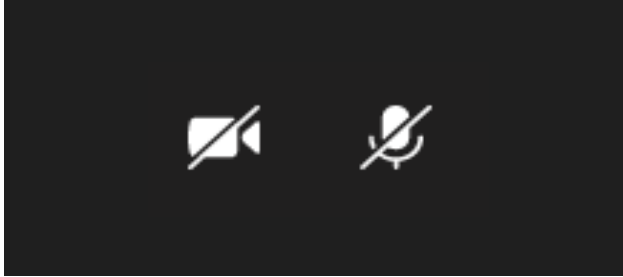


# Reflecting on transformational interventions: The role of theories of change

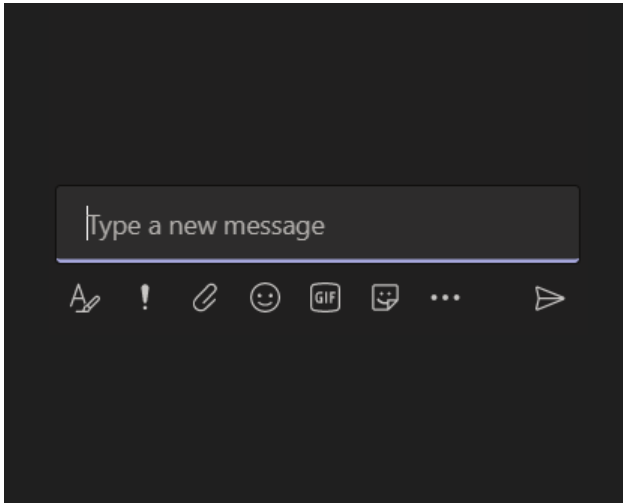
6 June 2024

Sarah Goodier

# Housekeeping rules



**Your microphone & camera should be automatically off in this session**



**If you have a question, please use the chat box**

# Contents

1. What is theory of change?
2. Theory of change: Process and product
3. Using theory of change to support robust reflection on transformational interventions: Facilitating a ToC process

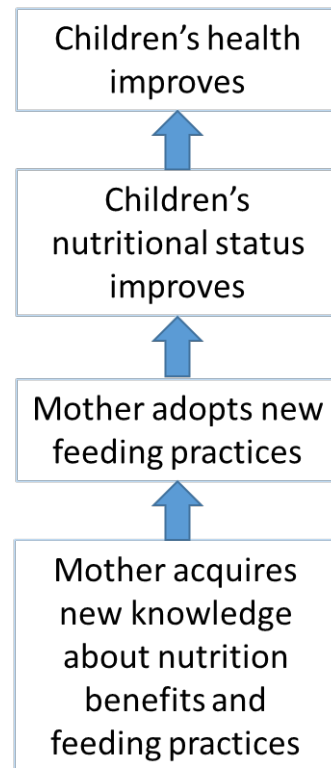
What is theory of change?

# What is ToC?

- A theory of how change happens
- “To understand **how and why an intervention** is working, there is a need to understand how the activities of the intervention are **expected to** lead to the desired results – both the pathway or results chain from activities to outputs to a sequence of outcomes to impacts, and **why the various links in the pathway are expected to work**” (Mayne and Johnson, 2015).

# What is ToC?

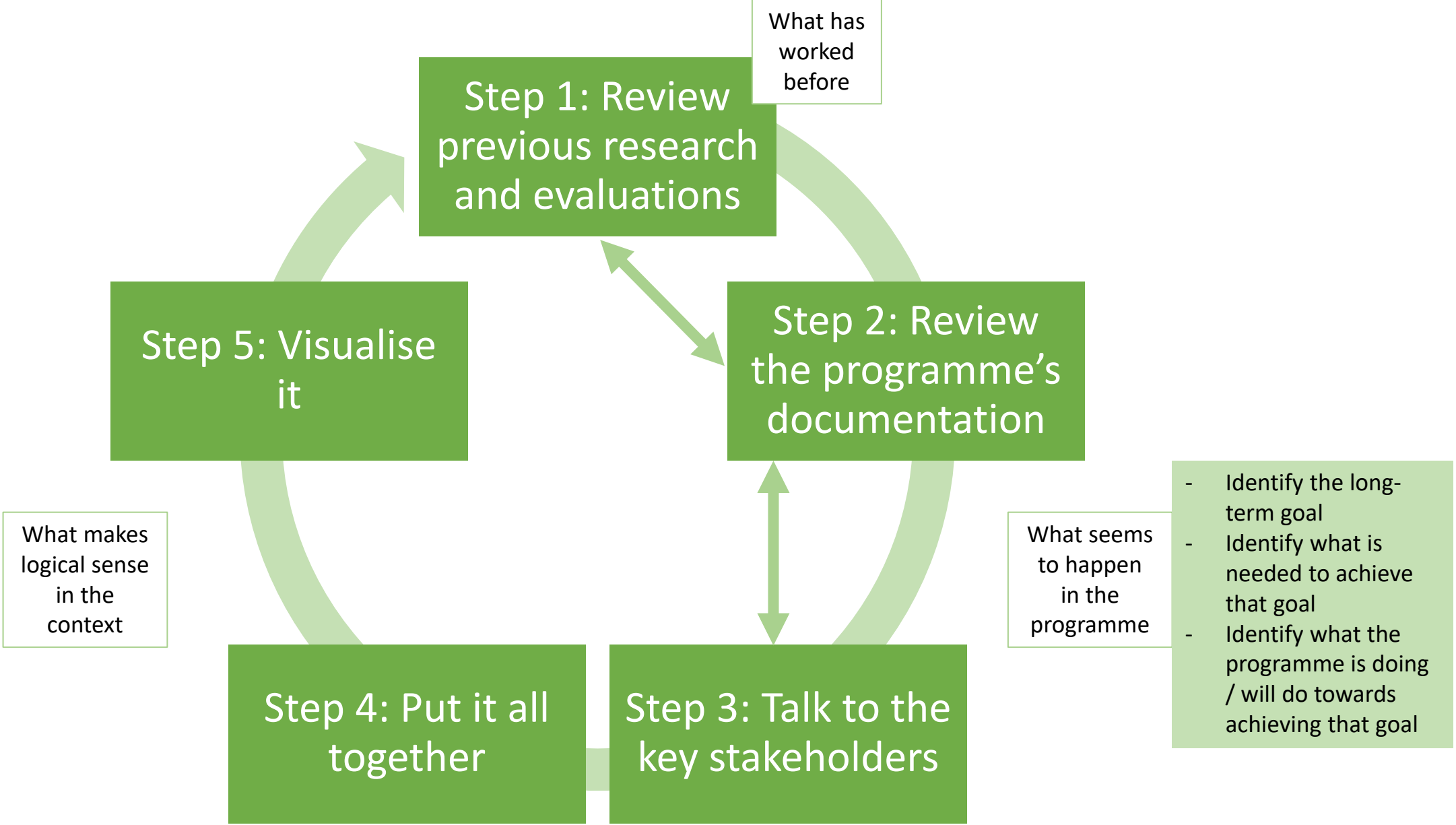
- A theory of how change happens – often visualised as a diagram





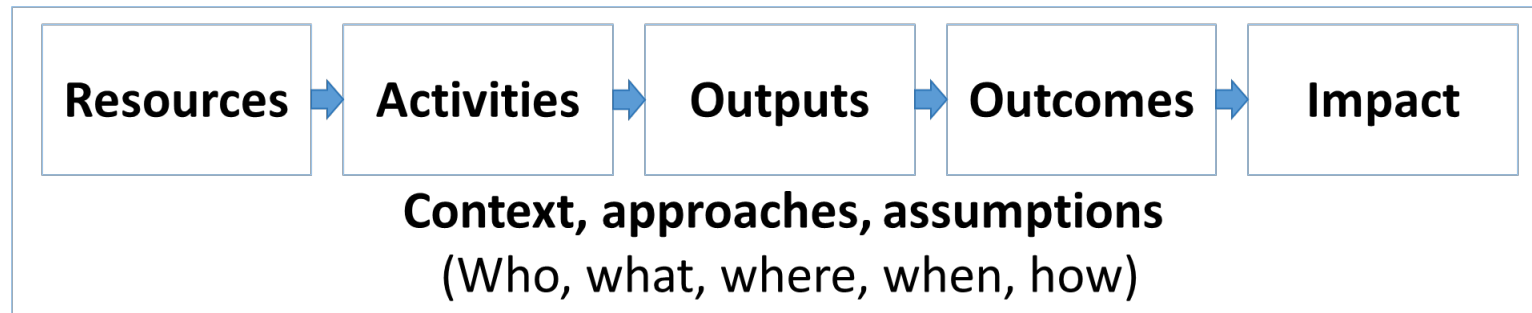
Theory of change as a product

# Basic steps in developing a ToC diagram

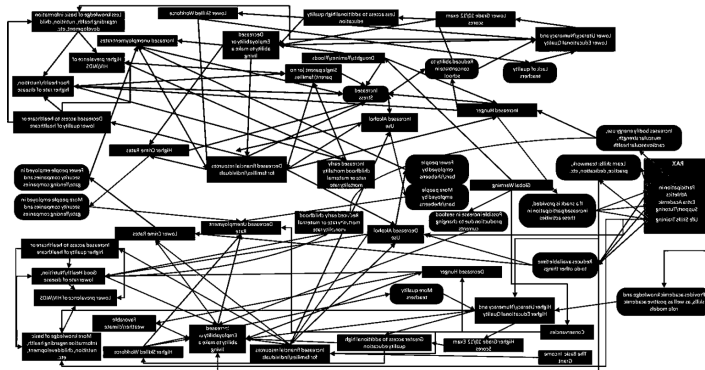


# ToC as a product

- Can be displayed in many ways – aim for clear and coherent



- Avoid spaghetti diagrams!



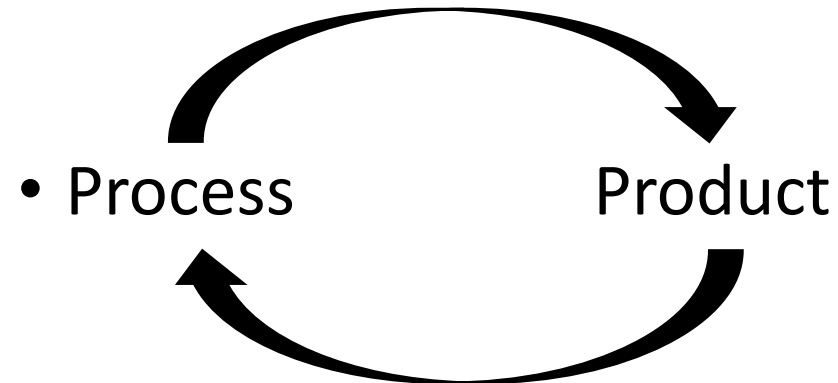
# Theory of change as a process



# Theory of Change is both a process and product...

- Process → Product

Process leads to product being developed



Process leads to product being developed, which in turn informs the process; iterative, cyclical reflection

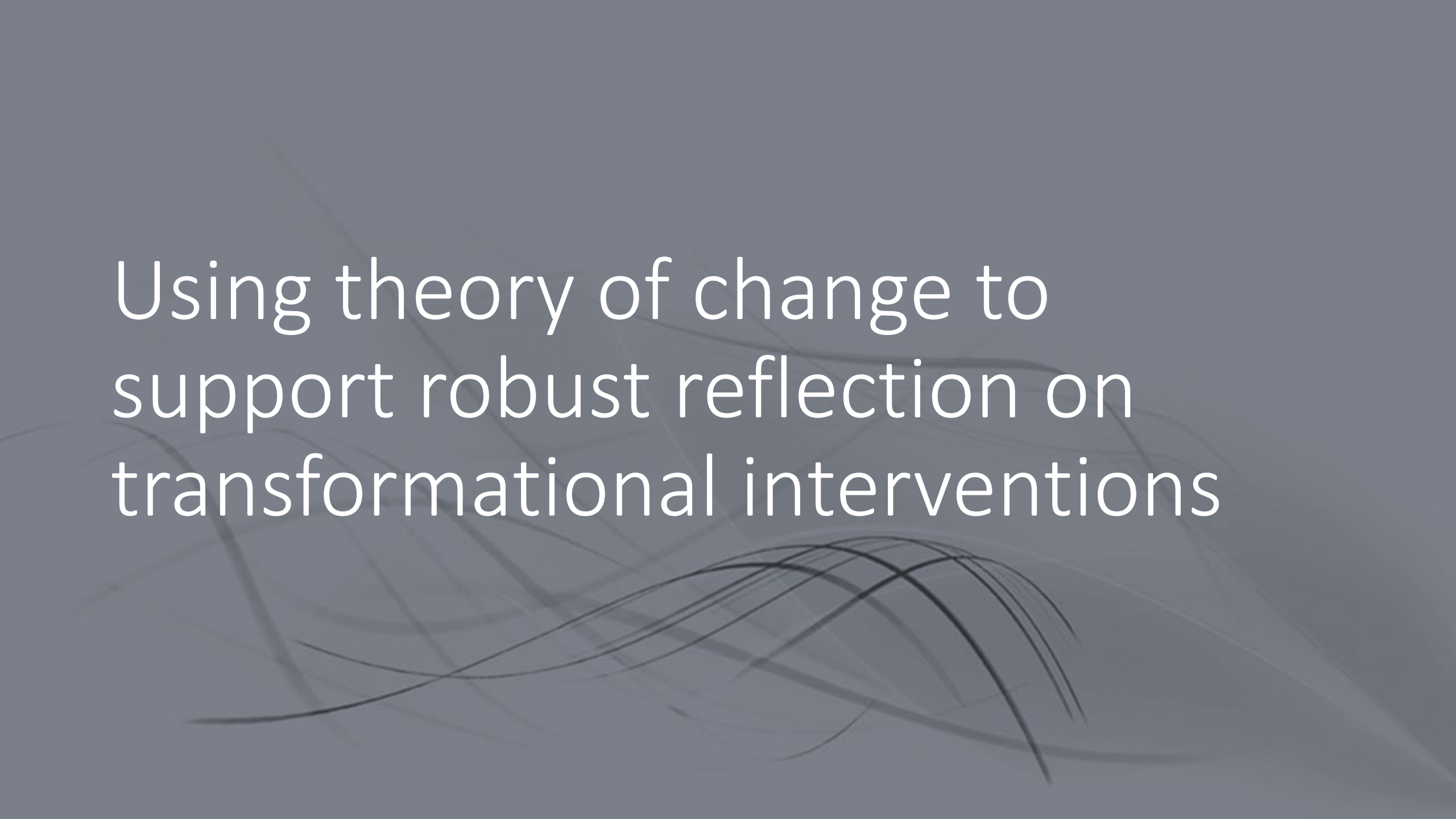
# What is ToC used for?

- **A versatile tool with many uses:**
  - Design and consensus building tool
  - Planning tool
  - Monitoring and evaluation tool
  - Communication tool
  - Reflection and adjustment tool

# Why is ToC needed?

- **Helps get and keep everyone on the same page**
- **Strengthening the programme:** Reflecting on **realistic and achievable outcomes and impact**, given the resources, planned activities and outputs
- **Learning and adapting:** What worked, what didn't
- **Creating and supporting any MEL frameworks and activities:** ToC informs what it will be possible to measure when and using which appropriate indicators
- **Process approach to ToC creates a space for the reflective critical questioning**

Using theory of change to  
support robust reflection on  
transformational interventions



# Facilitating a ToC process with programme staff

- A theory of how change happens – Facilitated, participatory process
  1. What is the change your programme is aiming to bring about?
  2. What are the potential pathways for change in the programme?
  3. What is the context of the system in which your programme will take place?
  4. What is the strategic plan to operationalise the programme?
  5. What are the assumptions underlying the ToC?

(adapted from some of the steps in van Es et al, 2015)

# 1. What is the change your programme is aiming to bring about?

- Ask: What is the programme's desired change/mission/goal? (Intended Impact)

Example programme: **Roads and development in Eastern DRC**

Reduced income poverty and improved security in North and South Kivu



## 2. What are the potential pathways for change in the programme?

- Ask: How will you achieve this? What needs to be put in place to get there?

(i.e. begin to outline the outcomes, outputs, activities and resources)

**Resources**

**Activities**

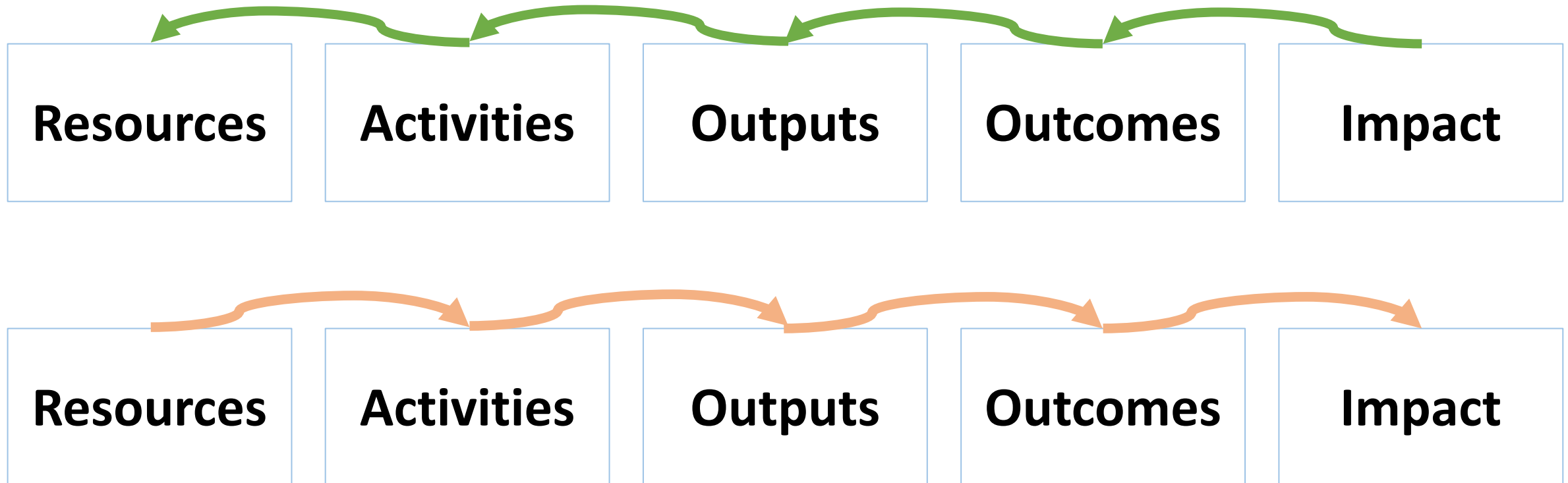
**Outputs**

**Outcomes**

**Impact**

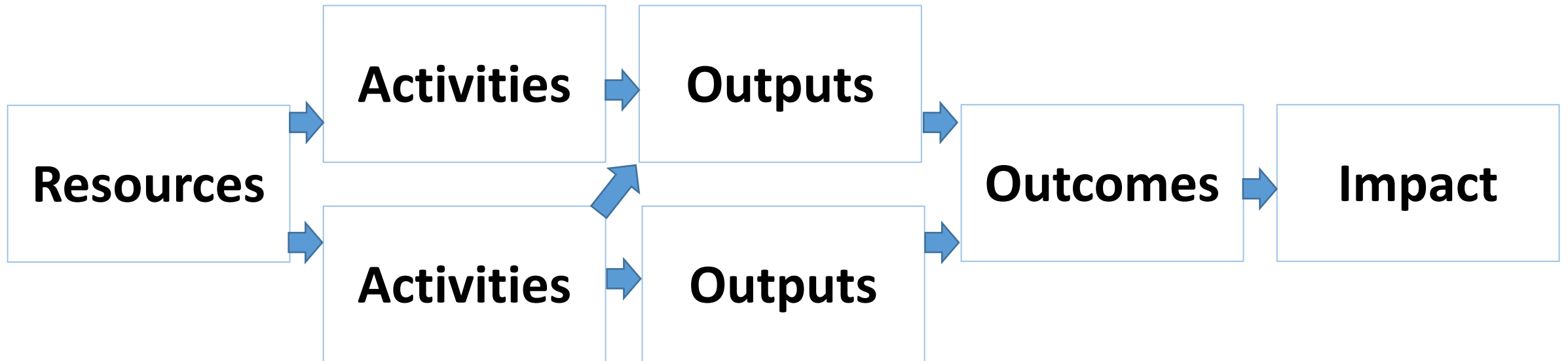
## 2. What are the potential pathways for change in the programme?

- Ask: How will you achieve this? What needs to be put in place to get there?



## 2. What are the potential pathways for change in the programme?

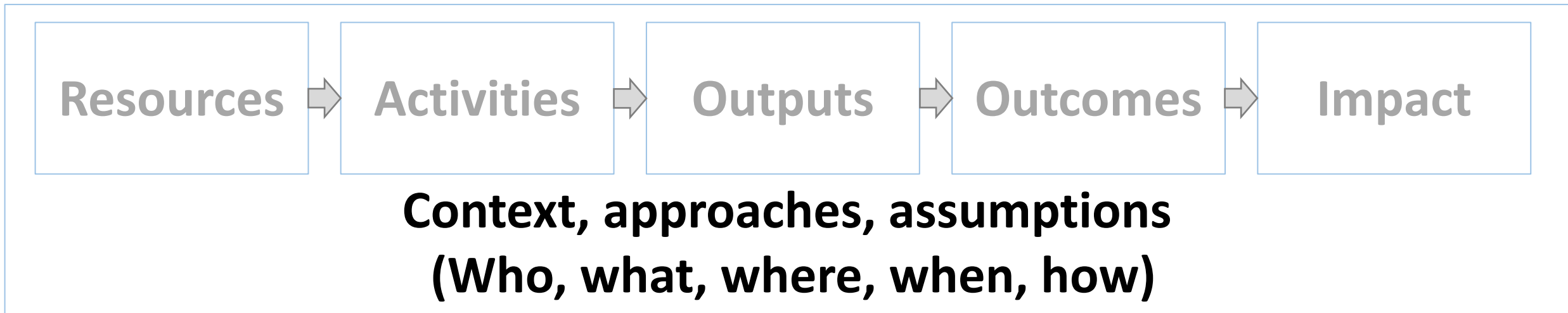
- This should result in a basic start to your ToC:



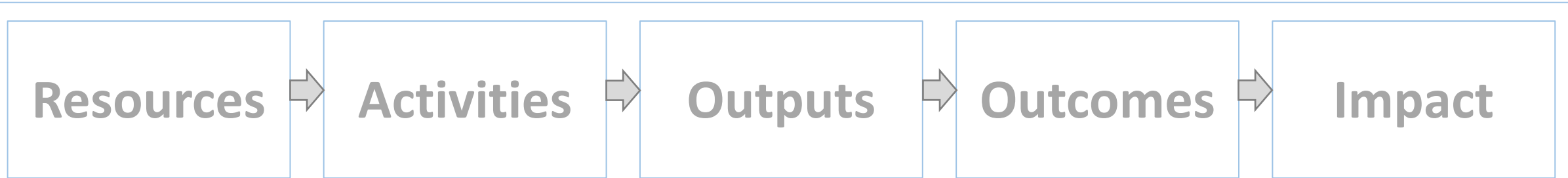
- But this is just the start...

Now **consider** if the activities and outputs *can* lead to the outcomes and impact...

This is dependent on the context, approaches and assumptions.



3. What is the context of the system in which your programme will take place?



### **Context**

Systems, stakeholders

Social, economic, political, gender & power dynamics

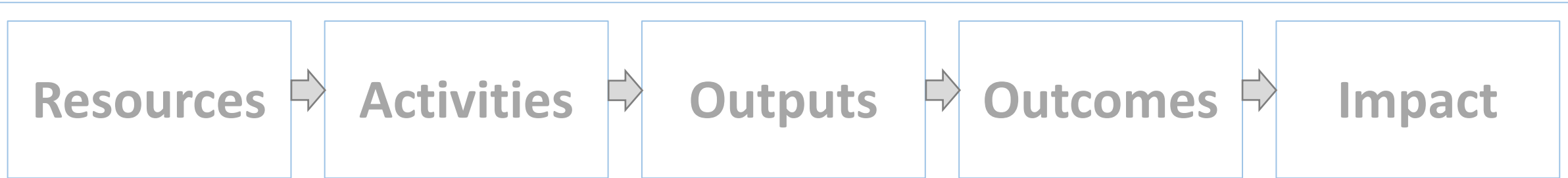
## 4. What is the strategic plan to operationalise the programme?



### **Approaches**

Generally more than one possible approach, given the context and the resources available

## 5. What are the assumptions underlying the ToC?



### **Assumptions**

Make any assumptions explicit and check them (using research findings, good practice, stakeholder experience)

# This should result in a better ToC

How planned programme activities will produce intended outcomes and impacts, with the key contextual factors, different possible approaches and their underlying assumptions articulated

(as far as possible) => ToCs are works in progress!

**Resources**



**Activities**



**Outputs**



**Outcomes**

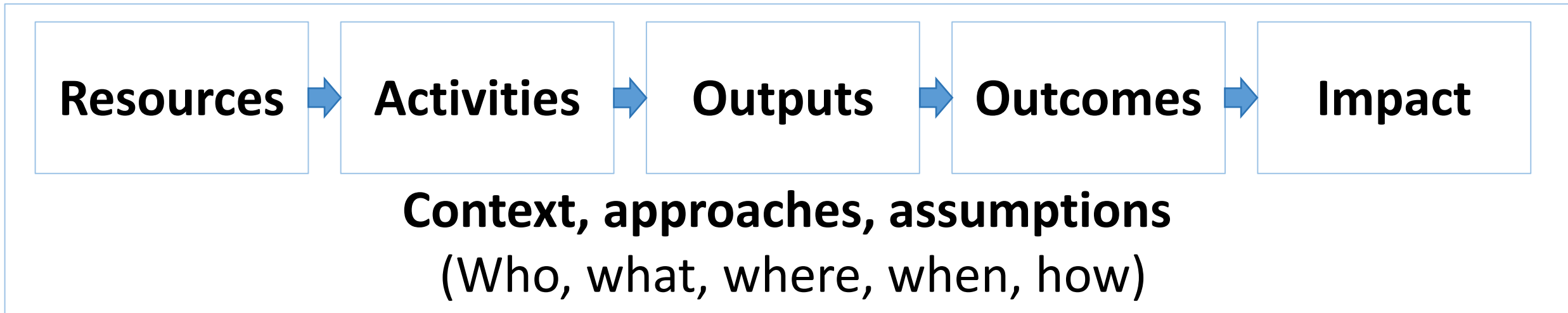


**Impact**

**Context, approaches, assumptions**  
(Who, what, where, when, how)

# And this ToC will help you in M&E

How will the programme be evaluated and how will this allow for learning to take place?



# How do you know you have a 'good' ToC?

- Understandable
- Verifiable
- Testable
- Explained
- Complete
- Inclusive
- Justifiable
- Plausible
- Feasible
- Owned
- Embedded

And:

- **Useful!**

Thank you



# Questions



# ToC vs Logframes – What’s the difference?

<b>Theory of Change</b>	<b>Logframe</b>
Critical thinking, room for complexity and deep questioning	Linear representation of change, simplifies reality
Explanatory: Articulates and explains the what, how and why of the intended change process and the contribution of the initiative	Descriptive: States only what is thought will happen/what will be achieved
Pathways of change, unlimited and parallel result chains or webs, feedback mechanisms	Three result levels: Output, outcome, impact
Ample attention for the plausibility of assumed causal relations	Suggests causal relations between results levels without analysing and explaining these
Articulates assumptions underlying the strategic thinking of the design of a policy, programme or project	Focuses on assumptions about external conditions