Welcome!

CAUSAL
PATHWAYS

Causal Pathways:

Introduction to the Qualitative Impact Protocol - QuIP

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The Causal Pathways Initiative

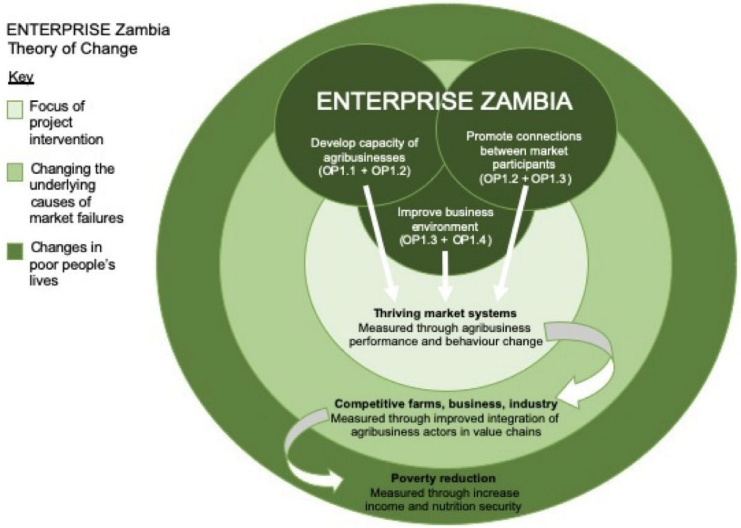
Making visible the "black box" of philanthropic and systems change strategies, helping us collectively see how systems are (or are not) changing

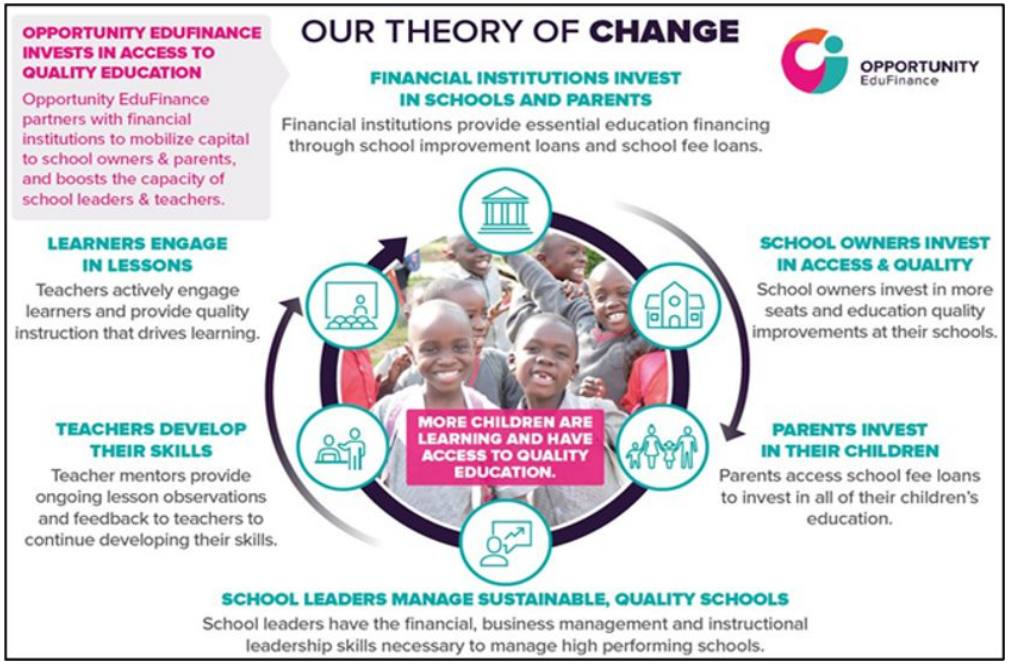
An international network of evaluators, methodologists, philanthropic leaders, and more.

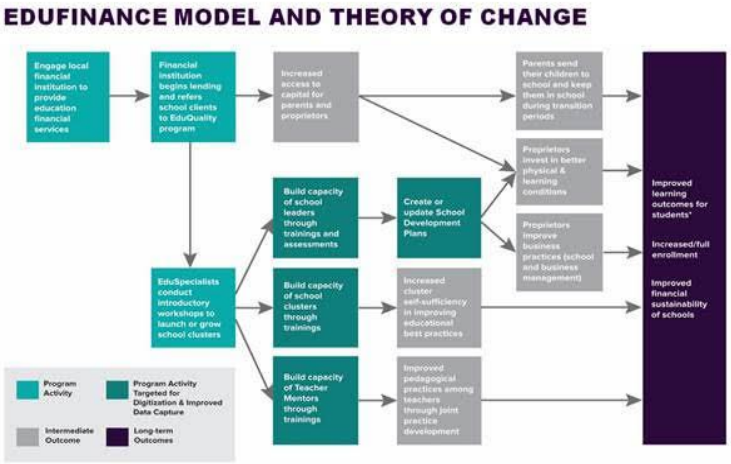
Focused on supporting philanthropy, other funders and their evaluation partners to open-up the black box of strategy and systems change by **building awareness, will, and skills to use evaluation approaches that can make sense of causal relationships** without depending on more traditional experimental and quasi-experimental approaches.

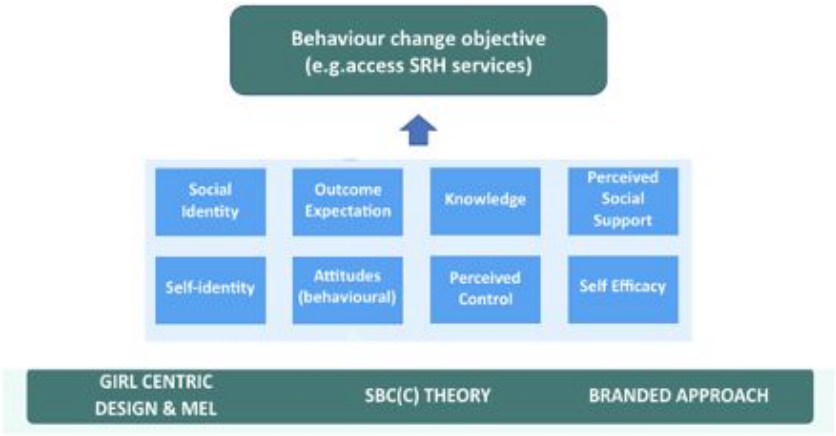
CAUSAL PATHWAYS

What do you think causes what?

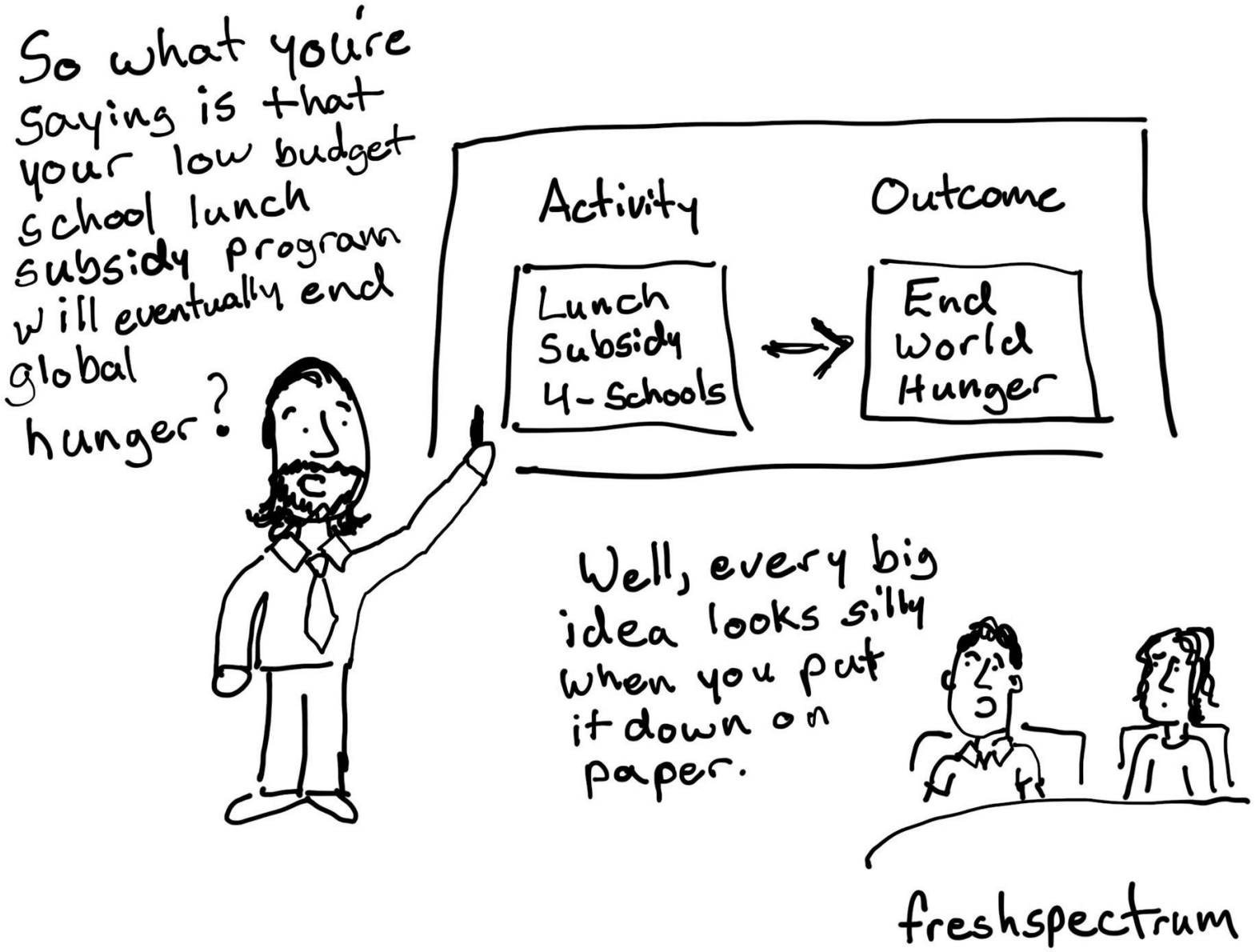








Does your programme need a reality check?



How to understand and differentiate the causes of impact?

Method	Issues
Performance management based on operational data	Positional biases Vested interests Mission drift Lack of rigour
Quantitative impact assessment	Costly Can be extractive Narrowly framing Focus on average effects – not how, why & for whom
Theory led qualitative impact evaluation methods (including QuIP)	Which method to choose? e.g. from process tracing, contribution analysis, outcome harvesting… Less precision
Qualitative social research (including ethnography & participatory methods)	Costly Lack of transparency to non-participants Relevance and timeliness

Qualitative Impact Protocol: Features

Developed to address key issues identified with qualitative social research (cost, transparency, relevance, timeliness):

- Relies on **self-reported attribution** to understand impact (rather than statistically inferred attribution based on exposure variation)
- Does not require a control group to infer impact, or such a large sample size
- Exploratory - allows respondents to tell us what is important in key outcome domains
- Embraces complexity – including multiple intended and unintended causal pathways.
- Additive – each source adds to confidence in being able to generalize about likely causal pathways, and to apply understanding to specific contexts

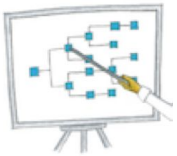
1. Research and case selection:

In what **areas** of people's lives do you expect to see change and **who** should have experienced that change? Identify groups who may experience change differently.

2. Goal-free interviews:

Independent, local researchers with little or no knowledge of the programme ask guided questions about change **without any prompting about inputs**. Let respondents explain the reasons for change as **they** perceive it.

3. Qualitative data analysis focuses on mapping causal connections in people's stories – what causes what?



4. Integration and sensemaking:

What does this mean for your intervention? Are your stakeholders being impacted as you expect, what are the blockers, derailers or positive reinforcers?

Understand your impact in more than numbers

QuIP

Qualitative Impact Protocol: collecting stories of change from the perspective of intended beneficiaries and mapping the causal connections **they** make.

Where and when to use?

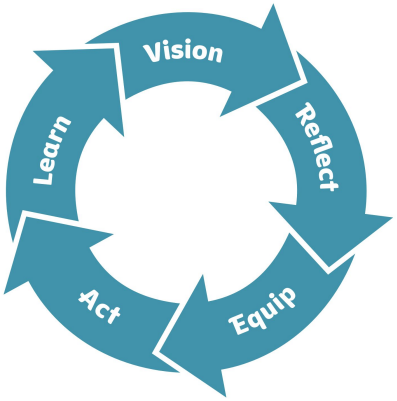
- Design - for needs assessment, diagnostic or exploratory research
- For concurrent evaluations and reviews to facilitate timely adaptions and adjustments
- For final impact evaluations, including as part of mixed method studies
- Selective deep dives into a portfolio of projects or grants
- To test and refine the ideas underpinning an organization’s vision and strategy

A case study: Tearfund

Evaluation Question:
How and in what way do the Church and Community Transformation processes affect poverty and people's lives?

Countries: Uganda, Sierra Leone, Bolivia and Nepal

Size: 48 individual interviews and 8 focus group discussions per study



Summary: Tearfund is a Christian charity working in over 50 countries, responding to disasters, doing advocacy work and community development. These evaluations explored the impacts of the Church and Community Transformation programme, known as CCT. Through partnering with churches, Tearfund aims to mobilise churches to take an active role in addressing community issues as identified by the community themselves.

tearfund

Why QuIP?

Community meeting in Uganda. *Photo: Andrew Philip/Tearfund*

1. Lack of baseline and other monitoring data

2. ‘Blindfolding’ to reduce bias gave them more confidence

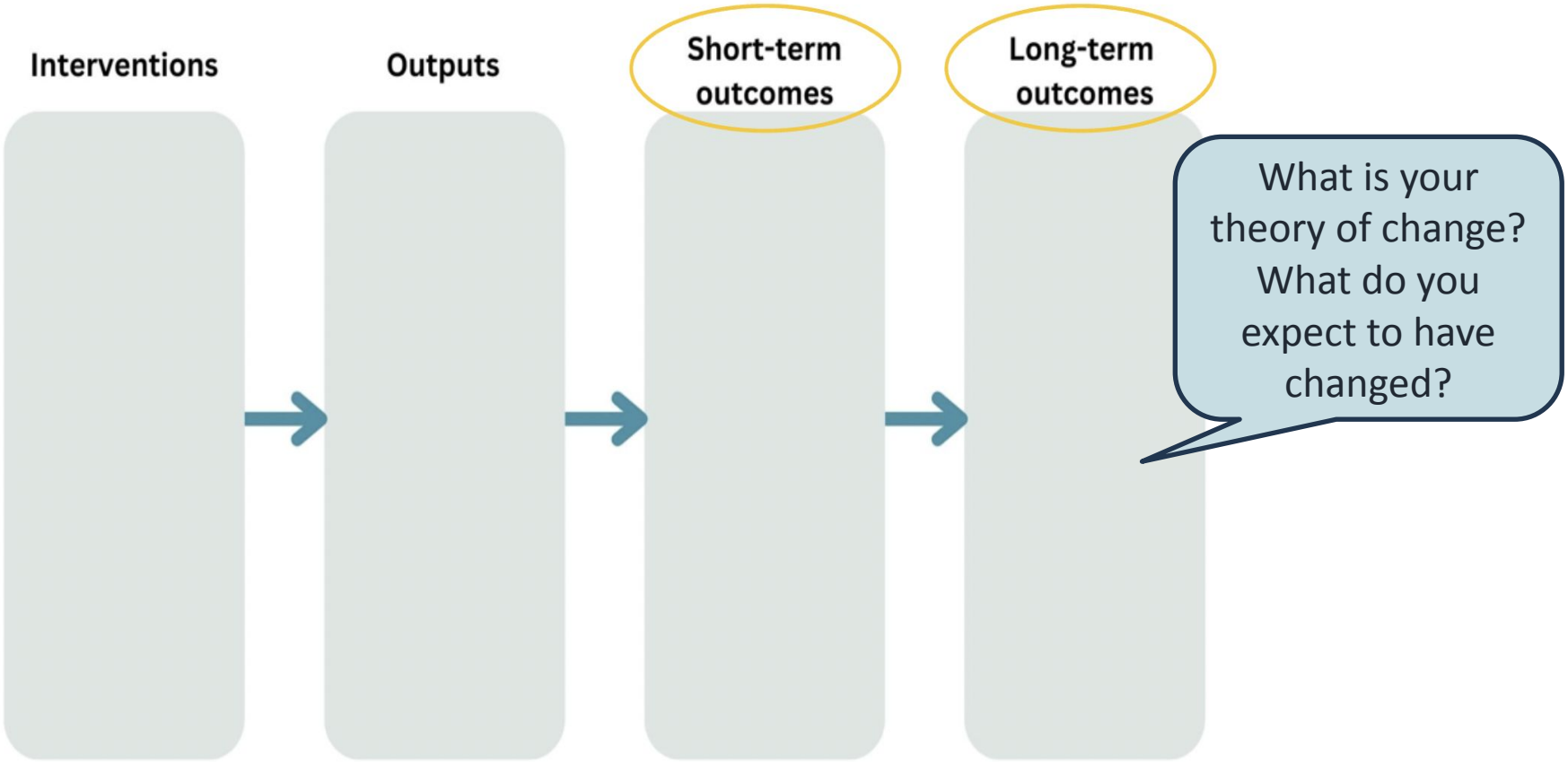
3. Commitment to learning about what works, what doesn’t and how **directly** from those affected by the programme.

4. No set metrics to measure as approach different in each community – an exploratory approach better

5. Transparent analysis helped with sharing results

How to ask questions which give you causal information?

Outcomes-based interviews



How to ask questions which give you causal information?

Outcomes-based interviews

List your key ‘domains’ of change and design questions around those **intended outcomes** – NOT inputs

e.g. Income:

✓ *How has your income changed in the last x years (increased/decreased); why and how has it changed?*

✗ *How has the training provided by X affected your income and by how much?*

How to ask questions which give you causal information?

Outcomes-based interviews

List your key ‘domains’ of change and design questions around those **intended outcomes** – NOT inputs

e.g. Health:

✓ *How has your family’s health changed in the last x years (improved/ worse); why and how has it changed?*

✗ *Has using the new community sanitation centre had an impact on your family’s health?*

Tearfund expected change
e.g. More community cohesion

Do you feel that there has been any change in the way people in the community work together?

- *At the community level, have any changes been made or are planned to be made to improve the wellbeing of the community?*
- *If yes, why have these changes happened?*
- *If no, what is hindering the community?*
- *Do you feel the community has the resources and ability to make these changes?*
- *Is there any change in how people feel they can express opinions and/or speak up about problems in the community? What are the reasons for these changes?*

Taken from Tearfund Bolivia study

Who to interview? Sample selection

Step 1. Define the population group and obtain lists.

Step 2. Assess variation within the population group (e.g. in exposure to intervention (X), measured outcomes (Y), geographical context and socioeconomic characteristics (Z).

Step 3. Decide on the overall sample size – usually a multiple of 24 interviews + 4 focus groups

Step 4. Stratify the population by X, Y and Z into sub-groups (e.g. positive and negative 'deviants') to ensure the sample picks up key differences within the population.

Step 5. Randomly quota sample each selected sub-group.

Sample selection principles

Increase the sample so long as the marginal benefit of an extra data point is likely to justify the marginal cost

Exploratory studies – aspire to 'saturation' (no more codes added)

Confirmatory – sufficient data to (dis)confirm prior beliefs ('Bayesian')

Constraints

- Weak monitoring data
- Weak prior theory
- Geogaphical dispersion of population
- Fixed budgets and time

For more detail – see Copestake, J. (2020). Case and evidence selection for robust generalisation in impact evaluation. **Development in Practice**. 31(2): 150-160.

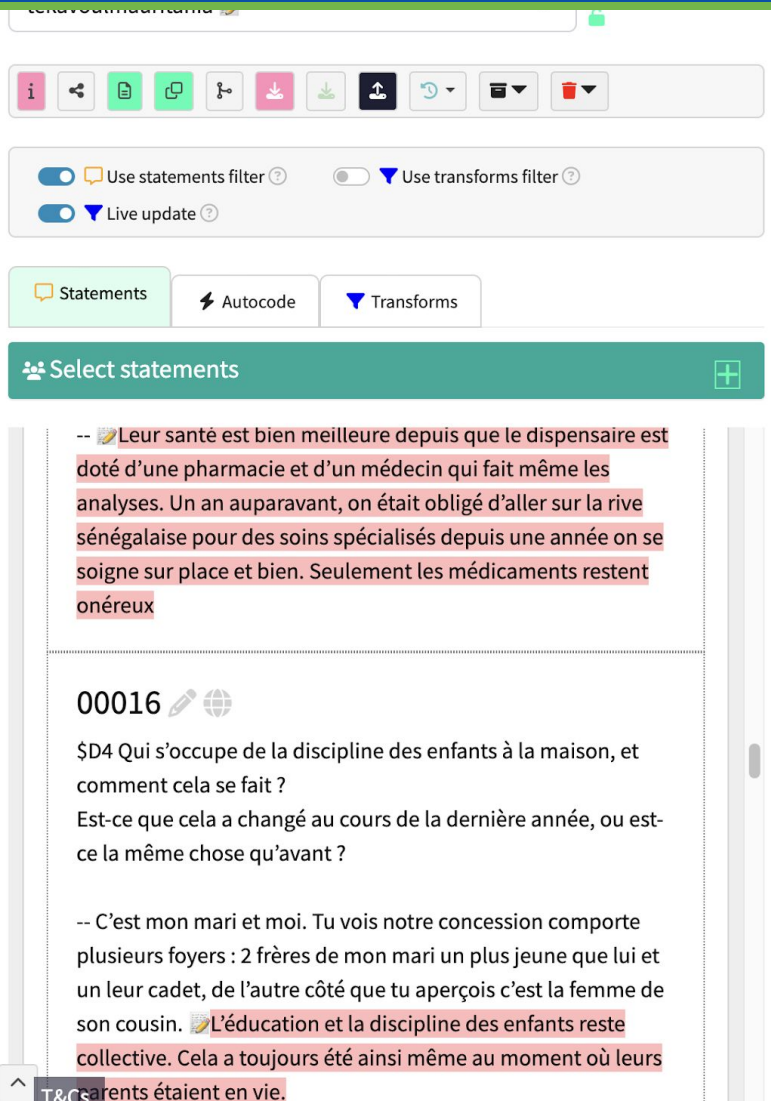
Collecting data

Tearfund sampling more opportunistic as no known outcomes. Stratified by areas around churches known to be active, and community wealth ranking used in some countries:

48 in each country, split over at least 4 different locations

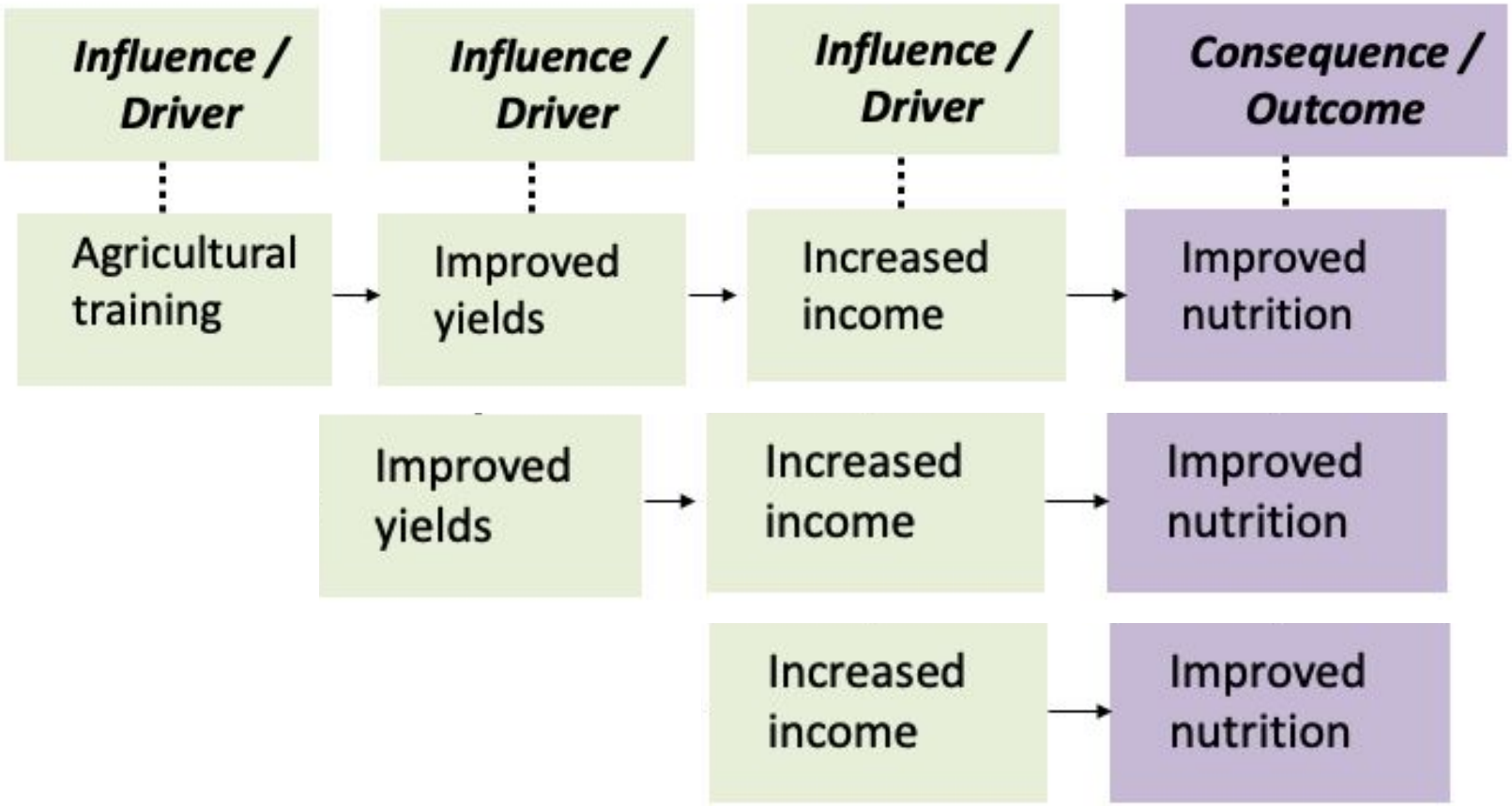
- Interviewers trained either in-person or remotely, focusing on how to probe for causal stories and how to document
- Interviews last approx. 1 hour, usually recorded
- Transcript focuses on changes and **reasons for changes** mentioned by the respondent
- Many pages of narrative text!

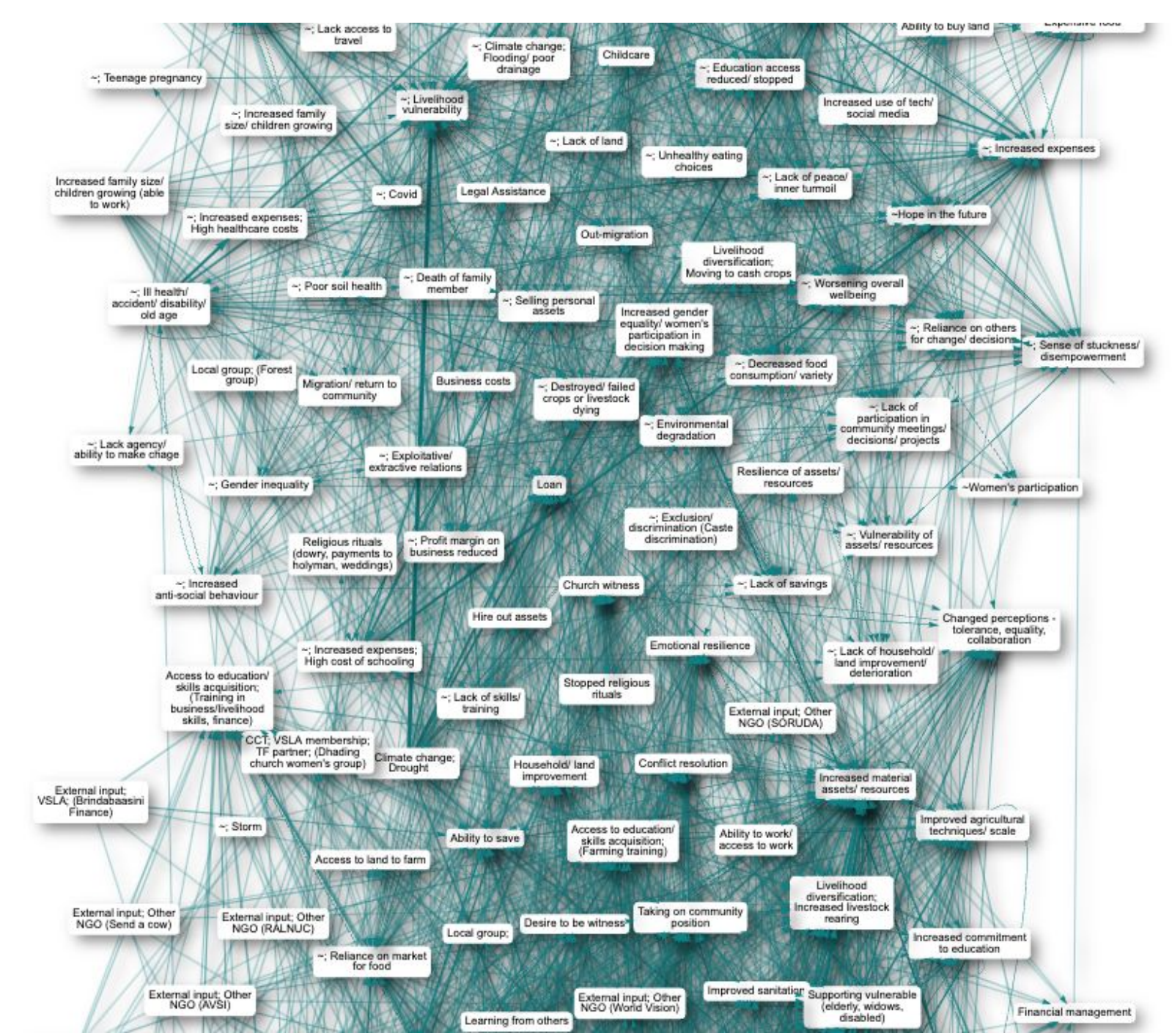
Analysis


Use statements filter
Use transforms filter
Live update
Statements
Autocode
Transforms
Select statements
-- Leur santé est bien meilleure depuis que le dispensaire est doté d'une pharmacie et d'un médecin qui fait même les analyses. Un an auparavant, on était obligé d'aller sur la rive sénégalaise pour des soins spécialisés depuis une année on se soigne sur place et bien. Seulement les médicaments restent onéreux
00016
$D4 Qui s'occupe de la discipline des enfants à la maison, et comment cela se fait ?
Est-ce que cela a changé au cours de la dernière année, ou est-ce la même chose qu'avant ?
-- C'est mon mari et moi. Tu vois notre concession comporte plusieurs foyers : 2 frères de mon mari un plus jeune que lui et un leur cadet, de l'autre côté que tu aperçois c'est la femme de son cousin. L'éducation et la discipline des enfants reste collective. Cela a toujours été ainsi même au moment où leurs parents étaient en vie.
T&C

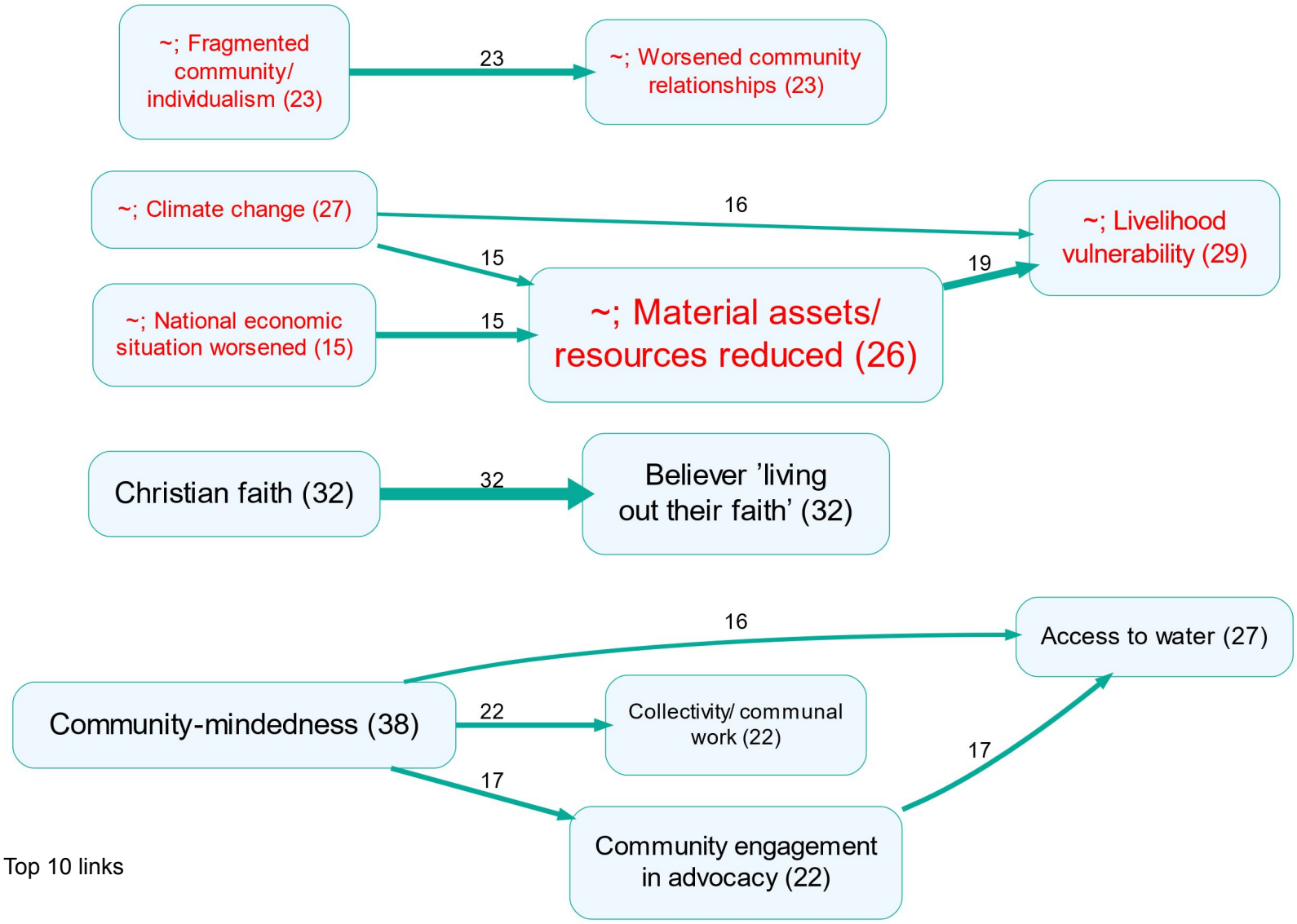
Manage links
Tables
File
Account
FORMATTING
RESET
Fit height?
SAVE SVG
Traditional culture (1)
1
~(E) Children in education (1)
(W) Positive change in community (1)
1
(W) Optimistic about future (1)
If women have income generating activities (1)
1
(S) Positive change in community (1)
(R) Pos relationships; marital trust (1)
1
(W) Increase independence (1)
1
(W) Wellbeing (1)
(I) Small business (1)
1
Increased opportunity to work; Women/Girls (1)
1
(R) Pos relationships; Do not punish (1)
Tekavoul cash transfer (1)
1
(I) Saving (1)
(Hyp) If there is a marital disagreement (1)
1
(R) Win men round (1)
(Hyp) If feels threatened (1)
1
(Hyp) Tell parents-in-law/parents (1)
1
(R) Pos relationships; Discuss problems/ negotiate (1)
ADMIN PANEL

Identifying causal claims




~; Lack access to travel
~; Climate change; Flooding/ poor drainage
Childcare
Ability to buy land
~; Teenage pregnancy
~; Education access reduced/ stopped
~; Livelihood vulnerability
~; Increased family size/ children growing
Increased use of tech/ social media
~; Lack of land
~; Increased expenses
~; Unhealthy eating choices
Increased family size/ children growing (able to work)
~; Covid
Legal Assistance
~; Lack of peace/ inner turmoil
~; Increased expenses; High healthcare costs
~Hope in the future
Out-migration
Livelihood diversification; Moving to cash crops
~; Ill health/ accident/ disability/ old age
~; Poor soil health
~; Death of family member
~; Worsening overall wellbeing
~; Selling personal assets
Increased gender equality/ women's participation in decision making
~; Reliance on others for change/ decisions
~; Sense of stuckness/ disempowerment
Local group; (Forest group)
Migration/ return to community
Business costs
~; Destroyed/ failed crops or livestock dying
~; Decreased food consumption/ variety
~; Lack of participation in community meetings/ decisions/ projects
~; Environmental degradation
~; Lack agency/ ability to make chage
~; Exploitative/ extractive relations
Resilience of assets/ resources
~; Gender inequality
Loan
~Women's participation
~; Exclusion/ discrimination (Caste discrimination)
Religious rituals (dowry, payments to holyman, weddings)
~; Profit margin on business reduced
~; Vulnerability of assets/ resources
~; Increased anti-social behaviour
Church witness
~; Lack of savings
Hire out assets
Changed perceptions - tolerance, equality, collaboration
Emotional resilience
~; Increased expenses; High cost of schooling
~; Lack of household/ land improvement/ deterioration
Access to education/ skills acquisition; (Training in business/livelihood skills, finance)
Stopped religious rituals
~; Lack of skills/ training
External input; Other NGO (SORUDA)
CCT; VSLA membership; TF partner; (Dhading church women's group)
Climate change; Drought
Household/ land improvement
Conflict resolution
Increased material assets/ resources
External input; VSLA; (Brindabaasini Finance)
~; Storm
Improved agricultural techniques/ scale
Ability to save
Access to education/ skills acquisition; (Farming training)
Ability to work/ access to work
Access to land to farm
Livelihood diversification; Increased livestock rearing
External input; Other NGO (Send a cow)
External input; Other NGO (RALNUC)
Desire to be witness
Taking on community position
Local group;
Increased commitment to education
~; Reliance on market for food
External input; Other NGO (AVSI)
External input; Other NGO (World Vision)
Improved sanitatio
Supporting vulnerable (elderly, widows, disabled)
Financial management
Learning from others

Overview of change

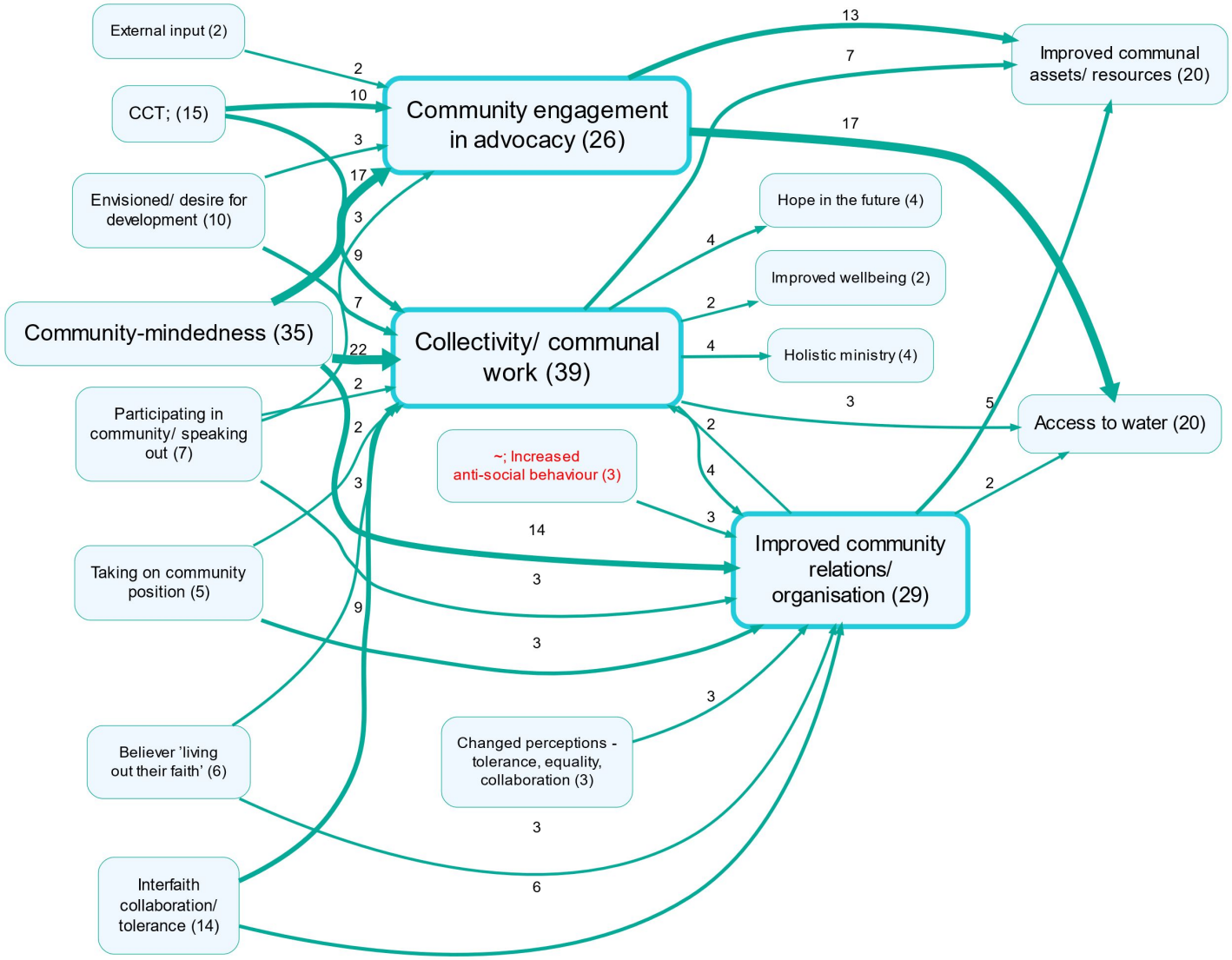


Top 10 links

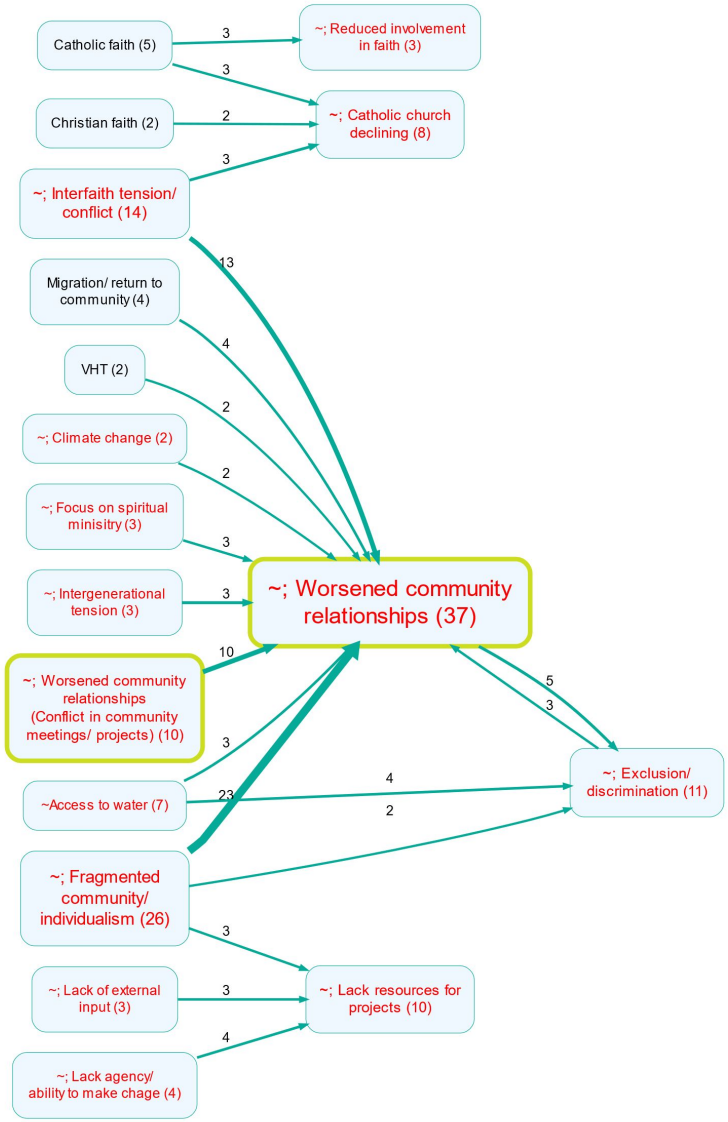
Factors >25 mentions

Label	Sources	Label	Sources
Hope in the future	55	National economic situation worsened	34
Improved communal assets/ resources	50	Access to water	33
Christian faith	49	Holistic ministry	33
Community-mindedness	48	Increased food consumption/ variety	31
Livelihood vulnerability	46	Envisioned/ desire for development	31
Material assets/ resources reduced	46	Climate change; Drought	30
Believer 'living out their faith'	44	Fragmented community/ individualism	28
CCT	42	Interfaith collaboration/ tolerance	28
Collective/ communal work	40	Community engagement in advocacy	26
Livelihood resilience	37	Increased material assets/ resources	26
Worsened community relationships	37	Self-worth/ confidence/ agency	26
Improved community relations/ organisation	35	Worsening overall wellbeing	26
Access to education/ skills acquisition;	35		

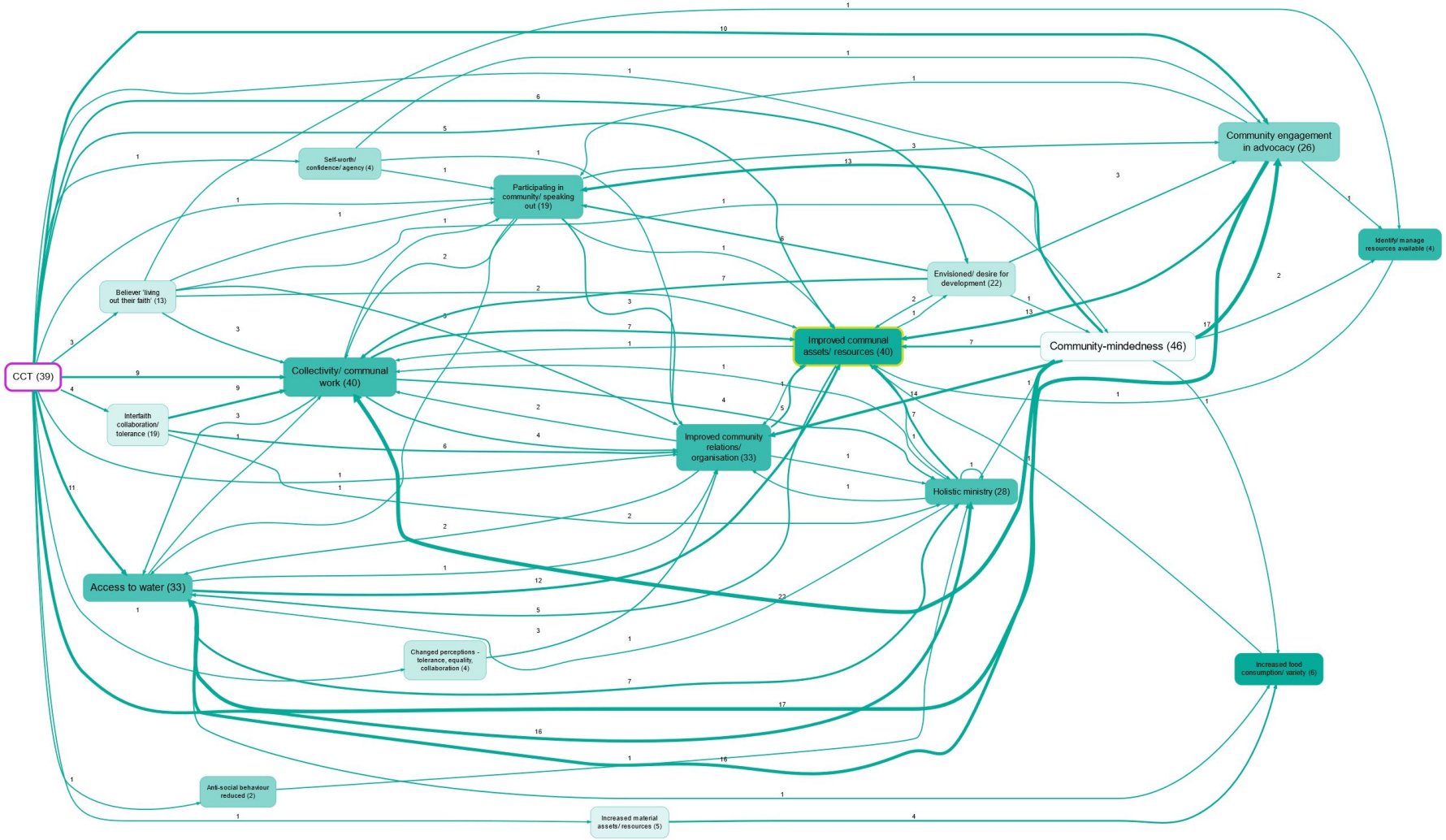
Drivers of improved community collaboration



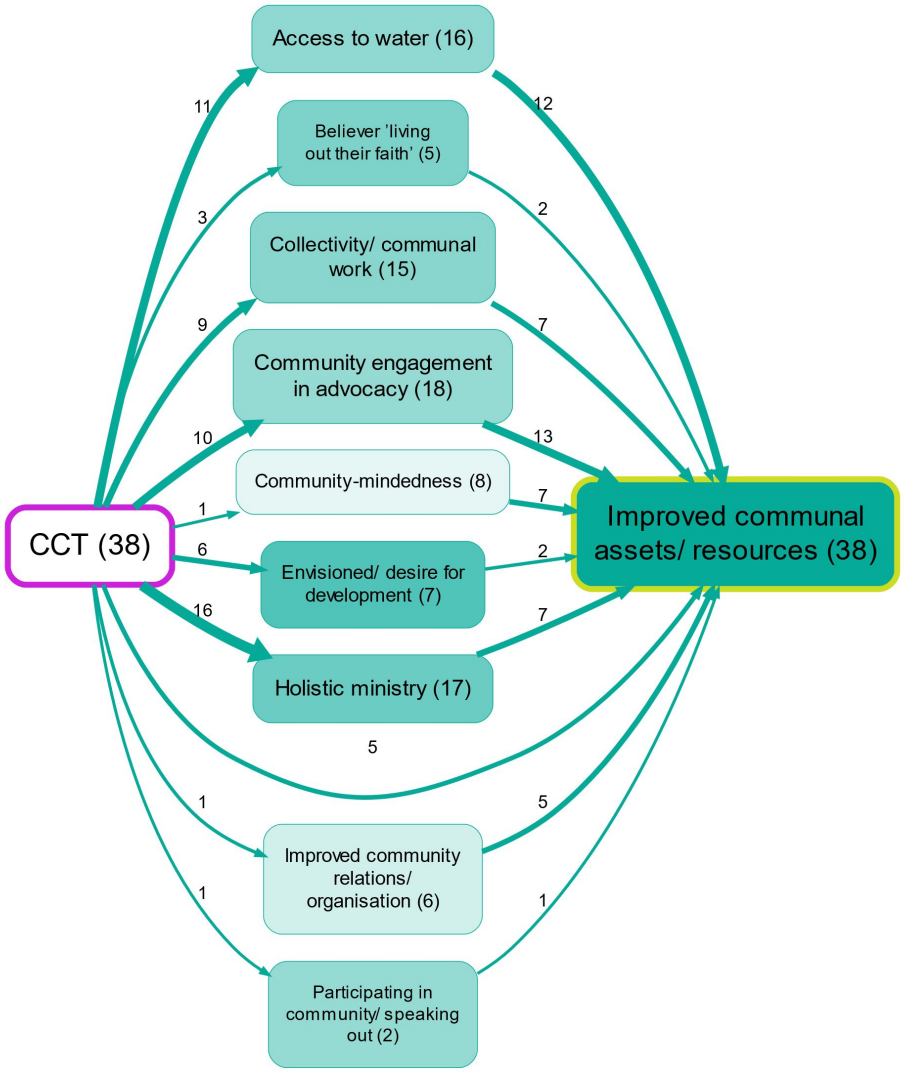
Drivers of worse community relationships



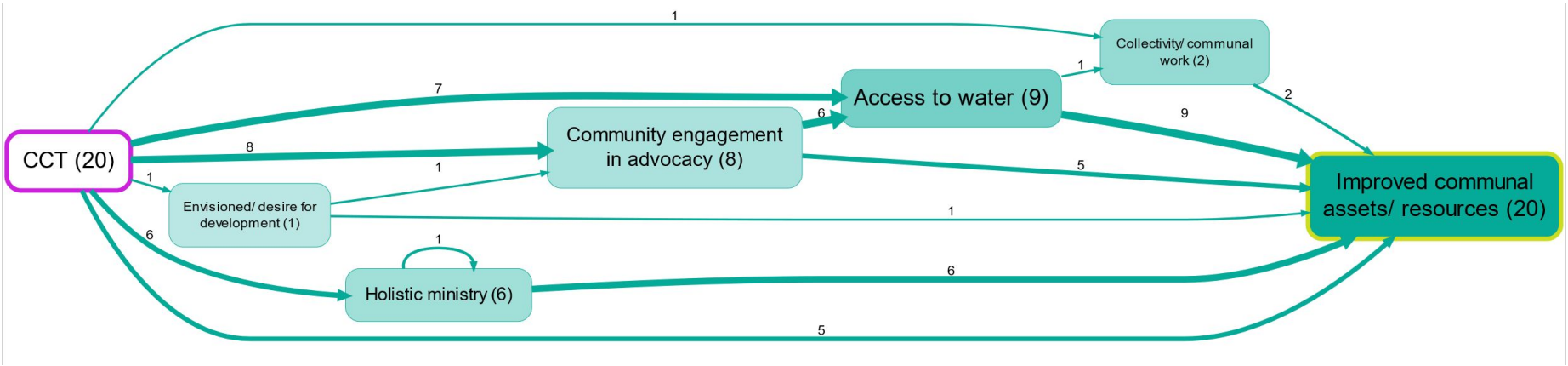
Tracing threads between factors



Reduced pathways to 2 links



Tracing threads between factors



Findings broadly supported Tearfund's theory of change - many positive findings

But communities could not always address **external challenges** alone, such as unpredictable social and economic crises i.e. Covid-19, unpredictable weather patterns, economic crashes

- **Uganda**: droughts and flooding negatively influenced intended community outcomes. This finding led to action planning workshops amongst staff and church leaders, and provision of **training for leaders on environmental and disaster management.**

Focus group, Sierra Leone

- **Sierra Leone**: results less good in urban areas. This finding led to changes in training materials to be **less rural-centric**.

Closing the feedback loop

Sensemaking workshops with:

- Commissioner, project staff, and other key stakeholders – to discuss results, triangulate with other data, and decide on next steps
- Respondents/participants – to give them an opportunity to validate and build on their responses

Charlotte Flowers/Tearfund

A QuIP alone…

Does not provide…	Responses
Estimates of the magnitude of average treatment effects	Use as one input into modelling/simulation Run alongside a quantitative impact evaluation
Statistically representative frequency counts	Reveals scope and range of responses Combine with Bayesian updating Use alongside quantitative surveys
Objective ‘facts’	Perceptions matter! Incorporate with other approaches
Recommendations for action	Combine with process evaluation Address in follow-up stakeholder engagement

Eight things a QuIP can reveal

Changes in self-reported **outcomes** across selected domains

Perceived **causal drivers** of those changes

Maps of **causal mechanisms** linking drivers to outcomes

Self-reported **attribution** of outcomes to selected interventions

Aggregation of evidence based on frequency counts, auditable back to text source

Insight into **variation** in responses (e.g. by age, gender, geographical context, exposure to intervention)

Evidence to provide **causal explanations** for trends and correlations and variations identified through quantitative M&E

Evidence to review and **revise prior theories** and generalizations

Thoughts and questions!

- What was raised in this session that you would like to discuss further, or that you are unsure of?
- Is there **one thing you can commit to practice** after this session in your context?

Miro: https://miro.com/app/board/uXjVMrEtnp8=/?share_link_id=924591796199

Further resources

Scan the QR code for a document with all the links!

QuIP: the-quip.org and heaps of resources for further reading

Tearfund: How active churches help communities overcome poverty

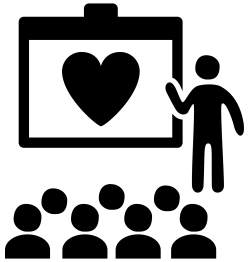
Causal Map: causalmap.app

Attributing Development Impact: The book!

CAUSAL PATHWAYS VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM 2023

Resources from the Causal Pathways Initiative

CAUSAL PATHWAYS

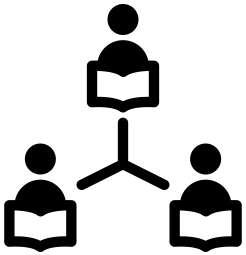


Presentations & trainings to build understanding and will

American Evaluation Association

Available to attend other events by request

Virtual 101 level training available on request



Resources to support understanding and action

Pending: BetterEvaluation.com updated resource hub on causal pathways

Case studies to provide overall stories and more detailed examples

Learning and acting together with support

Brain Trust to help funders work through tough questions with field experts

Pending: Peer learning spaces and early career support

www.causalpathways.org

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