

Integrated Development A THEORY OF CHANGE





TOO MANY DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES HAVE LIMITED IMPACT.

Preferred and predetermined solutions often drive responses, regardless of the real problem or its actual causes, evidence of effectiveness, or meaningful local participation in making decisions and solving problems. Moreover, many development efforts (effective or not) are uncoordinated, overlapping, or duplicative and thus waste valuable and limited resources. At the same time, we know that determinants of quality of life, particularly at the household level, are so intimately linked that successes in one domain are often limited or negatively affected by problems in another. For example, improvements in food security and nutrition go only so far when families do not have access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene. We understand that problems are connected but do not yet know whether, when, or how their solutions should be similarly connected.



Therefore, deepening our understanding of the complexity of challenges and contexts and customizing our responses to simultaneously address multiple aspects of communities and people's lives could provide a powerful opportunity to improve the way development efforts are designed, delivered, and evaluated. Integrated Development: A Theory of Change¹ outlines the ultimate goal and long-term outcome we seek to achieve through this lens. Our ultimate goal, "Development efforts are more impactful," goes above and beyond what is commonly referred to as an 'accountability ceiling,' which separates the outcomes an organization will monitor (and claim credit for attaining) from the higher-order outcomes that are beyond the organization's power to achieve (i.e., those outcomes influenced by multiple external factors). Therefore, our long-term outcome, serving as the goal within our accountability ceiling (i.e., what we can influence), is "Integrated development approaches are considered when tackling complex, interrelated development challenges and their root causes, and deployed when appropriate." Importantly, this outcome treats integrated development as a possible means to an end, and therefore is neither a goal in itself nor necessarily the most appropriate approach in all cases. The core aim, rather, is for integrated approaches to be explored for effectiveness, routinely considered within decision making, and systematically supported if they will add value and produce the most impact.

To realize our long-term outcome, three broad pre-conditions must be present: 1) development efforts are sufficiently responsive to the multi-faceted nature of people's lives, 2) an improved evidence base has determined the impact of integrated development approaches and is applied to decision making, and 3) a paradigm shift in the global development architecture supports the funding, design, delivery, and evaluation of integration where it is most effective. By articulating these pre-conditions, the changes required to create them, and the activities that will realistically produce the desired outcomes, the theory of change seeks to answer the question "What will it take to address human development challenges holistically using integrated development approaches where appropriate?" It also describes the core assumptions underlying our overarching theory. For each pre-condition, the relevant changes, outcomes, and activities are briefly described on the following pages.

¹ FHI 360 defines integrated development as an intentional approach that links the design, delivery, and evaluation of programs across disciplines and sectors to produce an amplified, lasting impact on people's lives.
² In standard Theory of Change language, the term pre-condition means any and all outcomes that must be achieved before a long-term outcome can be realized.



UNDERLYING ASSUMPTIONS

- → Understanding and acknowledgement of the complexity and interconnectedness of global challenges are on the rise, but development approaches have not caught up.
- → It is possible to change the way development is done despite a historically slow-moving enterprise.
- → Communities when invited to engage — will report better descriptions of real problems, demand more holistic and customized solutions, and be good stewards of development efforts.
- → Learning and robust evidence are underutilized in decision making.
- → Integration is not new, but the development community is better poised for success now because of improvements in data, technology, capacity, and guiding principles.



PRE-CONDITION:

Development efforts are sufficiently responsive to the multifaceted nature of people's lives To tackle actual problems and their root causes, development initiatives need to be more transparent and effective in addressing the substantial complexity of the problems they seek to solve. In other words, the approaches may need to be as interconnected as the problems. This pre-condition assures that development activities reflect an improved understanding of system complexities, are less assumptive and less-frequently driven by entrenched solutions seeking problems, and deploy activities that are appropriately human-centered in their design and are customized to their contexts.

ACTIVITIES

Incentivize and improve capacity for problemdriven design (in part through enhanced rootcause analyses that include families and communities); identify current missed opportunities within development initiatives for meeting needs and points of duplication that cause waste; identify common ground/goals/ interdependencies across sectors and raise awareness of them among key stakeholders; facilitate cross-discipline dialogue and problem solving; and nurture systems thinkers and other champions to be collective agents of change.

CATALYTIC OUTCOME

Development professionals are aware of different models of integration and their levels of effectiveness. and they know how to design, implement, and evaluate the models using established tools and guidance; systems thinkers (i.e., people who can transcend specialties) regularly collaborate to solve problems and design strategies tailored to root causes and context and include the families and communities intended to benefit; functioning platforms/mechanisms exist for people with shared interests to dialogue across sectors/disciplines; and development challenges are well understood, including all of the causes and influencing factors.

CHANGES NECESSARY

Integrated approaches are routinely considered, with costs, benefits, and impact weighed against single-sector approaches when efforts are being designed (in partnership with the families and communities they intend to benefit); when appropriate, integrated development approaches are deployed; and people and practitioners have sufficient capacity to design, deliver, and evaluate high-quality impactful integrated development initiatives.



PRE-CONDITION:

An improved evidence base has determined the impact of integrated development approaches and is applied to decision making Substantial commitments (financial and behavioral) are required to improve the way we learn about, measure, and refine our initiatives. Moreover, knowledge needs to be applied iteratively, catalyzing the pursuit of promising approaches and the retirement of others revealed to be ineffective (no matter how entrenched, popular, or well-funded). Within this context, many integrated development approaches are being evaluated with respect to their ultimate impact but not for whether there was value added or synergy produced specifically because they were integrated. This pre-condition assures that this knowledge gap has been addressed and that decision makers actively apply findings to development funding, policies, and programs.

ACTIVITIES

CATALYTIC OUTCOME

Identify current knowledge and evidence gaps related to integrated development; improve the capacity of development professionals for proper research and evaluation on integrated models; design research to address existing evidence gaps; ensure that integrated development approaches already in practice are welldocumented, disseminated, and used to inform best practices (in part through appreciative inquiries and adaptive learning and management models); based on available data, program models, and evidence, identify which problem sets likely require integrated approaches; confirm through rigorous evaluation which integrated approaches are best in what scenarios; and strengthen the capacity of decision makers to appropriately apply highquality evidence.

Evidence is produced that shows which combinations of approaches yield amplified impact or efficiencies, whether an integrated or a targeted approach will be better in specific contexts, and the cost/benefits of different options as they relate to various problem sets, including integration; research findings and programmatic experiences are synthesized and disseminated to relevant decision makers; and development stakeholders are aware of and understand the implications of the evidence.

CHANGES NECESSARY

Sufficient evidence and knowledge about whether, when, and how integrated approaches are beneficial has been generated and shared; and key decision makers access, understand, and use the available evidence.



PRE-CONDITION:

A paradigm shift in the global development architecture supports the funding, design, delivery, and evaluation of integration where it's most effective Important changes to the global development enterprise are required to move beyond the status quo and alter deeply entrenched patterns of decision making in development. This pre-condition implies that commitments to doing things differently are made from all spheres of development (i.e., from local communities, experts, policy makers, funders).

ACTIVITIES

Identify windows of opportunity for dialogue on integrated development in the implementation of the sustainable development goals agenda; conduct advocacy at all levels for the known benefits of integration; facilitate multi-level stakeholder engagement, including strengthening local and community participation in the demand, design, and delivery of development interventions; and raise awareness and understanding of integrated development among donors and other influential stakeholders.

CATALYTIC OUTCOME

Donors are aware of the benefits of certain integrated approaches and call for them in proposals where appropriate; increased global attention is paid toward integrated strategies and legitimized through support from global normative bodies (e.g., United Nations agencies); high-level decision makers have a better understanding of the processes needed to facilitate integration (e.g., resource harmonization, joint planning, coordinated implementation); local governments start providing and demanding more holistic and integrated services/support to their constituents; informed/ effective change agents influence the development and integration discourse; and stakeholders at all spheres of influence, including the local level, are given a platform for participation in dialogues

and decision making.

CHANGES NECESSARY

Meaningful multi-level engagement occurring through development efforts that are debated, defined, owned, and refined by a wide range of decision makers at all levels, including local people, in an ongoing process; funders proactively support deeper analysis of problems, fewer pre-determined designs, and more integrated development approaches (when they are most fit for purpose) with realistic time lines and resources to implement and rigorously evaluate them; and communities demand more holistic approaches and less duplication.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Gregory Beck Integrated Development Director AskID@fhi360.org