapted from Coffman (2002) *Public Communication Campaign Evaluation* and O'Sullivan et al. (2003) *A Field Guide to Designing a Health Communication Strategy*.)

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1192-campaigns-for-behaviour-change.html>

Equality, this could mean exploring how participants' professional capacities, seniority and sociocultural backgrounds influence how they respond to training.

- **Social influence, social comparison, and convergence theories.** Perception and behaviour are influenced by the opinions and behaviour of others, especially when a situation is uncertain. Group connections, information exchange, affection and beliefs about competence are perpetuated throughout social encounters and organisations that distribute power and resources, intrinsically directing higher status groups towards privileges.²² *In Training for gender Equality, this could mean participatory training with the backing of senior management that accords resources and status to training for gender equality.*
- **Emotional response theories.** Messages which provoke an emotional response have better chances to prompt behaviour change than those low in emotional content.²³ *In Training for gender Equality, this could mean developing participatory exercises which involve an emotional component.*

Some understanding of behavioural change theories is useful for exploring change in training for gender equality. However, it is also important to acknowledge the ways in which an individual's knowledge, actions and view of the world are based on his or her experiences.²⁴ Freire highlights the dialectical nature of the relationship between *consciousness of* and *action upon* reality, both of which are required for the transforming act of *praxis*.²⁵ This relates to more social understandings of behavioural change, such as Bandura's 'Social Learning Theory'. In this approach, behaviour is understood to be learned through experience and observation. This then leads to the behaviour of others being modelled, and the consequences of those behaviours either reinforcing or deterring the future repetition of such behaviour.²⁶ This is useful for training for gender equality, as it suggests that certain attitudes and behaviours are not inevitable, but rather are learned and as such can be 'un-learned' through training and education.

A Knowledge, Desire, Ability approach

As developed in the work of Myra Marx Ferree, a Knowledge, Desire, Ability (KDA) approach is useful for designing a Theory of Change for training for gender equality. As Marx Ferree argues, training is focussed predominantly on discursive change, composed of three core elements, as set out in Figure 1 below:

- Knowledge (K) on the desired change;
- Desire (D) or motivation (what is valued, feared, desired, etc.) and
- Abilities (A) (of articulation, reflection, communication) to make the change occur.

These elements are sometimes called being "ready, willing and able" to make a transition²⁷ and are core to strategic planning for change. Training that contributes to social change in organisations does

²² <https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/publication-documents/ressum7.pdf>

²³ <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1192-campaigns-for-behaviour-change.html>

²⁴ Freire, P. (1992) *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

²⁵ Allsup, R. E. (2003) "Praxis and the Possible: Thoughts on the Writings of Maxine Greene and Paulo Freire", *Philosophy of Music Education Review*, 11(2), 157-169.

²⁶ Nelson et al. (2010) "Eliciting behavior change in a US sexual violence and intimate partner violence prevention program through utilization of Freire and discussion facilitation", *Health Promotion International*, 25(3), p. 299-308.

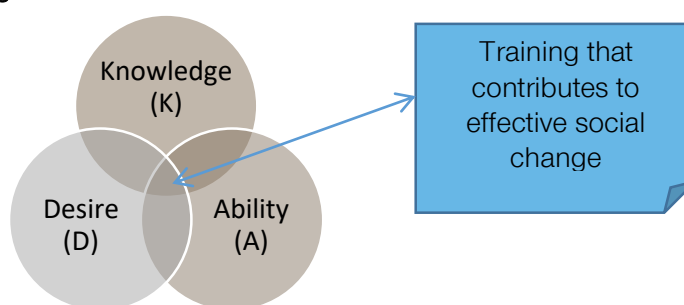
²⁷ Lesthaeghe, R. and Vanderhoeft, C. (2001) "Ready, Willing and Able -- A Conceptualization of transitions to New Behavioral Forms." in *US National Research Council: Diffusion Processes and Fertility Transition*, Washington D.C.: National Academies Press, p. 240-264.

not just offer new knowledge. Instead, it engages trainees in restructuring their existing KDA systems. Even if facts are learned well, their relevance to the lives and work of trainees can remain obscure. By contrast, training that increases both knowledge *and* curiosity (*desire* to learn), while providing advocacy skills or access to different networks of knowers (*ability* to challenge gender), will better engage trainees in active change work in their organisations.

Training for gender equality oriented to knowledge-building (K) alone will produce “trained people” in the sense of knowing facts and being able to explain them, but it is doubtful that it will produce the desire or ability among trainees to engage in transforming their workplaces into more gender equitable. Training that produces both knowledge (K) and motivation (D), but lacks a component that identifies and supports the abilities of trainees collectively to make a difference in their organisations may just increase frustration. Training that builds knowledge and skills/abilities, but not desire, may not sufficiently motivate trainees with the deep commitment necessary to effect lasting change in their work and lives.

Offering motivations for change concretely vernacularised to the specific context is ideally part of a training process, but one that works from creating layers of buy-in through the organisations’ hierarchies.

Figure 1: A KDA Approach to Change



As such, it is argued that training which leads to change can be understood to address all three components of a KDA approach. While these aspects will be highly specific to different training contexts, these form the building block of the Theory of Change for training for gender equality proposed below. I think this is something that needs to be addressed on a case-by-case basis. So we need to guide practitioners to develop theories of change and support them to do this. However, we cannot provide a blueprint for this.

Institutional change

In terms of institutional change, recent research from the field of feminist institutionalism explores “how institutional change happens and how feminist strategies of claims making and inclusion can impact processes of institutional change”.²⁸ Feminist institutionalism is concerned with *how* institutions can be changed, and draws on “more dynamic conceptions of institutional change, emphasizing the subtle

²⁸ Mackay, F. and Waylen, G. (2014) “Introduction: Gendering ‘New’ Institutions”, *Politics & Gender*, 10, p. 490

and often gradual ways in which institutions evolve over time as a result of both exogenous and endogenous factors”.²⁹

Understanding institutional change requires conceptualising a dynamic relationship between gendered institutional architects, gendered institutionalised subjects and gendered institutional environments, where agency is understood to involve strategic, creative and intuitive action as well as calculating self-interest.³⁰ Individual and institutional change are dialectic. Rather than being separate processes, they are closely interwoven, reinforcing and influencing one another.

Acknowledging that institutional power relations are deeply historical and constantly evolving suggests that they must be susceptible to agency, change and transformation.³¹ Following Thelen, institutions can be seen as sites of ongoing political struggle, conflicts and coalitions, in which change occurs *in specific historical contexts marked by multiple shifting interests and alliances*.³² This is a useful starting point for training for gender equality, which deals in an explicit manner with power dynamics within institutions. In addition, the notion of ‘bounded change within an existing system’ elaborated upon by Mackay³³ is helpful for understanding change in training for gender equality, as it helps to set realistic and manageable targets and indicators for change.

A number of further insights from the field of feminist institutionalism are useful for understanding the relationship between training for gender equality and change³⁴

- No institution—however new or radically reformed—is a blank slate: the capacity for new paths is profoundly shaped by its institutional environment no matter how seemingly dramatic the rupture with the past.
- Institutional innovation—or newness—is nested in time and sequence..... Understanding nested newness as gendered may help analysts better to explain “which specific elements of a given institutional arrangement are (or are not) renegotiable, and why some aspects are more amenable to change than others”³⁵.
- Institutionalised “gender regimes”³⁶ and gender norms of appropriateness³⁷ are part of the legacies and contexts within which reform efforts are nested and with which they must contend.

²⁹ Mackay, F., Kenny, M. and Chappell, L. (2010) “New Institutionalism Through a Gender Lens: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism?”, *International Political Science Review*, 31(5), p. 577.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Kenny, M. (2007) “Gender, Institutions and Power A Critical Review”, *Politics*, 27(2), 91-100.

³² Ibid.

³³ Mackay, F. (2014) “Nested Newness, Institutional Innovation, and the Gendered Limits of Change”, *Politics & Gender*, 10, p. 567.

³⁴ Adapted from Kenny, M. (2007) “Gender, Institutions and Power A Critical Review”, *Politics*, 27(2), 91-100; Mackay, F. and Waylen, G. (2014) “Introduction: Gendering ‘New’ Institutions”, *Politics & Gender*, 10; Mackay, F., Kenny, M. and Chappell, L. (2010) “New Institutionalism Through a Gender Lens: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism?”, *International Political Science Review*, 31(5), 573-588.; Mackay, F. (2014) “Nested Newness, Institutional Innovation, and the Gendered Limits of Change”, *Politics & Gender*, 10, 549–571.

³⁵ Thelen, K. (2004) *How Institutions Evolve: The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States and Japan*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 36.; Mackay, F. (2014) “Nested Newness, Institutional Innovation, and the Gendered Limits of Change”, *Politics & Gender*, 10, 549–571

³⁶ Connell, R. (2002) *Gender: A Short Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

³⁷ Chappell, L (2006) “Comparing political institutions: revealing the gendered ‘logic of appropriateness’”, *Politics & Gender*, 2(2), pp. 223–235.

- Useful concepts include *layering*, where some elements of existing institutions are renegotiated but other elements remain; *conversion*, in which existing institutions are redirected to new purposes; *drift*, in which institutional arrangements are actively neglected or co-opted; and *displacement*, where existing rules are discredited in favour of new institutions or logics.³⁸
- It is important to pay attention to both *endogenous sources of institutional change and stasis* (including dynamics of institutional power relations, resistance and reproduction)³⁹ and *external change drivers*, in particular the impact of changes in the wider gender order within institutional environments.⁴⁰
- Change in one institutional arena may be supported or confounded by the effects of other institutional arenas, illuminating the difficulties encountered in embedding gender reforms.⁴¹

Gender mainstreaming

In addition to the literature on feminist institutionalism, a large body of work on gender mainstreaming reflects on the extent to which change has taken place as a result of gender mainstreaming processes. These findings are especially relevant for training for gender equality and the change it hopes to evoke, as training is positioned as a leading tool to aid gender mainstreaming processes. A number of key insights from this literature can be highlighted here:

- Gender mainstreaming lacks a full articulation of a theory of change.⁴²
- The theory of change underlying many of our actions and strategies is often outdated and based on assumptions that are no longer valid in the complex economic and political reality of today, they are too narrow or limited, or too short-term and pragmatic, forgetting the longer-term social transformations that would lead to sustainable shifts in gender and social power relations.⁴³

³⁸ Mackay, F. (2014) "Nested Newness, Institutional Innovation, and the Gendered Limits of Change", *Politics & Gender*, 10, 549–571; Mahoney, J. and Thelen, K. (2010) "How Historical Institutionalists Explain Change", in J. Mahoney and K. Thelen (Eds.) *Explaining Institutional Change: Ambiguity, Agency, and Power*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Streeck, W. and Thelen, K. (2005) "Introduction: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies", in *Beyond Continuity: Institutional Change in Advanced Political Economies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-39.

³⁹ Kenny M. (2011) "Gender and institutions of political recruitment: candidate selection in post-devolution Scotland", in M.L. Krook and F. Mackay (eds.) *Gender, Politics and Institutions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 21-41.

⁴⁰ Waylen, G. (2007) *Engendering Transitions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁴¹ Chappell, L. (2011) "'Nested Newness' and Institutional Innovation: Expanding Gender Justice in the International Criminal Court", in M. L. Krook and F. Mackay (Eds.), *Gender, Politics, and Institutions: Towards a Feminist Institutionalism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 163-180; Chappell, L. (2014) "'New,' 'Old,' and 'Nested' Institutions and Gender Justice Outcomes: A View from the International Criminal Court", *Politics & Gender*, 10(4), p. XX-XX; Kenny, M. (2013) *Gender and Political Recruitment: Theorizing Institutional Change*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Waylen, G. (2007) *Engendering Transitions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Goetz, A. M. (2003) "Women's Political Effectiveness: A Conceptual Framework", in A.M. Goetz (Ed.) *No Shortcuts to Power: African Women in Politics and Policy-making*. London: David Philip; Majic, S. (2014) "Teaching Equality? 'John Schools,' Gender and Institutional Reform", *Polity* 46(1), p. 5-30.

⁴² Daly, M. (2005) "Gender Mainstreaming in Theory and Practice", *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, 12(2), pp. 433-450. p. 447

⁴³ Batliwala, S. (2012) *Changing Their World: Concepts and Practices of Women's Movements*. 2nd Edition. Toronto: Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID), p. 14. Available: http://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/changing_their_world_2ed_full_eng.pdf

- Many of our assumptions about how the world works are based on implicit theories of change, built into our worldviews, developed through our education and upbringing. However, these implicit theories of change “may have become so embedded that we no longer question whether they are the most useful for our purpose, or if we are using them as well as we could”.⁴⁴
- Gender mainstreaming approaches have often involved unrealistic expectations of the state as an agent of social transformation, and a conflation of state policy development and implementation with processes of social change.⁴⁵
- Constructing a theory of change for gender equality requires an acknowledgement that “women as well as men are actors and barriers of oppressive systems. Their agency is neither totally free nor autonomous, but also consists of, sometimes unconscious, sometimes willing, repetition and reproduction of dominant discourses and the upholding of patriarchal norms”.⁴⁶

In this section, we have drawn out some key points from a range of fields in order to further our understanding of change in training for gender equality - behavioural studies; a Knowledge Desire Ability approach; feminist institutionalism; and gender mainstreaming. **Training for gender equality targets individuals, but it is important to situate these actors within a broader critical understanding of structural injustices. Individuals are trained with a view to increased their capacity to bring about change in their immediate context, be it institutional or societal, or both. As such, while training happens at the individual level, it is always necessarily positioned within a broader understanding of structural issues, and should be designed with the objective of influencing critical collective movement for change at the individual and institutional levels. This reinforces the argument that training for gender equality is not in itself sufficient and should not be considered a one-off event or activity. Rather, in order to contribute to change, training for gender equality must be embedded within a range of other interventions and measures for change.** Next, the paper turns to an analysis of how lessons from practice can inform the development of a Theory of Change.

Lessons from practice about Theory of Change approaches

To date, there have been very few explicit attempts to develop a Theory of Change in the field of training for gender equality. However, lessons can be learned to inform such an approach from two broad areas of practice: the experiences of UN Women and other UN agencies; and the field of training, capacity development and education. Theory of Change approaches are used extensively across UN Women and other UN agencies (see Annex 1 for more details). None, however, focus on training. Nevertheless, these are useful for our broader understanding of Theories of Change and what feature these may usefully entail. Examples include:

- UN Women Theory of Change for Evaluation⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Eyben, R., Kidder, T., Rowlands, J., & Bronstein, A. (2008) “Thinking about change for development practice: a case study from Oxfam UK”, *Development in Practice*, 18(2), p. 201.

⁴⁵ Daly (2005)

⁴⁶ Davids and Van Eerdewijk (2016), p. 93

⁴⁷ UN Women (2014) 2014-2017 Evaluation Strategic Plan. Available:

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/about%20us/evaluation/evaluation-strategicplan-2014-2017-en.ashx>

- UN Trust Fund Theory of Change⁴⁸
- UNDP Gender Equality Strategy⁴⁹
- UNDS “Theory of Change” for the UN Development System to Function “As a System”
- FGM UNICEF UNFPA TOC⁵⁰
- UNICEF Early Childhood Education Evaluation⁵¹
- JGP TOC Joint Evaluation of UN Gender Programmes⁵²

A number of these theories of change are presented in more detail in Annex 1. While these are not specific to training for gender equality, they do nevertheless offer some key insights for developing a Theory of Change. The most salient lessons learned for the purposes of this paper are:

- Identify how the selected mechanisms and interventions are expected to **change knowledge, attitude and practices**⁵³ (UN Women Theory of Change for Evaluation)
- The Theory of Change should not be viewed as a linear model but as a complex system where change happens through feedback loops, reversals and sometimes even backlashes⁵⁴ (UN Women Theory of Change for Evaluation)
- Ensure change efforts are strategic, focused and well sequenced, and supported by appropriate instruments and that targets and indicators for measuring progress are in place while still allowing for flexibility and experimentation. Structural change, while very important, must be reinforced by attitudinal and behaviour change. Strong leadership and vision for change are critical.⁵⁵ (UNDS “Theory of Change” for the UN Development System to Function “As a System”)
- Theories of change can be improved during evaluation processes. This involves reviewing and testing the relevance and robustness of the theory of change, and using it to assess the ways in which the programme contributed to, or was likely to contribute to change⁵⁶ (UNICEF-UNFPA FGM Theory of Change).
- It is difficult to link programming successes to subsequent changes in individual or collective behaviours. This is partly due to the absence of systematic follow-up activities and longer-term

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<http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/trust%20funds/untrustfundevaw/untf%20strategic%20plan%202015%202020%20designed.pdf?v=1&d=20160329T155828>

⁴⁹ UNDP (2014) Annex 4: Background Note – Theory of Change¹ for Outcome 4. Annexes to the UNDP Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017: The Future We Want: Rights and Empowerment. New York: UNDP.

⁵⁰ http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/FGM-report_11_14_2013_Vol-I.pdf

⁵¹ https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/brief_2_theoryofchange_eng.pdf

⁵² <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/admin-resource/JointGenderInceptionReportfinal.pdf>

⁵³ UN Women (2014) 2014-2017 Evaluation Strategic Plan. Available:

<http://www.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/about%20us/evaluation/evaluation-strategicplan-2014-2017-en.ashx>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ UNDP (2016) A “Theory of Change” for the UN Development System to Function “As a System” for Relevance, Strategic Positioning and Results: Summary Paper Version 1.0, 26 January 2016. Available:

<https://www.un.org/ecosoc/sites/www.un.org.ecosoc/files/en/qcpr/theory-of-change-summary-paper.pdf>

⁵⁶ Rogers, P. (2014). *Theory of Change, Methodological Briefs: Impact Evaluation 2*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research. Available: https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/brief_2_theoryofchange_eng.pdf

monitoring at the local level. Observable changes in FGM/C prevalence are likely to be the result of a large number of actors and factors.⁵⁷ (UNICEF-UNFPA FGM Theory of Change).

Further insights can be gained from work on theories of change in training, capacity development and education. A brief review of the literature in this field highlights that theories of change for education and training are highly specific, relating to the specific learning objectives of a particular education or training programme. General or broad-sweeping theories of change are not appropriate for this field. This is a particularly important lesson for the purposes of constructing a theory of change for training for gender equality, as discussed in more detail below.

As demonstrated from this brief review, there are very few explicit theories of change for training for gender equality. One exception to this is the work of Promundo, who have a developed theory of change that applies to their training programmes (see Annex 2). A number of lessons can be drawn from this for the purposes of this paper:

- A theory of change for training for gender equality should be built upon considerations of structures and power relations in society
- A theory of change for training for gender equality should incorporate a theory of group learning in order to contribute to transformative and sustainable change
- Theories of learning are particularly important when the learning objectives of the training initiative include critical reflection and attitude change

These insights are key for constructing theories of change for training for gender equality, which at its core involves “transforming the ways individuals experience and express power in their lives, relationships, and communities”.⁵⁸

Guidelines for a developing a Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality

Developing a theory of change should not be considered a purely technical exercise, but rather “an ongoing process of reflection to explore change and how it happens – and what that means for the part we play in a particular context, sector and/or group of people”.⁵⁹ In the case of training for gender equality, this requires an exploration of institutional history and power relations, as well as an explicit analysis of power relations and resistances. This allows for training initiatives to be located within a wider analysis of how change comes about, while acknowledging the wider systems and actors that influence change.⁶⁰

The most extensive work to date on theory of change for training for gender equality is the UN Women Training Centre’s working paper “Training for gender equality as a source of organisational change” developed by Myra Marx Ferree. This paper offers a detailed background on the key theoretical

⁵⁷ UNFPA and UNICEF (2013) *Joint Evaluation UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Accelerating Change. Volume 1*. New York: UNFPA and UNICEF. Available: http://www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/FGM-report_11_14_2013_Vol-I.pdf

⁵⁸ UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality*. p. 15-16

⁵⁹ James, C. (2011) *Theory of Change Review: A Report Commissioned by Comic Relief*. London: Comic Relief. Available: <http://mande.co.uk/blog/wp-content/uploads/2012/03/2012-Comic-Relief-Theory-of-Change-Review-FINAL.pdf>

⁶⁰ Green, D. (2015) “Where have we got to on Theories of Change? Passing fad or paradigm shift?”, April 16, 2015, Oxfam Blog. Available: <http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/where-have-we-got-to-on-theories-of-change-passing-fad-or-paradigm-shift/>

considerations to be taken into account when developing theories of change for training for gender equality, as well as some practical recommendations for developing a theory of change.⁶¹ As Marx Ferree argues, a theory of change for training for gender equality should involve:

1. Understanding **what training can realistically achieve**:

- It must be recognised that training alone will always be insufficient to change how organisations work. For this reason, as noted above, the conditions in which change occurs, the reasons for seeking change and the preconditions in place must be recognised.

2. Clarity about the **goals and aims** of training:

- Training must always be tied to a clear understanding of what broader strategic goals are sought. Different strategic priorities are needed for different types of training. As explored by the Training Centre, there are five broad “types” of training (see Table 1) which relate to different “types” of strategic goals:
 - **Transformation goals** – goals which explicitly choose organisations or structural relations as the target for change. For instance, as in “mobilisation for social transformation” trainings. Implicitly, these goals take a longer-term, evolutionary perspective. Transformational goals may seek to increase motivations and commitment to long-term change among participants more than working on their knowledge or immediate practical abilities.
 - **Empowerment goals** – goals that highlight individuals as change actors and focus on increasing their abilities and knowledge of gender. Such trainings aim for “change in attitudes, behaviours, and practices”, which in turn can contribute to longer-term change efforts.
 - **Skill/knowledge development goals** – action-orientated goals which hold that training can provide situation-specific skills or knowledge to equip trainees to “better” apply knowledge of gender equality in practice. For instance, “skills training”, “knowledge enhancement” or “awareness-raising and consciousness-building” trainings. This may imply a shorter-time horizon and less structural change than “transformational goals”.
- Training for gender equality and women’s empowerment can legitimately encompass all three kinds of goals (transformational, empowerment, skills/knowledge development) but to be successful, any specific training should be explicit about which of these goals is prioritised and for what specific targets.

Table 1 – “Types” of Training	
Awareness-raising and consciousness-building	Introduces participants’ to key issues concerning gender (in)equality and women’s empowerment
Knowledge enhancement	Provides more in-depth information and understanding on these issues and the power structures underlying inequalities
Skills training	Strengthens participants’ competences in this field by offering instruments, tools, techniques and strategies with which to apply their knowledge in practice

⁶¹ Marx Ferree, M. (N/D) “Training for gender equality as a source of organisational change.” Unpublished background paper

Change in attitudes, behaviours, and practices	Fosters lasting positive changes in the way participants think and act, as well as their long-term habits
Mobilisation for social transformation	Stimulates participants' capacity to collaboratively put their knowledge, motivation and skills into practice, to change their work, communities and daily lives into more gender equitable spaces

3. The importance of **context**:

- The types of training, trainers and evaluations that are appropriate in each instance depend on the norms and resources of the organisations and individuals within them.
- For this reason, it is important to assess the context, including norms and resources, from the outset.
- Actual institutional change has to arise from a broader strategy in which individuals and their training experiences are activated organisationally.

4. The centrality of **reflexivity**:

- Effective use of training for institutional transformation includes conveying experiential, motivational, and practical elements, not just abstract knowledge. This exists within a cycle of transformation in organisations and individuals.
- Reflexivity should be built into a theory of change, so that trainers become experienced as self-reflective learners and skilled trainers.
- As a reflexive process, training has a continuing need for applied research on feminist pedagogy, intersectionality, and social change (or absence of change).

5. The need for **measuring** change:

- Evaluation instruments should be matched to the types of training offered.
- For both designing and assessing training, it is important to consider where the organisation targeted for change stands in relation to such changes and where the targeted individuals are located in the overall organisation structure (leadership, middle management, front-line workers).
- Many trainers view this as a “cycle of change”, since training is called for multiple times as an organisation moves from one stage of the change process to another or engages different members in the process.
- Every assessment strategy should engage with the KDA model of individual change. As far as possible, it should address the extent of organisational change as concretely situated in hierarchies of authority, divisions of labour, and histories of transformation.
- Strategies to make short-term change persist over a longer-term should be considered as part of any transformation goal, which is inherently long-term. It is advisable to draw a path pointing from short-term interventions to the longer term outcomes sought.

Drawing on practical experiences from the field of training for gender equality – and gender mainstreaming more broadly – a number of additional elements for consideration can be added. These include:

The importance of **critical reflection** in the theory of change process:⁶²

- Critical reflection needs to be a core part of a Theory of Change approach. It must be recognised that the process and product of training is hamstrung by the power dynamics of an institution. Thus, we should use training as an opportunity to open up a space for honesty and critical reflection.
- The content of a theory of change approach itself also needs to be more explicitly related to the power relations and politics that the intervention is aiming to work with, or shift.
- This must be based on a serious reflection of how individuals within the institution feel about the interventions and the changes that might be set in motion. For example, if Theories of Change remain internal documents, it is more likely that critical reflection will be encouraged

Drawing from the context of international development, there are a number of additional factors to consider. The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) identifies four principles of good practice in terms of theory of change⁶³:

- **Focus on process:** the process of uncovering and critically appraising assumptions must be on-going since assumptions may remain uncovered in initial analysis, or information is likely to emerge as interventions unfold, to confirm or challenge assumptions. A Theory of Change can be used a way to record learning and adjusting.⁶⁴ To an extent, this relates to the “cycle” of learning implied by training for gender equality, where learning which occurs in a dialectic and reflexive manner is essentially dynamic, revealing or challenging assumptions at different stages.
- **Prioritise learning:** programmes could be held accountable for how much has been learnt over time, how they have adapted to new information and why this adaption has been important for improved outcomes.⁶⁵ As above, the dynamic learning process and trainer reflexivity are at the very heart of training for gender equality. In order to be effective or *transformative*, training must adapt and adjust as trainers and trainees navigate the learning process together.
- **Be locally led:** gain participant feedback and apply this explicitly and systematically throughout monitoring, learning and evaluation processes. As such, participants need to be consulted, at the start and throughout the Theory of Change process.⁶⁶ This ties into training for gender equality’s focus on participatory feminist methodology, which stresses inclusiveness and requires the engagement of trainees at all times.
- **Think compass not map:** more useful than a ‘roadmap’ is the idea of a ‘compass for helping us find our way through the fog of complex systems, discovering a path as we go along’. This is important since Theory of Change approaches must acknowledge that ‘social contexts and processes are always in flux, with emergent issues, unforeseen risks and surprises arising

⁶² Valters, C. (2014) *Theories of Change in International Development*. Asia Foundation and the Justice and Security Research Programme, LSE, p. 20.

⁶³ Overseas Development Institute (ODI) (2015) Theories of Change: time for a radical approach to learning in development <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/9835.pdf>

⁶⁴ Green, D. (2015) "What are the key principles behind a theory of change approach? Top new ODI paper," September 17, 2015, Oxfam Blog. Available: <http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/what-are-the-key-principles-behind-a-decent-theory-of-change-approach-top-new-odi-paper/>

⁶⁵ Green, D. (2015) "What are the key principles behind a theory of change approach? Top new ODI paper."

⁶⁶ Green, D. (2015) "What are the key principles behind a theory of change approach? Top new ODI paper."

throughout.’⁶⁷ In the same way, training for gender equality is an essentially dynamic process in flux, best navigated with this kind of approach.

Other recommendations from practice include:

- **Review theories of change regularly:** in particular, ensure that assumptions are articulated and tested.⁶⁸
- **Step beyond certainty:** Move beyond a need for certainty provided by linearity and up front design. Move towards ‘truly strategic partnerships in which not knowing is seen as a strength’.⁶⁹

The quality of a theory of change is judged by four explicit criteria: how plausible, doable, testable, and meaningful the theory of change is.

- **Plausible** means that stakeholders believe the logic of the model is correct: if we do these things, we will get the results we want and expect.
- **Doable** means the human, political, and economic resources are seen as sufficient to implement the action strategies in the theory.
- **Testable** means that stakeholders believe there are credible ways to discover whether the results are as predicted.
- **Meaningful** means that stakeholders see the outcomes as important and see the magnitude of change in these outcomes being pursued as worth the effort.⁷⁰

The process of developing a Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality should be guided by feminist pedagogical principles, as set out in the Pedagogies working paper:

- participatory learning;
- validation of personal experience;
- encouragement of social justice, activism and accountability; and
- development of critical thinking and open-mindedness.

(Adapted from Hoffman F. L. and Stake, J. E. (2001) "Feminist Pedagogy in Theory and Practice: An Empirical Investigation", *National Women's Studies Association Journal (NWSA)* , 19, pp. 80)

Once developed, a Theory of Change for training for gender equality will enable us to “share these ideas with others and create a shared vision of the long-term change we all want to see in a given community, how this change will be reached, and how we will measure our progress along the way.”⁷¹ A Theory of Change should therefore be considered as both process - the process of working out the

⁶⁷ Green, D. (2015) "What are the key principles behind a theory of change approach? Top new ODI paper."

⁶⁸ Care International (2012) *Women's Empowerment Impact Measurement Initiative (WEIMI). Part I: Developing the Theory of Change*. Atlanta: Care International. Available:

http://gendertoolkit.care.org/Resources/Compiled%20WEIMI%20Part%201%20Briefs%201_3.pdf

⁶⁹ Green, D. (2015) "Where have we got to on Theories of Change? Passing fad or paradigm shift?", April 16, 2015, Oxfam Blog. Available: <http://oxfamblogs.org/fp2p/where-have-we-got-to-on-theories-of-change-passing-fad-or-paradigm-shift/>

⁷⁰ Connell, J. P. and Klem, A. M. (2000) "You Can Get There From Here: Using a Theory of Change Approach to Plan Urban Education Reform", *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation*, 11(1), 93-120.

⁷¹ Keystone Accountability (n.d.) *Developing a Theory of Change: A Framework for Accountability and Learning for Social Change. A Keystone Guide*. London: Keystone Accountability, p. 2. Available: <http://portals.wi.wur.nl/files/docs/ppme/KeystoneTool-DevelopingaTheoryofChange.pdf>

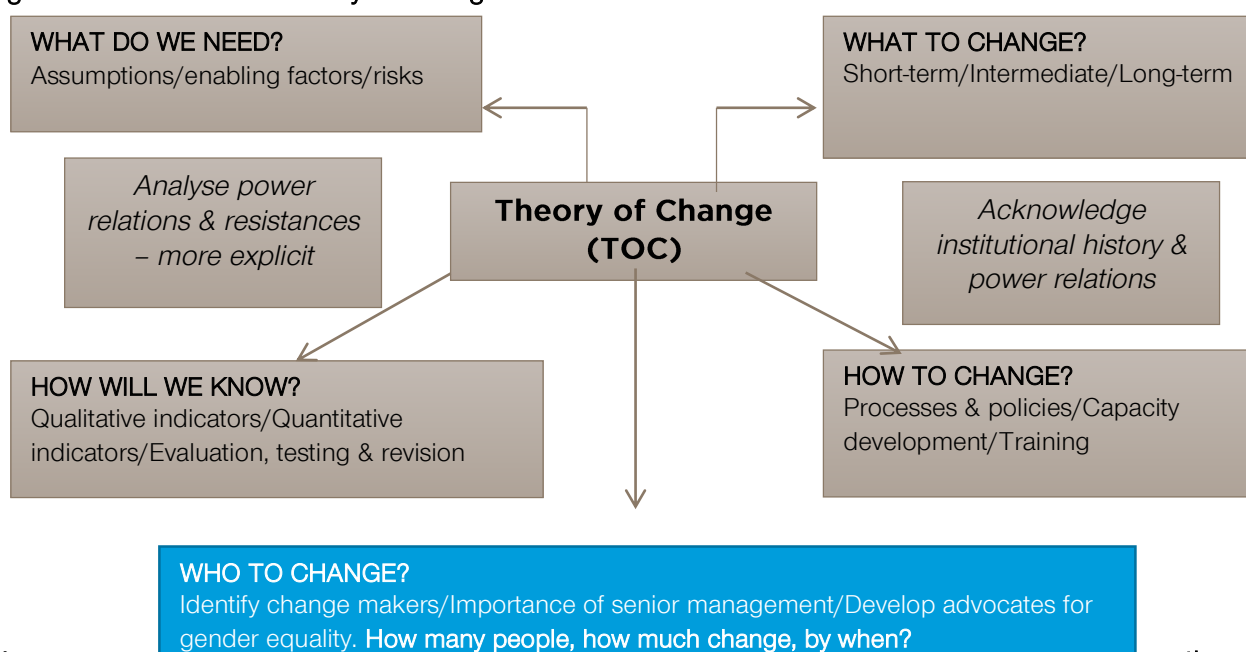
theory, mainly in group sessions of practitioners and stakeholders led by a capable facilitator - *and* product - a document of the change model showing how and why a goal will be reached.⁷² Both aspects are equally important, especially in the context of training for gender equality.

A proposed Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality

Drawing on both the conceptual work by Marx Ferree and guidelines for good practice set out above, we can now propose a specific methodology for developing a Theory of Change for Gender Equality. This should not be considered a blueprint for such a process, but rather some key points for thinking and reflecting on this by practitioners, commissioners and researchers. In practice, developing a Theory of Change involves asking a series of questions, such as: What do we want to change? How can we change it? How will we know? and What do we need? These questions are addressed in the proposed theory of change outlined below.

A theory of change also requires explicitly setting out the assumptions and logic, as well as identifying potential risks and stumbling blocks. These elements are then mapped out graphically in causal pathways to develop a flow diagram, including explanations for what is expected to change in the short-term, intermediate and long-term. These elements are reflected in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Elements of a Theory of Change



More concrete approaches to analysing change in gendered power relations as it does not begin with the assumptions, but rather identifies the desired change and works backwards from there, rather than the other way round. However, this is not an entirely linear process comprised of a series of self-contained steps.

⁷² Taplin, D. H., Clark, H., Collins, E. and Colby, D. C. (2013) *Theory of Change Technical Papers: A Series of Papers to Support Development of Theories of Change Based on Practice in the Field*. New York: ActKnowledge, p.2, Available: http://www.theoryofchange.org/wp-content/uploads/toco_library/pdf/ToC-Tech-Papers.pdf

Many steps may overlap and need to be revisited during the process. Nevertheless, it is useful to identify these steps as a solid practical basis for constructing a theory of change for training for gender equality.

Figure 4: Steps to Create a Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality



As argued throughout this paper, it is not possible to create a singular, overarching theory of change for training for gender equality. **Training for gender equality is both a process and a strategy and therefore is always bound to a particular context and content. Any Theory of Change should therefore take as its starting point the particular context and content of the training scenario.** Nevertheless, it is a useful exercise to explore what a theory of change might look like in training for gender equality. As such, using the 5-step process identified above, we will now aim to construct a proposed theory of change for the UN Women Training Centre. This will require further discussion, elaboration, revision and participation. However, this can be seen as a useful starting point for understanding how theory of change methodologies can be applied to training for gender equality, and what they can contribute to the field.

Figure 5 - Proposed Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality

VISION → Training for gender equality supports the implementation of broader gender mainstreaming strategies and contributes to the transformation of gender

OUTCOMES

LONG TERM → Participants have the Knowledge, Desire and Ability to implement gender mainstreaming strategies, policies and processes

KNOWLEDGE

DESIRE

ABILITY

SHORT TERM OUTCOMES

Participants understand the gender equality issues strategies, policies and processes of their organisation

Participants are motivated to implement these in their work

Participants have the required skills and are supported to deliver on the organisation's commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment

PRECONDITIONS

Participants have good knowledge and understanding of gender equality

Participants want to apply this knowledge in their work

Participants are able to implement new learning and skills in practice

INTERVENTIONS

- Understanding of key gender concepts and issues
- Ability to engage critically with gender concepts and issues
- Knowledge of organisational policies and processes related to gender equality

- Opportunities to raise resistances to gender equality issues and policies
- Space for open contestation of gender concepts and issues
- Critical reflection on how gender shapes different aspects of work and home life, and how gender inequalities harm everyone
- Understanding of the importance of gender

- Staff are given space and time to implement the knowledge and skills they have learned
- Potential organisational resistances are identified and solutions are proposed

MEASUREMENT

Comparative learning needs assessment exercises before and after training (qualitative & quantitative)

Ex-ante and ex-post interviews and questionnaires (qualitative & quantitative)

Individual gender equality plans and long-term, ongoing follow-up (qualitative)

ASSUMPTIONS

- An understanding that gender equality is key to the success of the organisation
- The organisation has a gender equality strategy, policies and processes which are backed up with sufficient resources – both financial and human – to implement these
- The learning objectives match the needs and expectations of the organisation and participants

- The training meets quality guidelines, including the use of feminist pedagogical approaches and methods
- The training is properly funded in line with the cost of excellent training for gender equality
- There is sufficient political will for the training to be successful

- The organisation is committed to gender equality and transformative change at the most senior level, and this is reflected in budgetary allocations, systems and procedures
- The organisation provides the necessary human and financial resources
- Training is an ongoing process embedded in broader learning and capacity development strategies

Figure 6 depicts a proposed theory of change for training for gender equality. This is accompanied by a *change narrative*, as elaborated here. The overarching **Vision** is that **Training for gender equality supports the implementation of broader gender mainstreaming strategies and contributes to the transformation of gender inequalities**. In terms of **Outcomes**, these are envisaged at two different timeframes – long-term and medium-term. In the *long-term*, it is expected that training participants have the Knowledge, Desire and Ability to implement gender mainstreaming strategies, policies and processes. In the *short-term*, three outcomes can be identified: participants understand the gender equality issues, strategies, policies and processes of their organisation (Knowledge); participants are motivated to implement these in their work (Desire); and participants have the required skills and are supported to deliver on the organisation's commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment (Ability).

As argued throughout this paper, analysing the power dynamics of an organisation is fundamental to any Theory of Change for training for gender equality. More broadly, as outlined in the papers on feminist pedagogies and quality guidelines, resistances and contestation are a key component of successful training for gender equality. These tensions, power asymmetries and contestations thus need to be reflected in some way in the Theory of Change. In the proposed structure, such ambiguities are captured in the final part – **Assumptions**. This makes clear the importance of a range of factors for the success of training for gender equality, and also serves to explain why training may not always reach the change expected or anticipated. That is, if these assumptions do not hold true, aspects of the pathway to change will not be completed, and further analysis will need to be done in order to address these issues.

The Theory of Change is based upon a Knowledge Desire Ability approach, as outlined throughout the paper. As such, the expected pathways to change are mapped out in these three areas, in order to demonstrate clear lines of influence. Here these are outlined in turn, in order to show how change is understood to happen in each area. However, as highlighted in the outcomes, all three areas are required in order for the expected change to take place.

Knowledge

In order to achieve the short-term outcome - participants understand the gender equality issues, strategies, policies and processes of their organisation – a **Precondition** is that participants have a good knowledge and understanding of gender equality. A number of **Interventions** are proposed in order to meet this precondition, namely: understanding of key gender concepts and issues; ability to engage critically with gender concepts and issues; knowledge of organisational policies and processes related to gender equality. These are specific to training for gender equality, and broadly set out what content and materials training needs to cover. In terms of **Measurement** of knowledge, this can be done through comparative learning needs assessment exercises before and after the training. These should be both qualitative and quantitative and meet current best practice guidelines in the field.

This pathway to change is premised on three key **Assumptions**: An understanding that gender equality is key to the success of the organisation; The organisation has a gender equality strategy, policies and processes which are backed up with sufficient resources – both financial and human – to implement these; and the learning objectives match the needs and expectations of the organisation and participants.

Desire

A **Precondition** for achieving the short-term outcome participants are motivated to implement these in their work is that participants want to apply this knowledge in their work. This requires **Interventions** that present opportunities to raise resistances to gender equality issues and policies; generate space for open contestation of gender concepts and issues; facilitate critical reflection on how gender shapes different aspects of work and home life, and how gender inequalities harm everyone; and provide an understanding of the importance of gender equality in their organisation and beyond. Change in the participants' level of Desire can be **Measured** using qualitative and quantitative ex-ante and ex-post interviews and questionnaires, drawing on the analytical framework set out in the evaluation paper.

Three key **Assumptions** underpin this change pathway: the training meets quality guidelines, including the use of feminist pedagogical approaches and methods; and that the training is properly funded in line with the cost of excellent training for gender equality; and there is sufficient political will for the training to be successful.

Ability

In line with the change pathways set out above for Knowledge and Desire, a **Precondition** for achieving the short-term outcome for Ability is that participants are able to implement new learning and skills in practice. This is required in order for participants to have the required skills and be supported to deliver on the organisation's commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment. Two key **Interventions** through training can support this process: staff are given space and time to implement the knowledge and skills they have learned; and potential organisational resistances are identified and solutions are proposed. In terms of **Measurement** for change in Ability, tools such as individual gender equality plans developed by participants at the end of the training can be used to capture self-assessment and identify institutional problems for implementation. These can be complemented by long-term, ongoing follow-ups using qualitative methods, as set out in the evaluation paper.

In order for this pathway to change to be valid, three key **Assumptions** must be met: the organisation is committed to gender equality and transformative change at the most senior level, and this is reflected in budgetary allocations, systems and procedures; training is an ongoing process embedded in broader learning and capacity development strategies; the organisation provides the necessary human and financial resources.

Statement on Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality

The UN Women Training Centre believes that theories of change are valuable for training for gender equality and should be integrated into the practice and processes of training, as they help to articulate realistic ideas about what training can achieve, and what is required in order for this to happen.

Two key points should be taken into account when developing a Theory of Change for training for gender equality. First, **training by itself cannot bring change, and should be considered a long-term continuous process embedded in a broader set of measures and actions to influence change**. Second, **there cannot be a singular Theory of Change for training for gender equality due to the highly specific and context-bound nature of the process**. As such, the Theory of Change exercise needs to be conducted for different kinds of trainings and organisations.

The UN Women Training Centre has developed template or model for Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality which can be modified and adapted to different contexts (see Figure 6). This requires a degree of abstraction and over-simplification, but nevertheless serves to demonstrate how training is understood to contribute to gender equality. The UN Women Training Centre's Theory of Change for Training for Gender Equality can be summarised as follows:

- The Theory of Change is underpinned by a Vision: that **Training for gender equality supports the implementation of broader gender mainstreaming strategies and contributes to the transformation of gender inequalities.**
- This Vision is then accompanied by two sets of **Outcomes**, both *long-term* (training participants **have the Knowledge, Desire and Ability to implement gender mainstreaming strategies, policies and processes**) and *short-term* (participants **understand the gender equality issues, strategies, policies and processes of their organisation (Knowledge); participants are motivated to implement these in their work (Desire); and participants have the required skills and are supported to deliver on the organisation's commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment (Ability).**
- The Theory of Change is driven by a number of **Assumptions**, which aim to capture the tensions, power asymmetries and contestations that are inherent in training for gender equality. This makes clear the importance of a range of factors for the success of training for gender equality, and also serves to explain why training may not always reach the change expected or anticipated. That is, if these assumptions do not hold true, aspects of the pathway to change will not be completed, and further analysis will need to be done in order to address these issues.
- The Theory of Change is based upon a **Knowledge Desire Ability approach**, with the expected pathways to change mapped out in these three areas, in order to demonstrate clear lines of influence.
- Within the Theory of Change, each aspect of training for gender equality – Knowledge, Desire and Ability - has its own set of **Outcomes (short-term), Preconditions, Interventions, Measurement and Assumptions.** This demonstrates how the different aspects of training for gender equality work together to contribute to transformative change, always in a **context-bound approach embedded in a broader change project.**

In order for the Theory of Change methodology to become a more systematic part of the training process, the UN Women Training Centre proposes the following recommendations:

7. Ensure that theories of change are considered from the very inception of initiatives, and include in preliminary negotiations with commissioners
8. Build the exercise of developing a theory of change into all training programmes and make this a systematic component of the training cycle
9. Engage external practitioners in the process of developing theories of change
10. Advocate for the importance of theory of change as a key tool for demonstrating the expected impact of training for gender equality

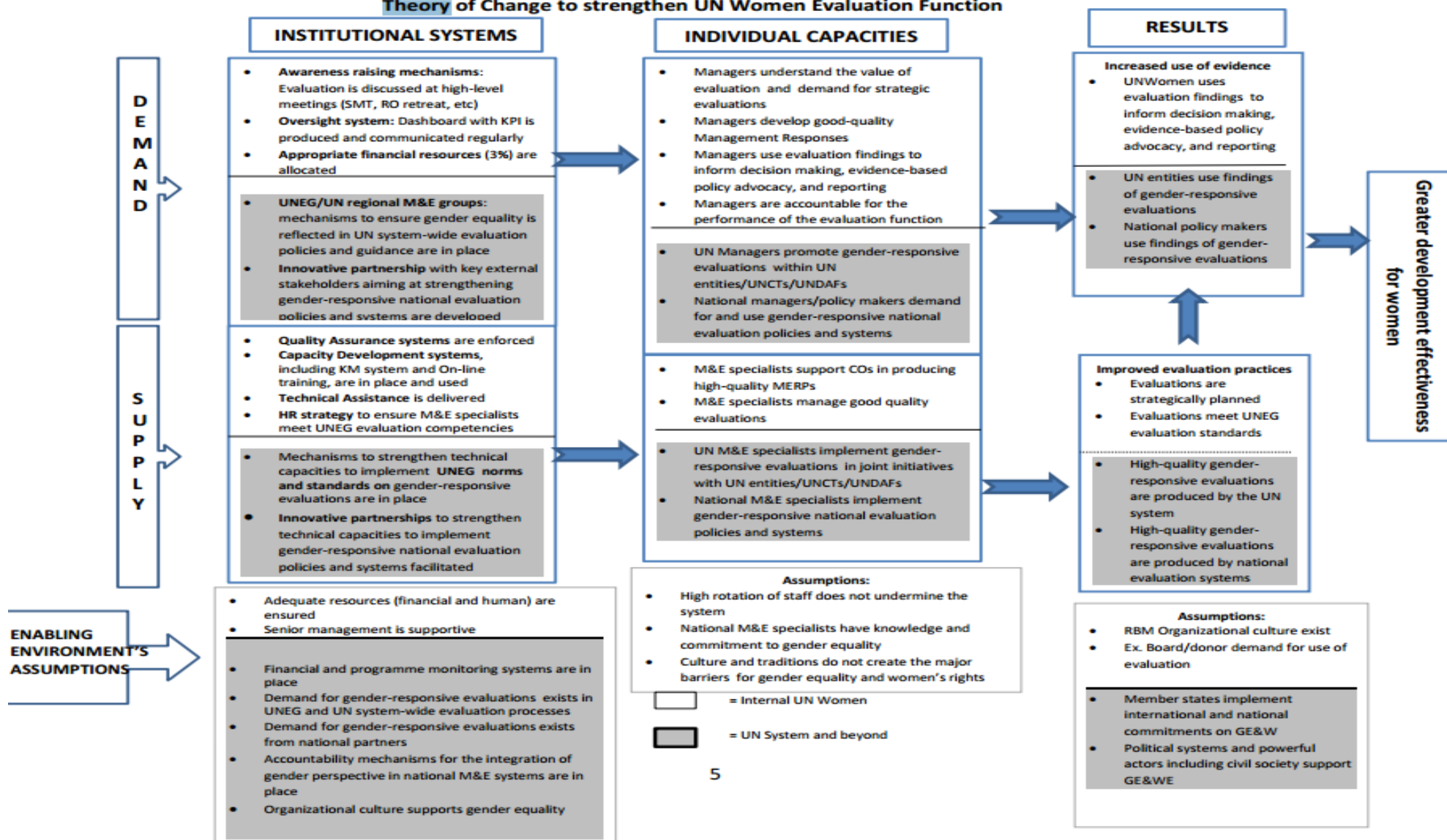
11. Continue to reflect critically on the relationship between training, individual change, institutional change and transformation
12. Facilitate collective discussion and debate among academics, practitioners and commissioners over the value of theory of change approaches to training for gender equality

The Theory of Change proposed in this paper maps out how different aspects and processes of training for gender equality support the impact of training in achieving the long-term goals and broader vision of transformation. It serves to demonstrate the ongoing value of training for gender equality, whilst at the same time advocating for adequate funding and resources, as well as political will at the highest level.

Annex 1 – Theory of Change approaches across UN agencies

UN Women Theory of Change for Evaluation

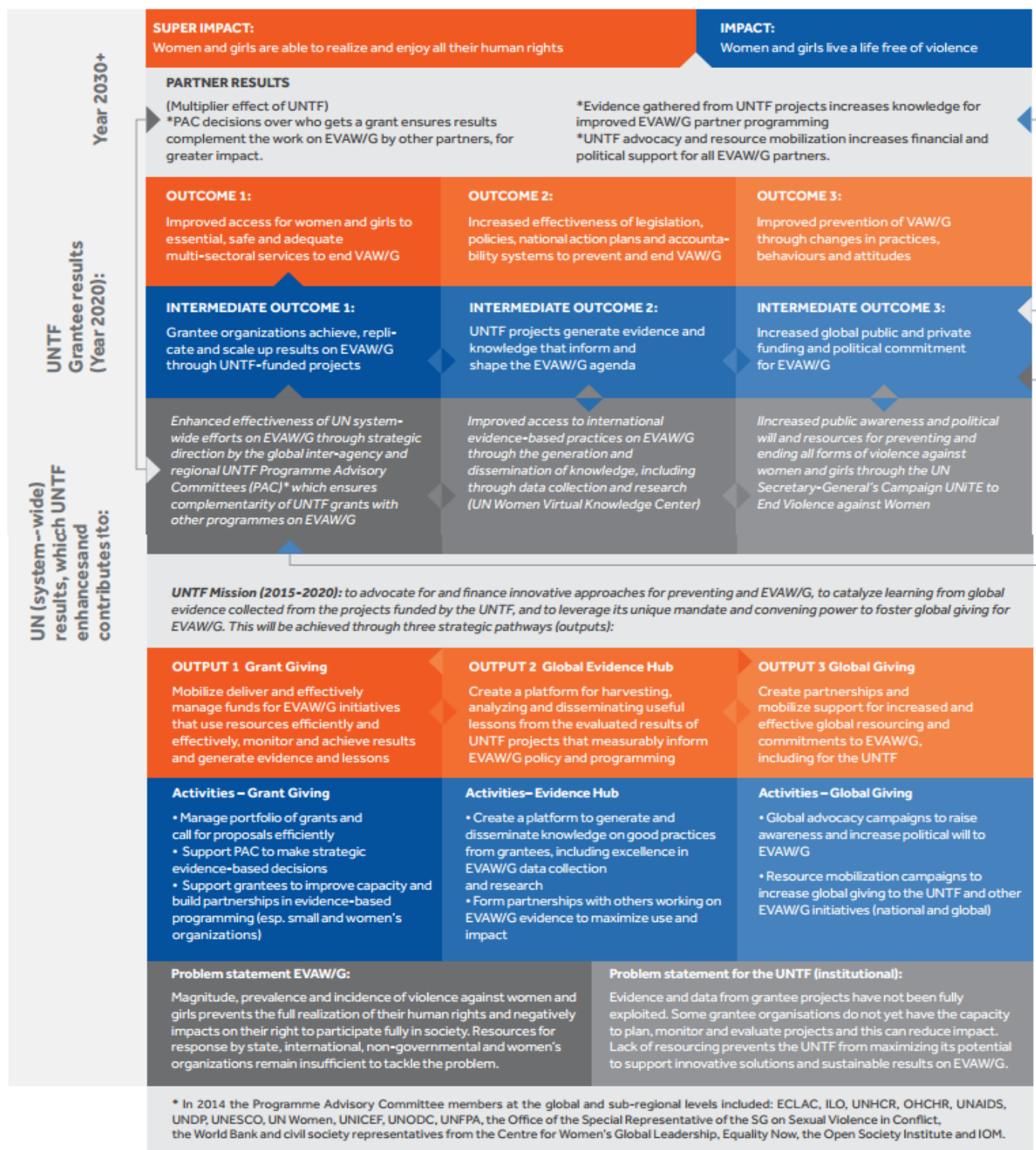
Theory of Change to strengthen UN Women Evaluation Function



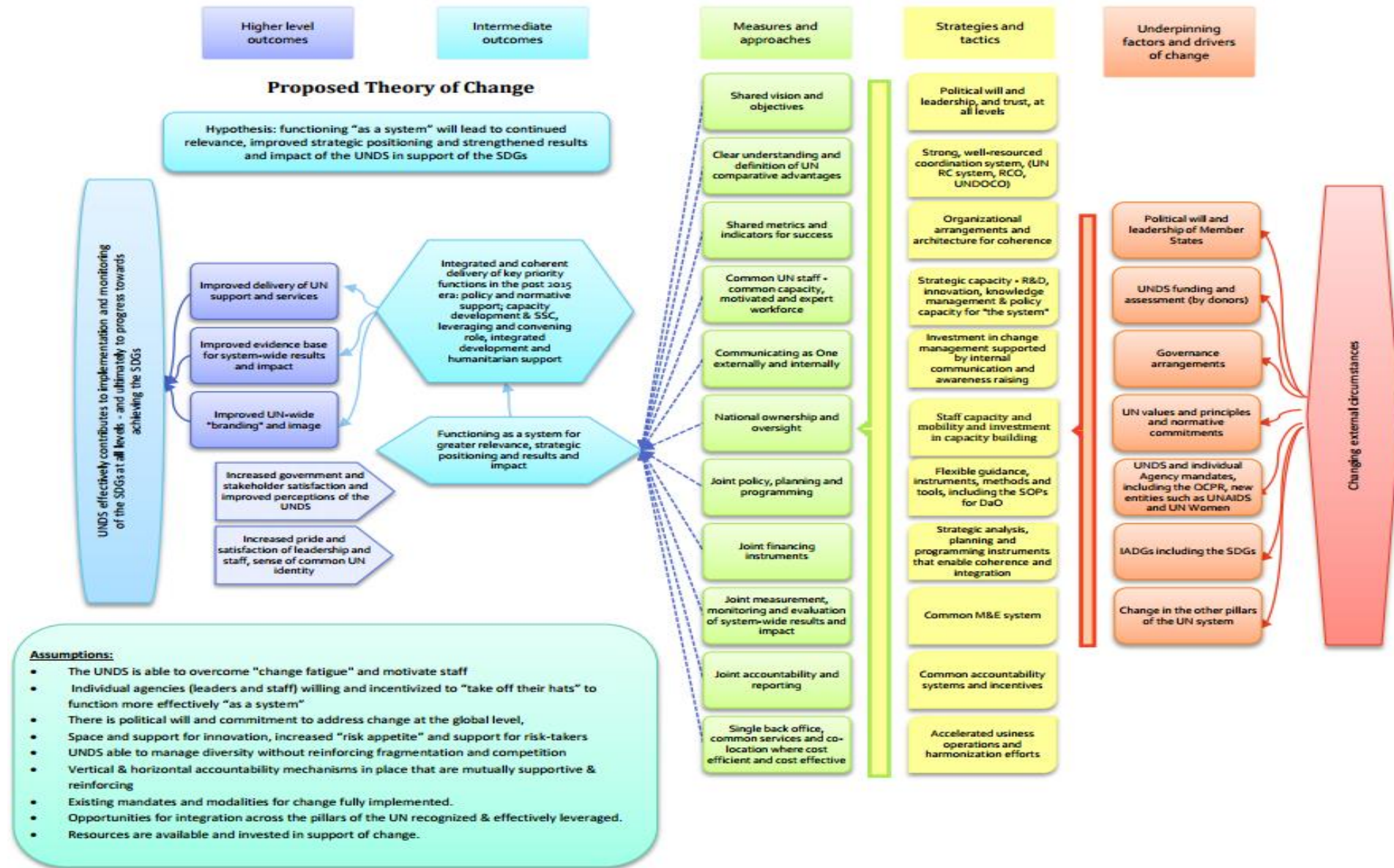


THEORY OF CHANGE DIAGRAM

UN TRUST FUND TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN 2015-2020

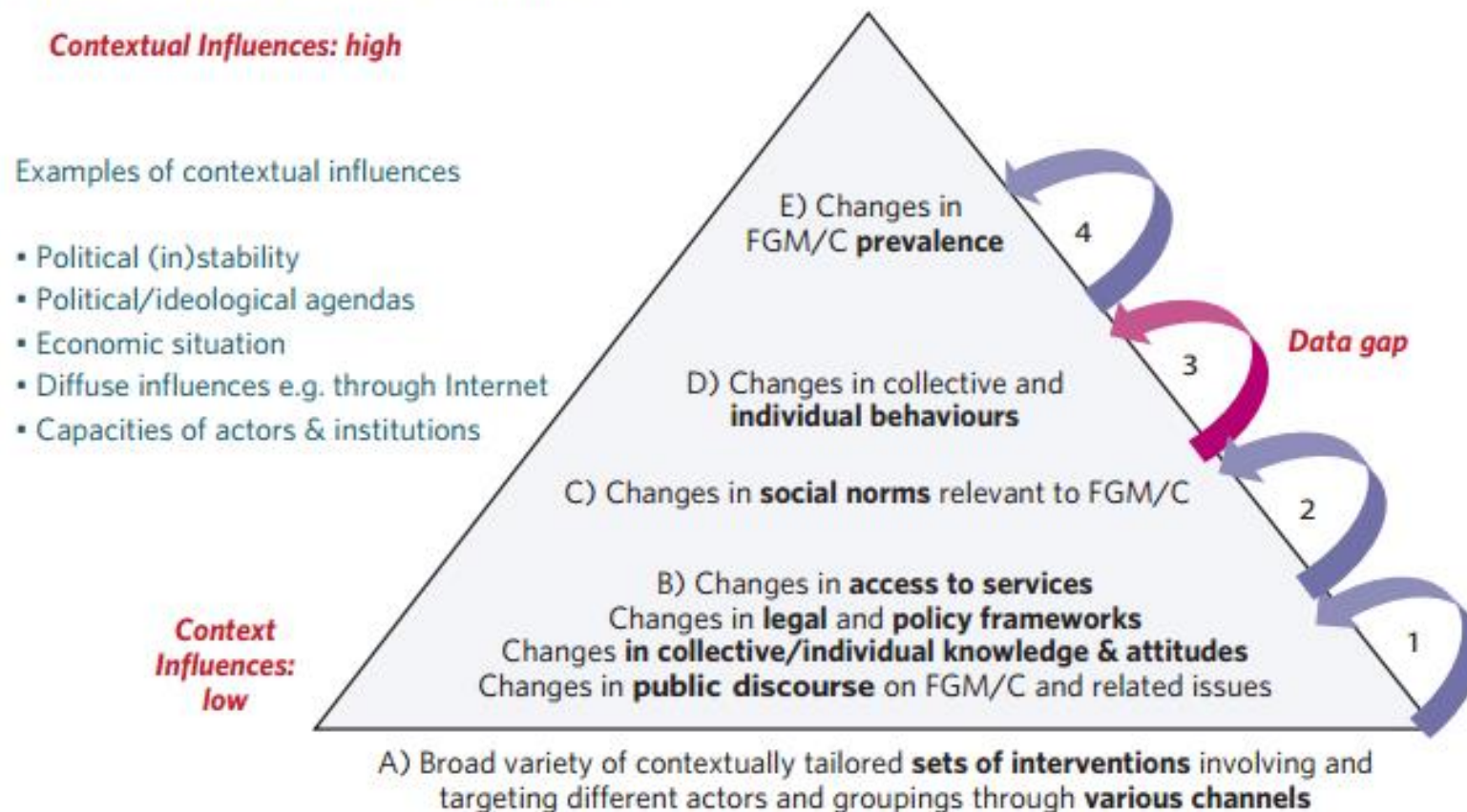


UNDS “Theory of Change” for the UN Development System to Function “As a System”



UNICEF and UNFPA FGM Theory of Change

Diagram 5. Theory of change (simplified)



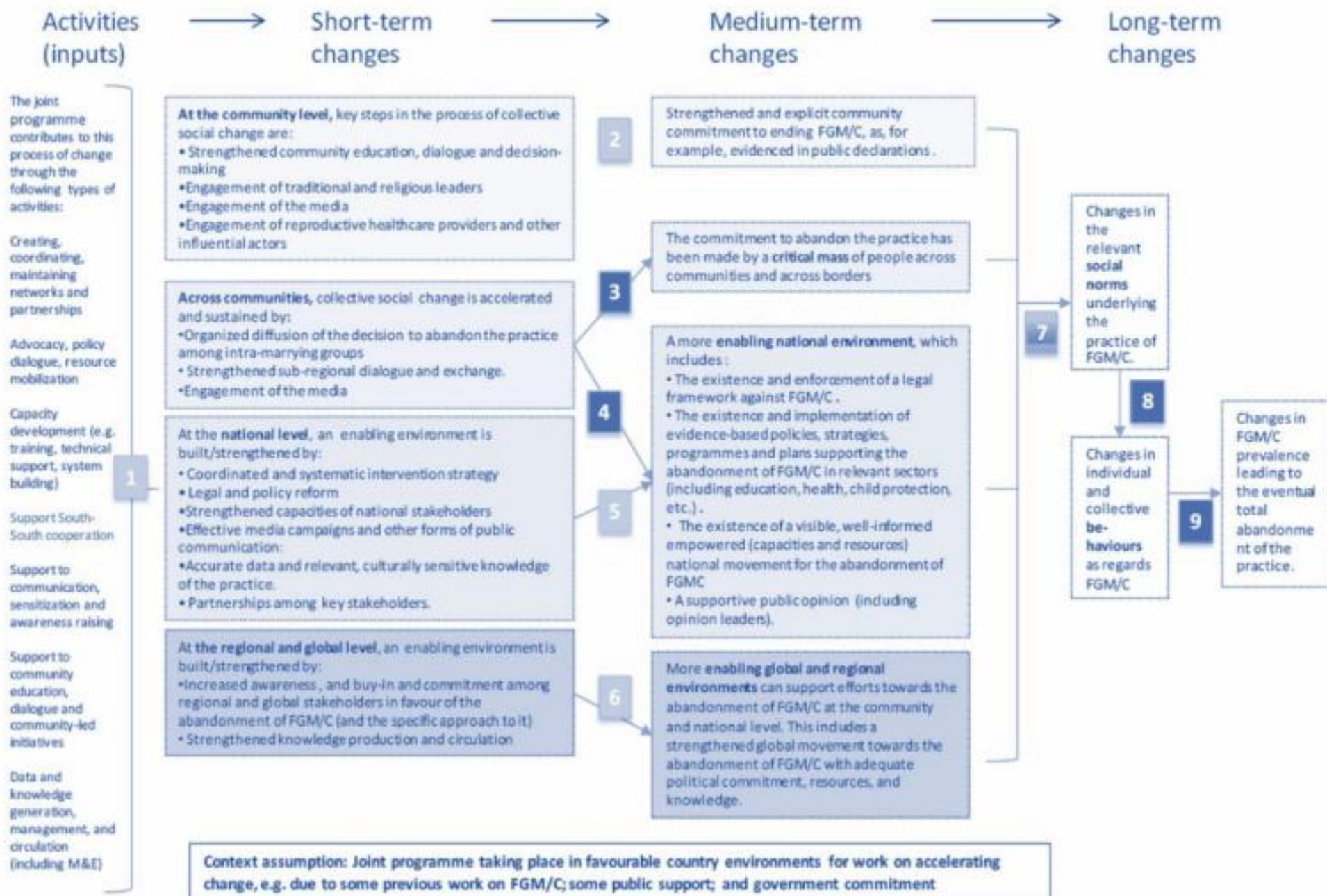
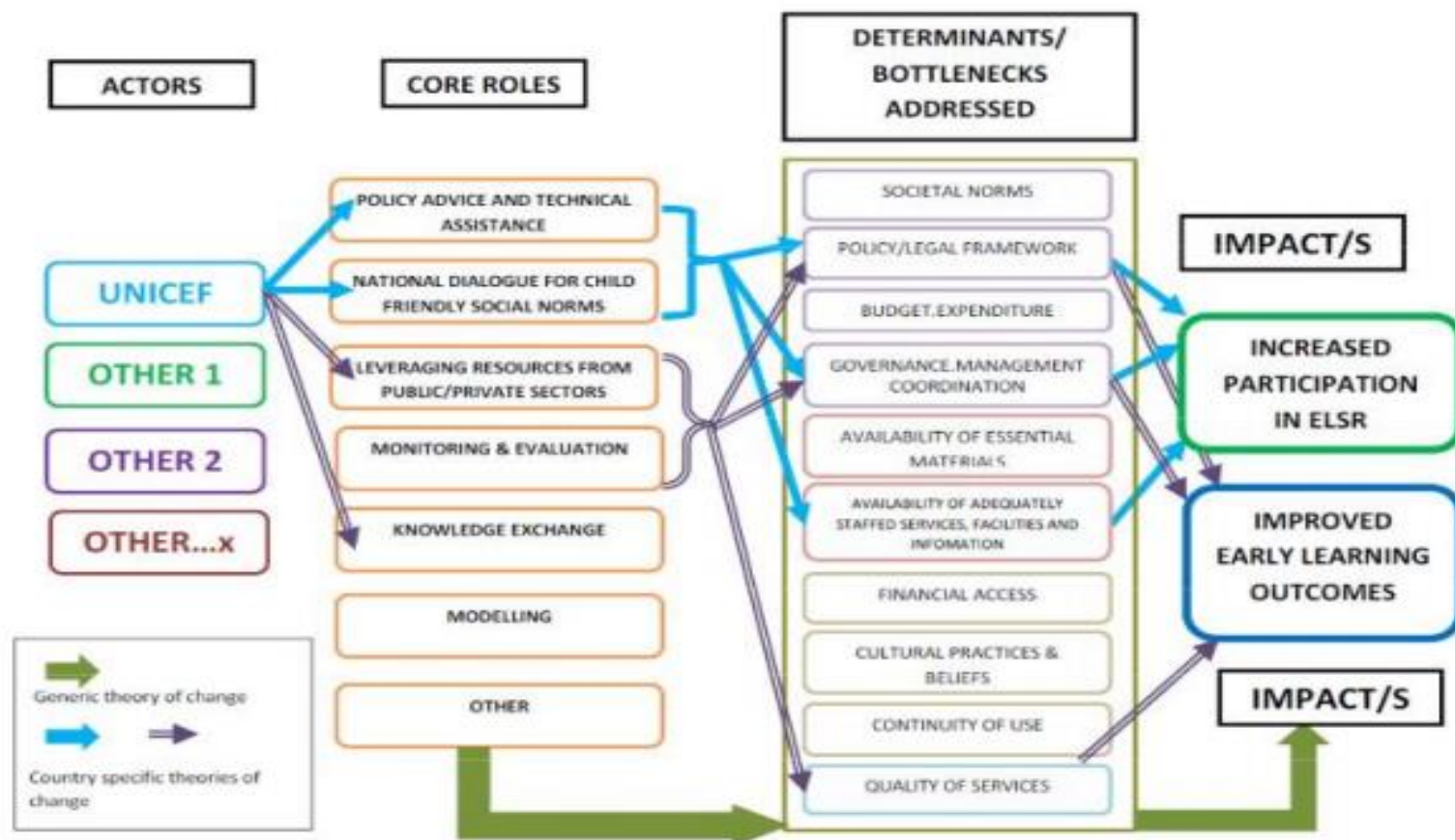


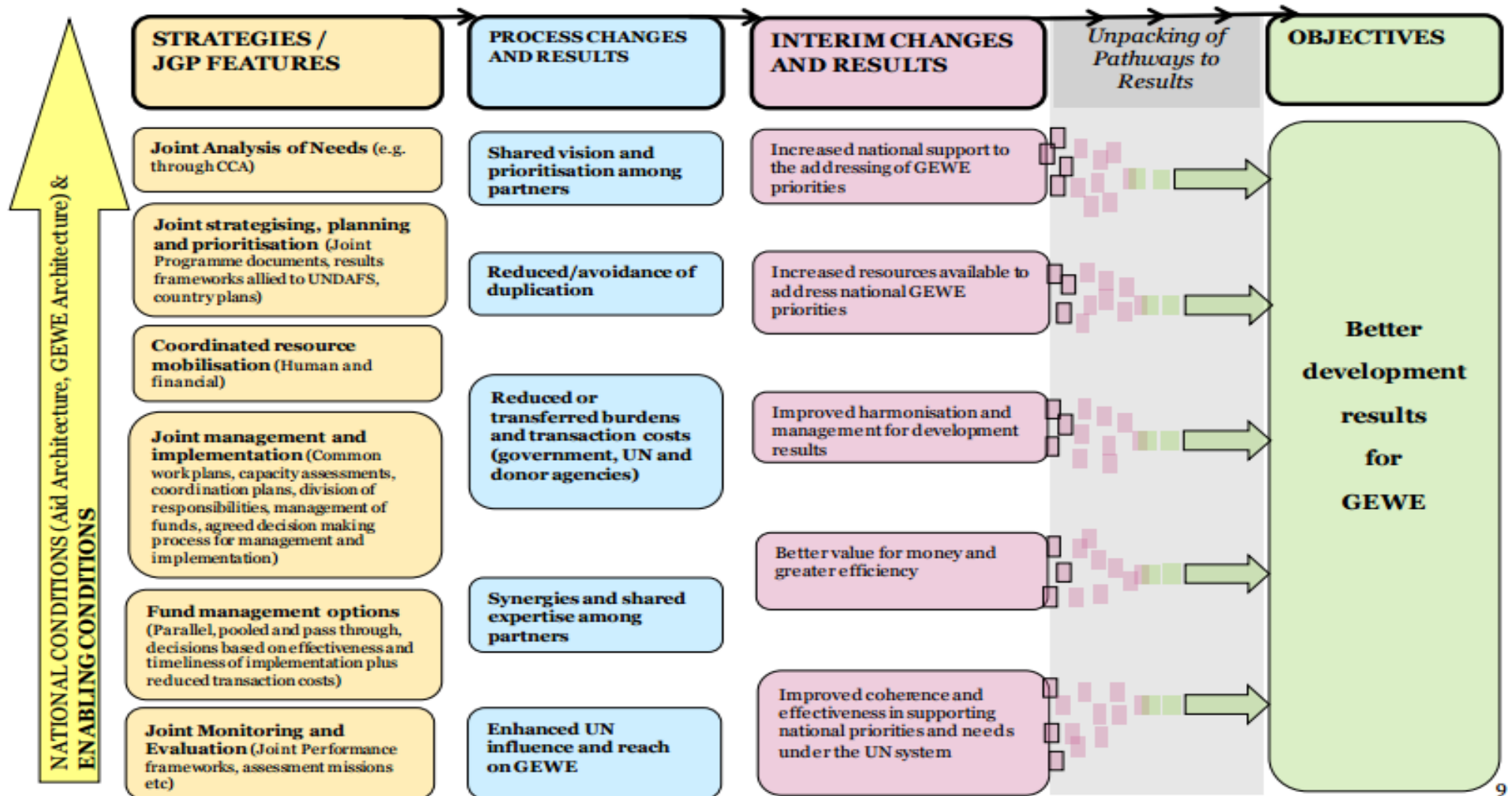
Figure 2. Theory of change for multi-country evaluation on increasing access and equity in early childhood education



Source: UNICEF Regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (2014) Terms of Reference for Multi-country evaluation on increasing access and equity in early childhood education: UNICEF's contribution to achieving results in six CEE-CIS countries, 2005–2012, p. 7.

⁷³ https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/brief_2_theoryofchange_eng.pdf

Figure 1: Preliminary Programme Theory



Annex 2 - Theory of Change Case Study: Promundo

The international nongovernmental organisation Promundo is dedicated to transforming harmful gender norms and unequal power dynamics.⁷⁴ It is guided by a mission to “promote gender equality and prevent violence by engaging men and boys in partnership with women and girls.”⁷⁵ The main tools which Promundo employs to do so are its Programs H and M, internationally recognised instruments in gender transformative programming.

These Programs are guided by a specific theory of change, which adopts a transformative, rights based approach to group education. First, it considers the supporting institutions and structures which underlie the education process, and which can encourage learners to “develop and use the tools to become agents of change for gender justice and social justice”.⁷⁶ Upon these, the education process is built, involving:

- (1) learning by questioning and reflecting critically on gender norms;
- (2) rehearsing equitable attitudes and behaviours; and
- (3) internalising equitable gender attitudes and applying them in their lives.

Promundo envisages that this process, in turn, contributes to “two sets of objectives”:

- gender equity, defined by Promundo as “fairness and justice in the distribution of opportunities, responsibilities, and benefits available to men and women, and the strategies and processes used to achieve gender equality”; and
- attitude and behaviour changes “at the individual and community levels that lead toward transformed gender norms within specific objectives.”⁷⁷

Meeting these objectives, moreover, means working towards the broader “goal” of “the realization of human rights for men and women, and boys and girls”, including “gender justice and social justice”.⁷⁸ The concept of “critical consciousness” spearheaded by educational theorist Paulo Freire (1970) guides Promundo’s approach.⁷⁹ That is, “reflecting critically on the history of cultural conditions and class structures that support and frame experiences of gender inequality”, on the understanding that individuals will be empowered by their reflection towards “personal growth, political awareness, and activism that in turn can create the conditions to achieve greater social and gender justice.”⁸⁰ This involves the dual measures of ensuring “men’s and boy’s engagement as allies in, and beneficiaries of, gender equality”, as well as tackling the “structures underlying gender inequality”⁸¹.

⁷⁴ UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality*. Santo Domingo, p. 54.

⁷⁵ Promundo (n.d.) “About Us”. Available: <http://promundoglobal.org/about/>

⁷⁶ Promundo, Instituto PAPAI, Salud y Género and ECOS (2013) *Program H/M/D: A Toolkit for Action/ Engaging Youth to Achieve Gender Equity*. Promundo: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and Washington, DC, USA. Available: <http://promundoglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Program-HMD-Toolkit-for-Action.pdf>

⁷⁷ Promundo et al. (2013) *Program H/M/D Toolkit*.

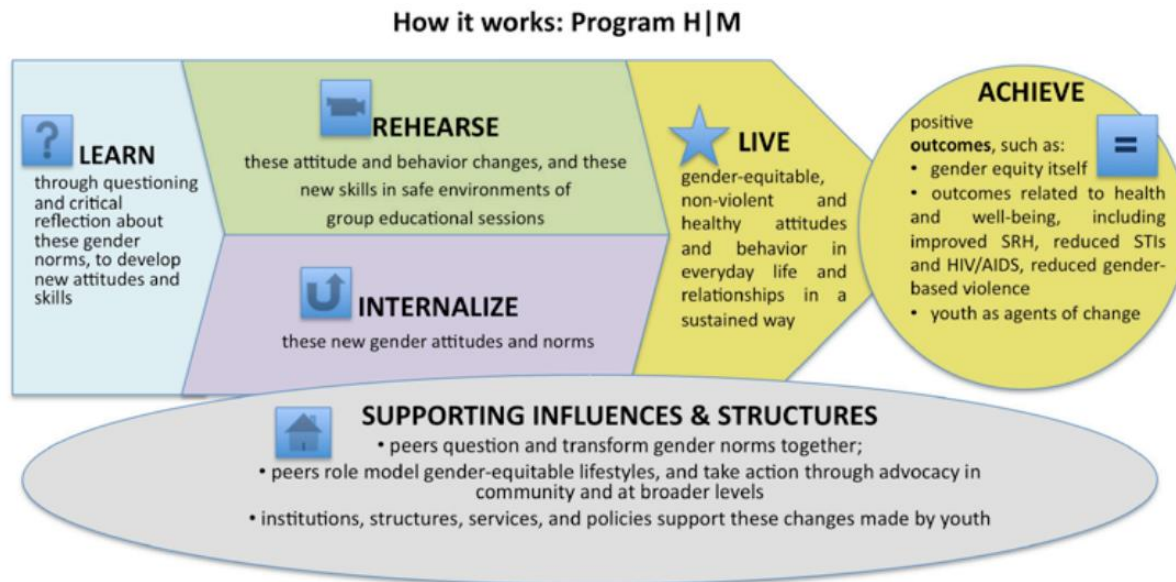
⁷⁸ Promundo et al. (2013) *Program H/M/D Toolkit*, p. 4

⁷⁹ UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality*. Santo Domingo, p. 54.

⁸⁰ Promundo et al. (2013) *Program H/M/D Toolkit*, p. 2.

⁸¹ UN Women Training Centre (2016) *Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality*. Santo Domingo, p. 15.

Figure 1 – Diagram of Promundo's Theory of Change⁸²



⁸² Promundo et al. (2013) Program H/M/D Toolkit, p 4.

