



Environmental Conservation and Agricultural Enhancement Uganda's Theory of Change

October 2014

Acknowledgements

This document summarizes many years of Eco-Agric Uganda's work to align our work and describe our organizations mission. We therefore acknowledge the efforts of all of those who have contributed to the development of the Organizations Framework, our Integrated Focus, the Principle Level Choices, and the Rural community Livelihoods Aspirations and Outcomes.

Glossary of terms

Child This term covers boys and girls, adolescent and youth under the age of 18 years.

Community It is understood that there are multiple typologies of communities (rural, urban, etc). Eco-Agric Uganda's programming will engage with all types of communities and not only the traditional 'rural' community context.

Community The term community is used broadly in the programming context. Even marginalized rural poor vulnerable communities who are not living in traditional community or community structures usually form some sort of community. Eco-Agric Uganda does not target rural poor vulnerable communities as individuals alone, and our intent is that rural poor vulnerable communities live in communities and communities that are caring, protective and nurturing.

Rural poor vulnerable communities

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Eco-Agric Uganda's Theory of Change

I. Background

Eco-Agric Uganda is a member based non-governmental organization established in 2007 as a Ugandan community based organization but latter registered under the Uganda register of companies as a company limited by guarantee with no share capital on registration number 115111. Additionally, it is registered with the Ugandan NGO board. The organization was established in 2007 and has enjoyed over eight years of experience in providing services aimed at livelihood improvement to rural communities.

Environmental Conservation and Agricultural Enhancement, Uganda (Eco-Agric, Uganda) is guided by a vision of improved agriculture for a healthy population and environment with a mission to create improved livelihoods through trainings and capacity building, disease prevention, agricultural transformation and better environmental practices. We provide services and execute trainings in many areas, including: sustainable farming methods and technologies, energy conservation and petroleum (oil and gas governance), HIV/AIDs prevention and control, protection of women and rural poor vulnerable communities' rights, entrepreneurship and financial management, tree planting and agroforestry and in the training of trainers (TOT) on gender and rural poor vulnerable communities' issues. Our target population is rural/vulnerable communities, rural poor vulnerable communities, women, youth, the elderly and the disabled. The organization operates from Kibaale, Wakiso and in Hoima Districts.

Furthermore, the organization cherishes and builds upon five core values which include: (1) transparency and accountability, (2) innovativeness and professionalism, (3) partnerships and networking, (4) gender and equality, and (5) commitment to sustainable development of communities that takes into account contemporary crosscutting issues like HIV/AIDs, climate change and also takes into account the Millennium Development Goals and national development plans and strategies.

Since 2007, Eco-Agric Uganda has evolved into a National Community Development and advocacy organization, dedicated to working with the world's most vulnerable rural poor vulnerable communities and their communities to overcome poverty and injustice, enabling the sustained livelihoods of rural communities. To address the livelihoods of rural poor vulnerable communities, the organization aims to address the causes of poverty, focusing on basic needs such as health and nutrition, education, water, sanitation, care and protection, food security and income generation, plus environmental conservation and climate change.

Since its inception, Eco-Agric Uganda has expanded its operations in three districts of Uganda (Hoima, Wakiso and Kibaale districts) in various areas that are integrated in our work as outlined in our mission statement:

- **Development:** Transforming communities to improve the livelihoods of rural poor vulnerable communities and reduce poverty.
Advocacy: Advocating for global justice, engaging governments, institutions, donors, communities, and the general public globally, nationally and locally to address global, the systems and structures structural issues that perpetuate poverty and oppression. Today, Eco-Agric Uganda works in three districts of Uganda with fifty staff and twelve volunteers.

As part of a drive to bring better focus and greater alignment in their work, Eco-Agric Uganda has collectively made a number of strategic choices to clarify our role and priorities. The organization has confirmed that at the heart of our work are three foundational elements of being environmentally friendly, rural community-focused and Community-based, which make up our Integrated Focus. Our rural poor vulnerable focused prioritizes rural poor vulnerable communities, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, and empowers them together with their communities and communities to improve their livelihoods. Our work is community-based, which means that Eco-Agric Uganda's primary role is to 'walk alongside' rural poor vulnerable communities, who are rooted in the situation.

In addition to outlining our Integrated Focus, the organization has determined the Principle Level choices that drive us towards what we want to achieve. These choices are: to tackle the **causes of poverty**; through an **empowerment** approach, using **multiple Organizations'** foci that are driven by Organization's **priorities**.

Eco-Agric Uganda has also confirmed its commitment to the sustained livelihoods of rural poor vulnerable communities within communities and communities, especially the most vulnerable. This single goal for our work has been defined in terms of four specific **Rural community Livelihoods Aspirations**:

Rural poor vulnerable communities enjoy good health;

- Rural poor vulnerable communities are educated for life;
- The youth and disabled are economically empowered to attain sustainable development
- Rural poor vulnerable communities attain sustainable development; and
- Rural poor vulnerable communities are cared for, protected and participating.

Finally, the organization has developed an Organizations Framework to support this goal and align our approaches to disaster management, development and advocacy. The framework outlines four Organization's approaches drawn from methodologies that are asset-based, rights-based, participative, relational, and reflect an understanding of rural community livelihoods in terms of the ecology of the rural community. They include promoting just systems and structures; enabling caring and transformed relationships; assuring resilient households and communities; and empowering rural poor vulnerable and interdependent communities.

Building on these foundational pieces of work, this document articulates Eco-Agric Uganda's theory of change. This includes a diagram (see Appendix) that maps the necessary and sufficient steps that form the pathway of change towards sustained rural community livelihoods, and the supporting narrative below that describes the diagram, as well as the assumptions that underpin this theory of change and associated change strategies – our Organizations approaches.

2. Theory of change

The theory of change that is described in this document reflects all the changes at various levels that need to occur to lead to the sustained livelihoods for all rural poor vulnerable communities where Eco-Agric Uganda is present. The change inputs to achieve rural community livelihoods are *much* broader than Eco-Agric Uganda's Organizations contributions; Eco-Agric Uganda will only contribute to some elements that are required for change. No change can be directly attributed to Eco-Agric Uganda; rather our level of contribution will vary from minor to significant, depending on the context.

It is also important to note that the theory of change that is described here reflects our current collective understanding of how change takes place. As we build our evidence base, utilize this in our approaches to programming, and learn from our monitoring and evaluation data and other information, we will refine and adjust our theory of change going forward.

3. How will it help us?

The theory of change provides the basis for a number of aspects of our work. It focuses on the root causes of poverty and injustice. For programming, this theory of change provides a holistic perspective on how elements of our programming integrate to support a broader change process. It also helps us to see how we need to integrate our advocacy and programming work. It further

provides an anchor for evidence building and learning in our programs, outlining a hierarchy of outcomes that can be measured and submitted to empirical enquiry.

The theory of change is also useful in the strategy process, as it provides a practical guide to inform our strategic choices.

Given that as an organization we facilitate change, our strategies should be based on a very sound theory of change. Just like a business that works out its business model by determining where it will add value to the value chain, so too can Eco-Agric Uganda, or any individual entity within Eco-Agric Uganda, a sector or even a programme, broadly determine the value it will add, and scope its work with reference to the overarching change process that has been mapped here. Each entity, sector or programme will be able to determine what particular capabilities it has that allow it to add value to aspects of the change process. In other words, the theory of change will help Eco-Agric Uganda to decide where we will focus, when and how we will partner, and what we will and will not contribute to at organizational, national, sector and programme levels.

4. Eco-Agric Uganda's theory of change

This section provides the narrative that supports the attached change diagram. It describes the steps in the diagram, the assumptions that explain how we believe the steps in the diagram are connected and why, and the implications for Eco-Agric Uganda change strategies.

4.1 Pathways of change diagram

The theory of change diagram (see Appendix) outlines the steps towards achieving the long-term goal of sustained livelihoods of rural poor vulnerable communities. Our understanding is that these are the necessary and sufficient steps towards achieving this goal. It is important to note here that the diagram is a simplified, linear depiction of change – in reality change is often cyclical and non-linear.

In terms of achieving the sustained livelihoods of rural poor vulnerable communities within communities and communities, especially the youth disabled and most vulnerable, the theory of change asserts that this is dependent on achieving four rural community livelihoods aspirations: Rural poor vulnerable communities enjoy good health; rural poor vulnerable communities are educated for life; rural poor vulnerable communities are cared for, protected and participating; and rural poor vulnerable communities use the natural environment and biodiversity sustainably.

These aspirations can be further defined through the 15 rural community livelihoods outcomes (CWBOs) detailed in the theory of change diagram (level 3).

The diagram reflects that to achieve these CWBOs, the rural community cannot be viewed in isolation, and community-level change is critical. For example, communities' economic well-being needs to be assured; communities' basic needs in terms of access and availability to education, health, care, nutrition, shelter and sanitation need to be met; communities need sustainable livelihoods and food security; women and rural poor vulnerable communities need to be empowered as agents of change; communities need to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children; communities need to be resilient; strong and equitable relationships need to exist within the entire community that are based on respect for diversity; the livelihoods of community's needs to be nurtured; and communities need to sustainably manage and protect their natural assets.

Furthermore, to support community-level change, a number of local, national and international outcomes need to be achieved. At a local level social, political, technical, environmental and economic enabling conditions need to be met to ensure that communities and small units are empowered to work together towards sustained rural community livelihoods. An empowered

community will also be mobilized to demand (sub-) national-level change that supports its vision for improved rural community livelihoods.

At a national level, it is important that the policies and practices of government, civil society and businesses enable positive change at a local level. Also, if national governments, civil society and businesses are mobilized to support positive change, then these in turn will be better positioned to influence and demand greater change at the global level.

Finally, a reformed international order that facilitates global justice and equity will enable positive change towards the sustained livelihoods of rural poor vulnerable communities, in small units (groups) and communities, locally and nationally.

4.2 Assumptions and implications for Eco-Agric Uganda's contribution to change

This section outlines 12 core assumptions that underpin the theory of change. These assumptions explain why and how the steps in our theory of change diagram achieve sustained rural community livelihoods. For each assumption, Eco-Agric Uganda's contribution to change is outlined:

Assumption 1: Rural poor vulnerable communities' livelihoods are dependent on their relationships with others and on the social, political, spiritual, physical and environmental contexts in which they live.

This is understood as the 'ecology of the rural community'. Eco-Agric Uganda's theory of change shows the different levels and types of influence on rural poor vulnerable communities' development, from the closest (micro level, e.g. groups) to the furthest (macro level, e.g. national, global). Rural poor vulnerable communities are unique and affected by their contexts in different ways. Who they are; where they live; who they live with and many other variables affect their capacity to engage; participate; learn and flourish in the relationships around them; and also their capacity to respond to the many risk factors in their lives.

Implications for Eco-Agric Uganda

- Eco-Agric Uganda's approach addresses the different relationships, institutions, systems and structures at community, community, national and global level to create an enabling environment where rural poor vulnerable communities can thrive.
- Eco-Agric Uganda Organization's approaches support rural community participation to encourage them as agents of change to become active, critical, entrepreneurial, relational, democratic, ethical, spiritual citizens empowered to change society.

Assumption 2: A focus on equity is required to ensure that the most vulnerable receive intentional, focused support to realize their rights and well-being.

The most vulnerable are often negatively affected by changes in their community. Even positive change at the national and community level can result in them becoming more marginalized and create greater inequity. Certain groups of rural poor vulnerable communities are amongst the most vulnerable, for example youths, disabled, orphaned children, street children, or rural poor vulnerable communities with a disability. They are more vulnerable than others to ending up in a crisis situation. Eco-Agric Uganda's theory of change shows the need to intentionally focus on the most vulnerable by addressing equity and the factors of vulnerability, such as extreme deprivation, serious rights violations, vulnerability to disaster, and abusive or exploitative relationships.

Implications for Eco-Agric Uganda

Eco-Agric Uganda aims to assure the resilience of households and communities to reduce their vulnerability, to increase equity, and to emphasize duty bearers' responsibility to protect their rights and provide basic social services. Eco-Agric Uganda's approaches and project models aim to address factors of vulnerability and equity.

Assumption 3: Empowering women and girls as agents of change and promoting gender equality is critical to achieving sustained rural community livelihoods.

Women play a crucial role in the livelihoods of the community, and in the development of community and society, but they are marginalized and discriminated against in most societies. Gender inequality disempowers half of the population of the world, and curtails the achievement of women and girls' full potential and their contribution to the community and society. Eco-Agric Uganda cannot fully contribute to rural community livelihoods improvement if we are not intentional in addressing gender injustice.

Implications for Eco-Agric Uganda

Gender equity is identified as a key cross-cutting theme that needs to be addressed in all projects and programmes. This requires that projects take a strategic approach to tackling the issues of power and control between genders. Eco-Agric Uganda programmes aim to empower youth, disabled, women, men, boys and girls as actors in sustainable transformational development, by challenging and changing unequal gender relations and addressing structural, attitudinal and cultural barriers that prevent women and girls from participating in and benefiting from development.

Assumption 4: To achieve sustained rural community-livelihoods, Eco-Agric Uganda change strategies need to address different life cycle stages of Children.

Children develop rapidly through different life cycle stages. With each stage, from prenatal to 5 years, 6 to 11 years, and 12 to 18 years, there are specific survival, growth and development issues, in addition to some general needs across these stages, such as household food and livelihood security.

Implications for Eco-Agric Uganda

To address the specific life cycle stages that children develop through, different types of approaches are required. For example, from 0 to 5 years, Eco-Agric Uganda's focus includes health, nutrition and early child hood development; from 6 to 11 years the focus includes education and life skills; from 12 to 18 years our focus includes vocational/life skills, active participation and entrepreneurship.

Assumption 5: The likelihood of long-lasting, sustainable change is significantly increased if communities are enabled to drive their own development.

Development involves a dialogue between communities and internal and external 'change agents' who support change and bring different perspectives and access to information and support. However, ultimately, change is endogenous to the communities in which we work – where change is always already underway and ongoing. Our theory of change acknowledges that organizations such as Eco-Agric Uganda can only support this change and should enable and empower communities to drive their own development.

Implications for Eco-Agric Uganda

Our Organization's approaches empower rural poor vulnerable communities and interdependent communities and support their capacity for development rather than focusing solely on service delivery.

Assumption 6: Fullness of life for every rural community is enhanced by a rights-based approach to address structural and systemic causes of poverty.

Science and technology can provide important inputs into the change process. However, on their own, science and technology are not sufficient to achieve positive change. The impediments to positive change are often social and political. People who are poor may not have the power to change their circumstances until the structural and systemic causes of poverty are confronted and eliminated. Others (e.g. NGOs) will also struggle to change the circumstances of the poor in a meaningful, sustainable way unless these causes are addressed. The causes of poverty are not only local, but also national, global, structural, as well as rooted in world views, historical events, spirituality and cultural values. The theory of change provides that the transformation of communities in Uganda is dependent on the fulfillment of human rights, the transformation of communities and the transformation of global structures and systems.

Implications for Eco-Agric Uganda

Eco-Agric Uganda focuses on both addressing the causes of poverty as well as alleviating the symptoms.

- Advocacy and marketing programmes aim to engage governments, business, civil society, donors and the general public globally, nationally and locally to address the systems and structures that perpetuate poverty and oppression,
- Eco-Agric Uganda approaches promote just systems and structures and support change processes that emphasize empowerment and justice, and the fulfillment of human rights.

Assumption 7: Fullness of life for every rural community is enhanced by breaking the cycles of deprivation that entrap generations of rural poor vulnerable communities.

To break the cycle of inter-generational poverty requires addressing the social, cultural, structural and spiritual causes of poverty and addressing the ecology of the rural community.

Implications for Eco-Agric Uganda

- Eco-Agric Uganda aims to implement a life cycle approach that works with pregnant mothers and focuses on early rural childhood development.
- Eco-Agric Uganda approaches aim to empower rural poor vulnerable communities and youth as agents of change to become active, critical, entrepreneurial, relational, democratic, ethical, spiritual citizens empowered to change society.

Assumption 8: Change is complex.

The change process is very complex it comprises many interconnected social, political, economic and environmental systems, at different levels (local, national, global), each simultaneously going through different cycles of change (short-term, medium-term, inter-generational change), at different speeds. This requires a partnership approach that connects our work to others operating at a range of scales and sectors. As history shows us, we must always leave room for partnerships to spin off into powerful movements of social change, where the whole is much, much greater than the sum of its parts.

Implications for Eco-Agric Uganda

- Achieving rural community livelihoods requires an integrated, multi-pronged approach that addresses the many interconnected issues that cause poverty legal, social, spiritual, political,

economic, environmental, technical, etc. at different levels;– individual, community, local, national and international.

- Eco-Agric Uganda increasingly works in partnership with government, business, and civil society, recognizing that we are only one partner in a complex system. Partnerships are developed locally through a variety of approaches, but also nationally and globally with corporations, multilateral agencies, research institutions, and civil society and government institutions.
- Eco-Agric Uganda must make strategic choices regarding which areas of change and which actors to engage with. Eco-Agric Uganda cannot effectively engage in every area and therefore must identify gaps that are not being filled by others and focus on areas that contribute to the fulfillment of the rural community livelihoods aspirations.

Assumption 9: Change is unpredictable and non-linear.

Change is a non-linear, multi-directional, fragmented, multi-faceted and discontinuous process that emerges unpredictably from the many interactions of actors within the many different systems and networks that we engage in to address rural community livelihoods. Sometimes small actions can have big effects; sometimes big actions have very little impact. Sometimes change is progressive, sometimes the effects of shocks and crises lead to communities or individuals moving backwards. Furthermore, the nature of change itself is changing as people are connecting in different ways and on different scales as a result of telecommunications technology and social media. This means that the change process is increasingly difficult to control, manage or comprehensively understand and predict.

Implications for Eco-Agric Uganda

Change agents like Eco-Agric Uganda need to become ‘searchers’ with communities rather than ‘planners’ for communities. This involves stakeholders and partners in a reflective, social learning process that allows for dynamic exploration and adaptation. Supporting change is about collectively exploring an issue and adapting to it, rather than implementing a pre-defined solution.

- ECO-AGRIC Uganda’s approaches aim to address risk and vulnerability, recognizing that change is non-linear, by assuring resilient and secure households and communities.
- Eco-Agric Uganda is exploring approaches to engage with communities, supporters and donors in a way that acknowledges the increasing connectedness between people in the world, and the new ways of communicating through the internet and social media.
- Eco-Agric Uganda is exploring more flexible planning, budgeting processes and systems.

Assumption 10: To support change, Eco-Agric Uganda change strategies need to emphasize the positive drivers of change.

There are many factors that drive people to change;– fear, coercion, choice and hope. Some of these are positive drivers, some are negative. Eco-Agric Uganda aims to emphasize the positive drivers as integral to our approach to change.

Implications for Eco-Agric Uganda

Eco-Agric Uganda practices aim to provide people with choice, space, courage, hope and the right to change through a focus on changing cultural practices, legislative frameworks and capacity development.

Assumption 11: To ensure sustained change, it is important to tackle the root causes of poverty, to ensure community ownership of the development process, and to facilitate behavior and policy change.

Not all change is sustainable. The multitude of external influences can reverse gains and alter the status quo. Eco-Agric Uganda's programmes seek to contribute to sustained livelihoods of rural poor vulnerable communities and therefore need to ensure that factors that affect sustainability are understood and are, to the extent possible, mitigated in programmes.

Implications for Eco-Agric Uganda

- Programmes need to tackle the root causes of issues, not the symptoms; facilitate community ownership; and aim to support behavior and policy change.
- Eco-Agric Uganda must choose programmes that lead to sustainable change whenever possible; however, sometimes extreme needs require responses that do not result in sustainable change. In those cases we need to address the immediate needs, while seeking as quickly as possible to shift our attention to more sustainable solutions.

Assumption 12: Youth empowerment must include individual transformation, community building and youth leadership to change the available inadequate school and community conditions. Toward this end areas of impact include:

Individual Transformation – Critical Thinking and Leadership – Youth Together address the life conditions and immediate needs of youth and builds the self-esteem, skills and cultural understanding of youth organizers.

Team building for Power:– Through consciousness raising and political engagement, youth organizers develop positive relationships with young people across racial and ethnic lines, school walls, neighborhood turfs and city borders. Diverse youth organizers participate in leadership development through community organizing.

Challenging Institutions – Outside, Inside Organizing Eco-Agric Uganda works with community partners, schools, groups of youth in and out of school to shift the balance of power and position allies in key decision making position.

Building Power – Shifting Climate, Policy Change – Eco-Agric Uganda builds a community base of support in and out of schools to understand and advocate for young people's needs. In addition, Eco-Agric Uganda works with a broad range of organizations and institutions to build the capacity of adults to be allies to young people.

Transformation of our Social Context – Dismantle Oppression – Eco-Agric Uganda's ultimate goal is to transform the school systems and transform inadequate school and community conditions to ensure every young person has the opportunities to thrive.

5. YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP

Young people have tremendous potential to be both present and future drivers of inclusive and sustainable development. In recognizing this and the power of collective action, Eco-Agric Uganda has developed a Theory of Change (Theory of Change) to explore what needs to happen in order for young active citizens, institutions and communities to create positive, equitable and sustainable change together. This meta-theory was developed through a series of workshops which brought together various stakeholders young people working in civil society, youth activists, Eco-Agric Uganda staff, Eco-Agric Uganda partners and young people from communities in which Eco-Agric Uganda works.

Purpose of this document

The intent of this document is for it to be used as a tool by Eco-Agric Uganda, Eco-Agric Uganda partners and others working in the sector as a starting point to help guide strategies for collective impact, by specifically considering youth inclusion. The Theory of Change provided illustrates an overarching theory of the avenues through which young women and young men are already creating change, what needs to happen to further enable this and the various roles different actors need to play to create broader societal (or transformational) change. It is important to note that this is a theory; it is envisaged that this Theory of Change will continue to be modified and improved as we learn more about how best to support youth participation.

A point to note when using this resource, is that each organization/group does not need to work across all areas of the Theory of Change, however each organization/group should be thinking about which area they are best placed to work within and how they can strategically connect with stakeholders working in other areas to increase the likelihood of achieving broader societal change

The change envisioned is a transformation of current unequal power structures, including those that inhibit the advancement of women's rights, into equitable social and political relations where 'young people's rights and needs are understood and respected, and young people lead and participate in decision-making that affects their lives and their communities.'³ The gap is huge between the societal changes that Eco-Agric Uganda wants to see and how power dynamics currently work in most countries. Considering the number of behaviours and policies that continually exclude young women and young men from participating, this vision may be seen as naive or too optimistic.

However what young people have shown throughout history, is that they are active members of society and do have the ideas and determination to create social change. Adding to this, the current youth population is the largest the country has seen. Young people today are more connected and more educated than any previous generation; they're challenging restrictive gender norms and utilizing technology to mobilize civil society in new ways.

In some cases, Eco-Agric Uganda is already working with young women and young men in Uganda, to benefit from their knowledge, skills and motivation to create change. The challenge for Eco-Agric Uganda (and others in the sector) now is to identify its own role in supporting youth active citizenship in different contexts.

Which young people's participation is Eco-Agric Uganda actually trying to enable?

How can Eco-Agric Uganda build on existing work that's happening in the space of youth participation and leadership to amplify the voices of young women and young men who are already creating change?

How can organizations like Eco-Agric Uganda create space within their own decision-making processes for the young women and young men they're seeking to support?

THREE PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

This Theory of Change has identified three crucial routes (paths) for supporting youth active citizenship to enable collective impact. In understanding the three paths, it's important to note the following: - There is no sequence or priority between the paths intended; rather, they offer different avenues to achieving change by working in partnership with young women and young men, and the changes that need to happen throughout each path. - Accountability needs to occur up and down the paths and between various actors. This does not only include power holders and institutions/groups being accountable to young women and young men, but also young women and young men (as individuals or groups) being accountable to each other and other stakeholders. - These are not standalone paths; making connections between the paths is an essential element to achieving societal change. This is explained in more detail in the 'Strategic Connections' section later in this document.

Path A: Young women and young men participate in decision-making in affected communities In order for young women and young men to participate in decision-making

within communities; they must first be concerned about issues impacting communities and be motivated to be part of the solution. Power holders in the community must make space for young women's and young men's participation. This will require that power holders are valued and motivated to work with young women and young men. Strong and open communication between young women and young men, and power holders will enable mutual respect to be gained and power holders to see the value of youth participation, increasing the power of young women and young men and their capacity to create change in their communities.

Path B: Young women and young men from different regions and fields are organizing and taking collective action for youth groups to affect change they must first have opportunities to connect and share their ideas about issues they care about. There needs to be a collective concern, with young women and young men from affected communities and other young active citizens working together towards a shared aim. Roles and responsibilities need to be defined and strategic plans need to be made (including operational plans), to ensure sustainability. In order for youth movements to continue to create change collectively, they need to have the resources and support to sustain their collective action, and need to be working politically and connecting strategically with power holders in communities and formal institutions.

Path C: Young women and young men participate in formal decision-making in institutions. For young women and young men to influence decision-making in formal institutions (such as governments, government institutions, NGO's and private corporations), leaders of these institutions must first be motivated and see the value of working with young women and young men. Organizations need to be aware of the behaviors and practices that exclude young women and young men from participating, as well as what enables young women's and young men's participation, so organizational policies can be put in place to support this participation. While policies are one aspect, the organizational culture, everyday processes and individuals' practices must enable and support young women and young men to participate, giving equal voice to them in decision-making.

Underpinning factors influencing change: INTERNAL EMPOWERMENT AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

A set of underlying factors must exist across the Theory of Change to enable collective impact and transformational change. These factors can be grouped into 'internal empowerment' and 'enabling environments'. These elements need to be present throughout all paths and at multiple levels including the individual, family, community and institutional levels in order to shift traditionally held beliefs and behaviors (both at the individual and collective level) that inhibit meaningful youth participation.

- **Internal Empowerment:** These factors relate to the individual capabilities and attributes that lead to active citizenship: - Knowledge, skills and motivation - Awareness of oneself, one's view of the world and how this impacts on behaviors. - Awareness of power dynamics and how this can result in behaviors that exclude marginalized young women and young men. Internal empowerment not only relates to young women and young men, but also to power holders and other stakeholders. Internal empowerment is a crucial element to enabling interpersonal support, which must occur between peers, family, colleagues and other stakeholders to support youth active citizenship.

- **Enabling Environments:** These factors relate to broader environmental influences, which extend beyond the individual, to support young women and young men in being active citizens: - There are opportunities for young people to participate and/or be included in decision-making. - Special measures are put in place to further support marginalized young women and young men. - Space is created for young people to take measured risks. - Young women and young men feel safe and secure both economically, socially and politically. Enabling environments not only refer to the need to create the above environments, but also refer to seeking out spaces where change is already happening and amplifying these efforts.

Strategic Alliances KEY TO ACHIEVING CHANGE. A key feature of the Theory of Change is that while organizations/groups do not need to work across all paths, only when strategic connections are made between paths is broader societal change going to occur. If each path is addressed exclusively without consideration of how it relates to the other paths, long-term change is much less likely to be achieved. For example, if young women and young men in youth-led groups and networks work together without collaborating with leaders in communities and institutions, it is less likely that transformational change will occur. Thus, in order for change to occur at all levels (from the grassroots community level, to the national and global levels), leaders from youth groups, communities and institutions must be working together in strategic coalitions towards a shared vision.

Assumptions There are a number of assumptions which underpin this Theory of Change and affect whether or not transformational change will ultimately occur. These assumptions include:

- Young women and young men want to participate in decision-making in their communities and their societies.
- Marginalized young women and young men are currently participating significantly less than they could be.
- Young women and young men bring different ideas, perspectives and energy to the development process that will have a positive impact on achieving broader societal change.
- Young women and young men hold the greatest potential for shifting restrictive gender roles that perpetuate inequality within our societies.
- Working to address inhibiting environmental factors will support young people to participate.
- Young women and young men have the potential to be leaders in all areas.

6. A theory of change on child marriage

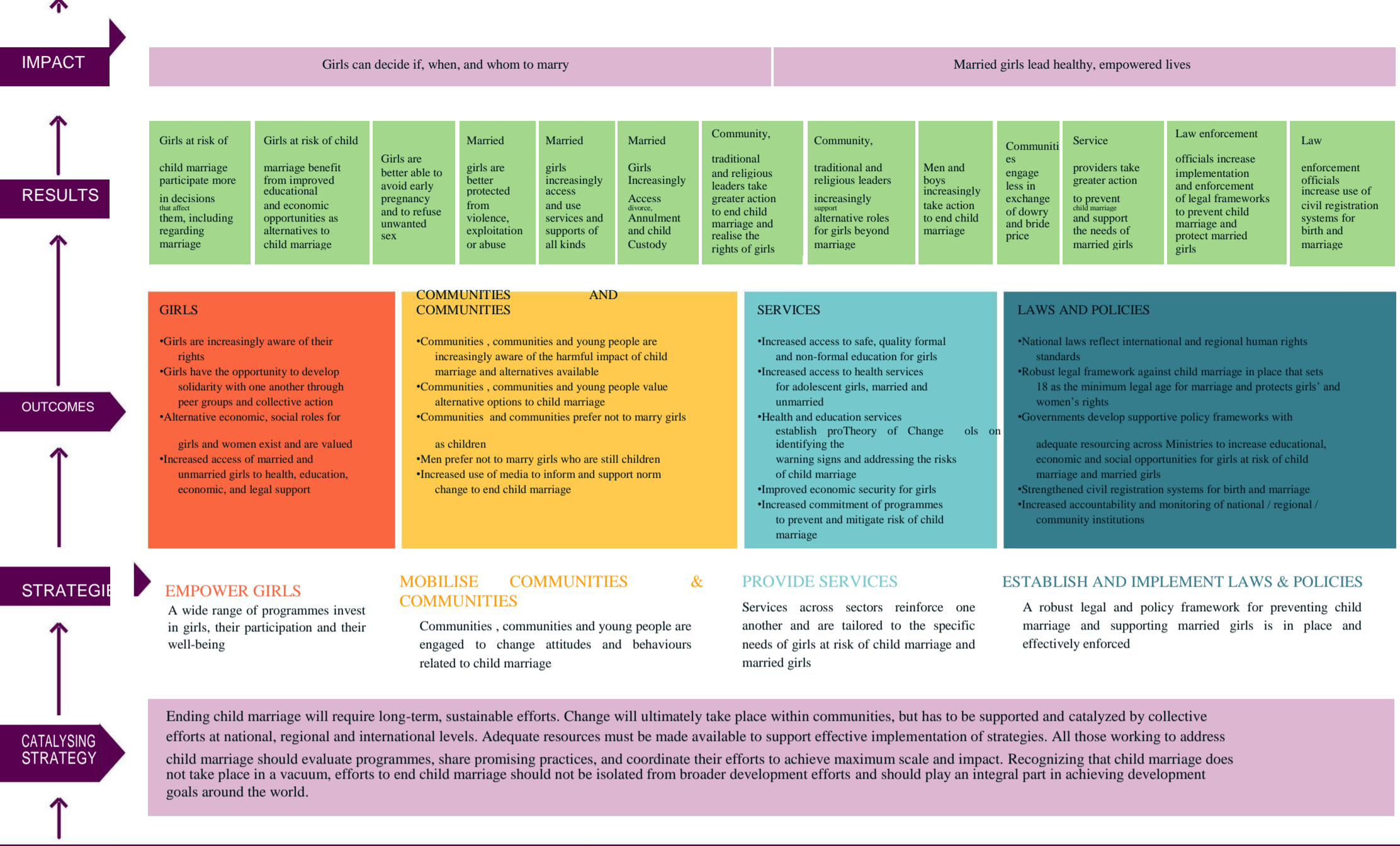
Assumption: Since girls are disproportionately affected by child marriage, Eco-Agric Uganda developed a separate 'Theory of Change on Child Marriage' to articulate what an effective response to child marriage entails. This is attached as an annex at the end

Conclusion

This theory of change provides Eco-Agric Uganda with a holistic perspective on how change takes place and how our various ministries and sectoral approaches integrate to support this change. It also provides an anchor for our evidence-based approach to programming, as it reflects our hypothesis of how change takes place, and a hierarchy of outcomes that can be measured and submitted to empirical inquiry. This allows us to assess and reflect on the success and impact of our work in a holistic way, and refine and adjust our approach accordingly.

Overall, it is envisaged that the theory of change will provide a strong anchor for evidence building and learning in our programmes and sectors, as well as helping Eco-Agric Uganda entities, sectors and programmes to make strategic assessments and choices, and determine and measure the value they add to a broader global change process.

VISION : A WORLD WITH OUT CHILD MARRAGE WHERE WOMEN AND GIRLS ENJOY EQUAL STATUS WITH BOYS AND MEN AND ARE ABLE TO ACHIEVE FULL POTENTIAL IN ALL ASPECTS OF THEIR LIVES



PROBLEM: Every year approximately 14 million girls are married as children across countries, cultures, religions and ethnicities. Child marriage is rooted in gender inequality and in the low value accorded to girls, and is exacerbated by poverty, insecurity and conflict. It denies girls their rights, choice and participation, and undermines numerous development priorities, hindering progress towards a more equal, healthy and prosperous world.

A. Why develop a common theory of change?

In Uganda, 36 million girls are married before the age of 18 every year. There is unprecedented recognition that child marriage infringes their rights and is a major setback to development. There is no single solution to ending this problem, but thanks to the work of *Eco-Agric Uganda* members, partners and others, we are able to build an understanding of all that is necessary to achieve our ultimate vision:

A world without child marriage where girls and women enjoy equal status with boys and men and are able to achieve their full potential in all aspects of their lives.

Eco-Agric Uganda has developed a ‘Theory of Change on Child Marriage’ to articulate what an effective response to child marriage entails. The Theory of Change outlines the range of approaches needed, demonstrates how they intersect, and aims to provide a basis for identifying common indicators that could be used by diverse practitioners to monitor progress.

The Theory of Change has been developed to facilitate greater partnership and collaboration among and across organisations, sectors and levels. It serves as a foundation to build consensus about actions needed to address child marriage and support married girls, in both the long and short-term. In addition, it provides a basis to understand where programming efforts are currently focused, in particular among *Eco-Agric Uganda* members, and to highlight where further work is needed. In this sense, the Theory of Change offers both a mirror *and* a target.

Crucially, the Theory of Change demonstrates that there is no single solution to ending child marriage and that everyone has a role to play. Ultimately efforts to address child marriage must respond to local contexts and accordingly programmes and investments may take different forms. We hope that this Theory of Change will be a useful framework and tool for all implementers and partners in *Eco-Agric Uganda* to draw from as they develop their own theories of change to respond to child marriage in their countries. It is intended both for those who are new to the issue, as well as those who work on it through one specific approach to see how their work forms part of a broader effort.

The Theory of Change will remain an evolving document; feedback, updates and changes will be welcomed as the field evolves and we gain a better understanding of the effectiveness and inter-relationship between different approaches. This brief outlines how the Theory of Change was developed and the insights that inform its structure and content.

B. What are the guiding principles reflected in this Theory of Change?

While we seek to end child marriage, we should not neglect married girls

An important decision in the development of this Theory of Change was to include the *prevention* of child marriage as well as its *mitigation*, or the provision of support to girls who are already married. The decision to include both aspects has two rationales: first, support for girls should not disappear once they are married. The factors that make them vulnerable to child marriage make them vulnerable within marriage as well. Second, there is emerging research suggesting that working to address these two goals simultaneously can have a mutually reinforcing impact, especially to improve the status of girls more broadly.

Girls are disproportionately affected by child marriage

The decision to reference girls rather than children throughout the Theory of Change is not intended to disregard the impact of child marriage on boys. Rather, it reflects the underlying rationale for the creation of the *Eco-Agric Uganda* partnerships: the disproportionate scale and devastating impact of child marriage on girls’ rights, education, health, development and personal relationships. Focusing on “children” seemed to diminish the importance of gender inequality in shaping patterns of child marriage and the importance of addressing this in efforts to tackle child marriage. The intention for this model is to reference girls for the most part, but to be relevant to the needs of boys as well.

We understand child marriage to include both formal and informal unions

The Theory of Change covers both formal and informal unions, recognising that in some regions where child marriage occurs, the union may not have been formalised but the circumstances are similar to a child marriage. For example, in Western Uganda, child marriage exists, but there is also early pregnancy outside of or before marriage. These are both expressions of the same problem: a low value given to girls and inequality in sexual relationships (as well as poverty, lack of education, among others).

No single strategy will end child marriage

Child marriage is an entrenched practice in many communities, communities and societies; ending it will require action by multiple actors at many levels.

Empowering girls with information about their rights and the skills to exercise them will be crucial. In addition, we need to address the broader context in which girls are married as children. This includes encouraging communities and communities to question child marriage and to envision other options for their daughters. Services such as schools, health centres and others must be tailored to the needs of adolescent girls and be supported by strong laws and policies demonstrating government commitment to addressing child marriage. The particular combination of activities that works to end long held child marriage patterns will differ across cultural settings.

Change happens locally but can be catalysed by national, regional and global action

Ultimately, change will happen locally, when individuals, communities, and communities understand the benefits of ending child marriage. For this to happen, it will be necessary to create an environment that offers girls opportunities beyond the traditional roles envisaged for them. National, regional and global action, by a broad range of stakeholders, is crucial to create a supportive environment that enables and promotes this change.

Marriage should only take place with the free and full consent of both parties; this is rarely the case where one of the spouses is under the age of 18

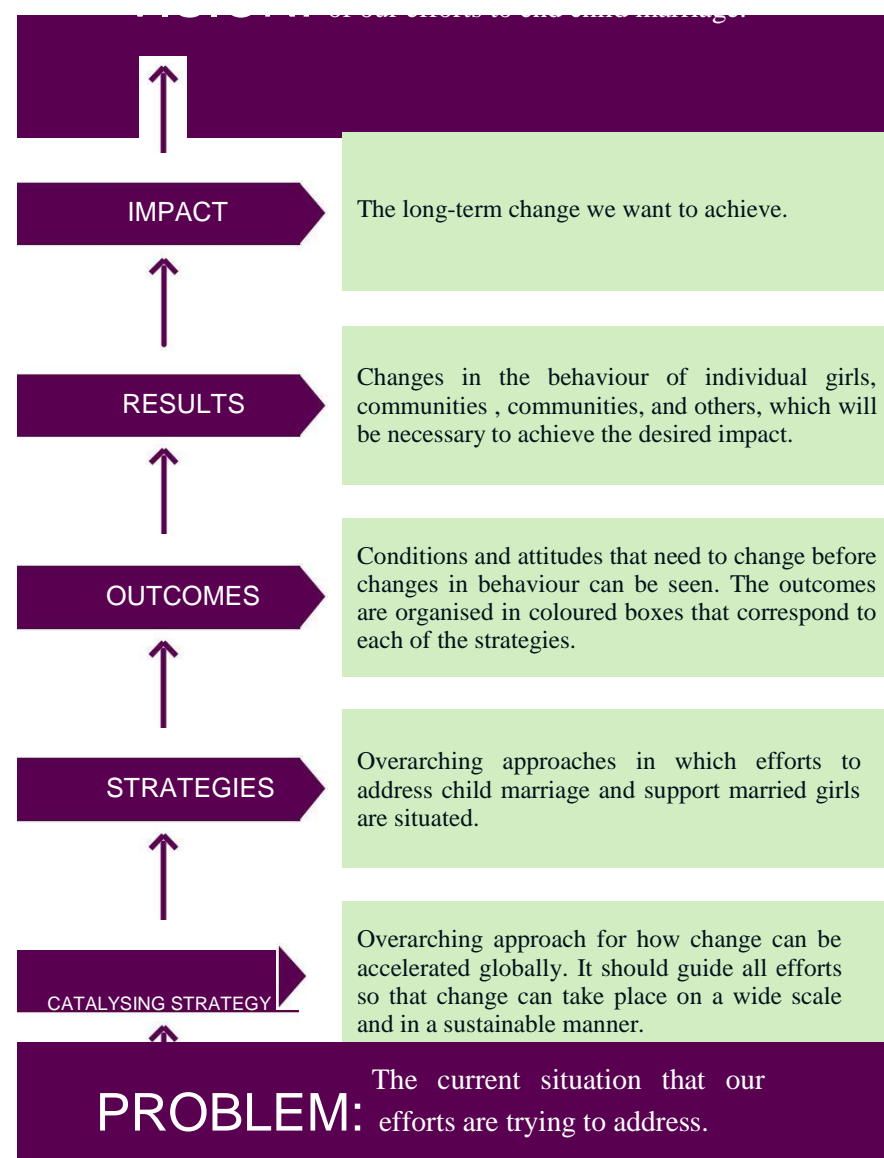
The nature of child marriage varies from context to context. In many situations, girls are married to much older men and have little choice in the matter, be it in law or in practice. Yet, there are other contexts where older adolescents express a desire to marry before the age of 18.

There is much debate as to whether adolescents have the capacity to ‘consent’ or ‘choose’ to marry, in particular in contexts of community or community pressure or a lack of other options. There is also debate about how to verify this consent. The unfortunate reality is that, in the majority of cases, the support structures do not exist to ensure that there is free and full consent upon marriage or to provide girls with realistic alternatives. Regardless of this ongoing debate, working with girls to develop life plans in line with their own wishes is an important element of this Theory of Change.

C. How to read this Theory of Change

The Theory of Change has seven levels, from the problem statement at the bottom, to the vision statement at the top.

It is important to recognise that the relationships between different levels are not causal or linear but represent a broader view of how change will occur.



D. Moving through the Theory of Change

This section explains the Theory of Change and the decisions and choices it reflects, level by level. Much of the language used throughout the Theory of Change reflects the built-in intention to measure progress. For the most part, however, the language is deliberately active and engaging (rather than technical for measurement) to make the Theory of change more accessible and easier to read.

The Problem

The problem statement encapsulates the urgent need to address child marriage, by highlighting its scale and depth, its drivers, as well as its impact on girls, communities, communities and nations. It recognises the diversity of settings in which child marriage takes place and highlights the many structural and societal drivers such as poverty, gender inequality, age inequality, conflict and insecurity.

Catalysing Strategy

To achieve the vision of a world where girls and women enjoy equal status with boys and men and are able to achieve their full potential, the catalysing strategy recognises that child marriage should not be addressed in isolation, but within a broader framework of development and human rights. Ending child marriage will require long-term, coordinated efforts that support and reinforce local activities with national, regional and international work.

The catalysing strategy identifies opportunities to coordinate efforts, including bringing attention to the issue, aligning partners, sharing findings and mobilising resources. Implicit within the catalysing strategy is the need for greater investment in research and data collection, not only to increase the evidence base to inform programmes, but also to measure progress against the broad range of outcomes and results.

The catalysing strategy assumes that, given the complex nature and wide-ranging impact of child marriage, and the range of actions necessary to address it, strategic collaboration will be crucial to achieve maximum impact. The *Eco-Agric Uganda* partnership plays an important role in facilitating such catalytic and collaborative action.

Strategies

The majority of strategies to address child marriage fall within four categories: empowering girls;

mobilising communities and communities; providing services; and establishing and implementing laws and policies. The four strategies are interlinked and mutually reinforcing; addressing child marriage will require a combination of actions related to all four. The specific combinations will be context-specific, and depend on the drivers of child marriage in a given region.

Empower girls

Activities are needed to empower girls and enable them to exercise their rights, for example through programmes which equip girls with training, skills, information, as well as the provision of safe spaces and support networks.

Mobilise communities and communities

Recognising that girls are rarely the decision makers when it comes to child marriage, and that child marriage is often a deeply rooted practice in many communities, work is needed with communities and communities to create awareness of the harmful impact of child marriage, and of alternative roles for girls and women, so that communities and communities prefer not to marry their daughters as children and so that they themselves engage in efforts to end the practice.

Provide services

Addressing child marriage and supporting the needs of married girls requires a thorough review of the services available to girls at risk of child marriage and girls who have already been married, and how these services reinforce one another. Depending on the context, activities under this strategy will relate to a number of sectors, including education, health, and justice. They can range from the provision of adolescent friendly health services, to ensuring that schools are accessible and child friendly, to ensuring that married girls have the support services to help them leave the marriage if they choose.

Establish and implement laws and policies

An enabling legal and policy framework should be at the core of efforts to address child marriage and must be backed by institutional support structures to ensure effective implementation.

Outcomes

The outcomes reflect the changes we hope to see as a consequence of our strategic activities. They reflect changes needed in the attitudes and conditions of girls, communities and communities, services and laws and policies. There is currently a variety and richness of approaches being used in different contexts to achieve these outcomes, from service-provision to research, policy, advocacy or capacity-building. The specific set of activities or interventions needed to achieve the outcomes in a given setting will depend on the context. How these activities are carried out – whether in discrete pieces by disparate actors, or through integrated programmes – will depend on local opportunities and constraints.

Girls

The Theory of Change emphasises several key outcomes related to how girls view themselves, how they are viewed by those around them and the practical support they can access. Girls' increased ability to refuse marriage requires girls to be aware of their rights, to see themselves as rights-bearers, to develop skills to support their own life plans and to have opportunities to connect with their peers and support one another. At the same time, alternative, respectable economic and social roles must exist for unmarried girls and must be valued by both girls and their communities to enable them to choose an alternative life course.

Communities and communities

Norms around child marriage and the values and practices that support it must shift for child marriage to end and for married girls to be supported. This set of outcomes reflects key areas of change needed

in the commitments and behaviours of communities and communities: greater *awareness* of the harmful impact of child marriage; a change in *attitudes* about alternative options to child marriage, including attitudes that compel girls to marry if they engage in early sexual activity or pregnancy; the reduced *acceptance* of child marriage by those who influence girls' lives, including the men that choose to marry girls as children. There is an important role for media in supporting greater awareness and attitude change on a wide scale.

There is still a lack of consensus about how social norms change, but there is recognition that the timeframes necessary for these changes to take place can vary dramatically. Activities needed to achieve this set of outcomes therefore need to reflect this and be resourced accordingly.

Services

A broad range of services and programmes are needed to remove the structural barriers that push girls into child marriage and prevent them from accessing support within marriage. Barriers in the education sector for example include: safety risks on the way to school and in school, a lack of clean sex-segregated toilets at school, particularly for girls who have begun to menstruate, a lack of relevance of what girls are learning to their everyday lives, or a lack of child support facilities for girls who are already mothers. Girls (both married and unmarried) must be able to access safe, quality education, which goes beyond the basic availability of schools and considers the conditions which stop communities sending girls to school. In some contexts, the barrier may be the inability to access formal education itself, in which case the provision of non-formal educational options is necessary.

Programme implementers and service providers need to recognise their own responsibility in preventing child marriage and mitigating its impact within their own spheres of influence. In practice, this may mean the establishment of systems or proTheory of Change ols to identify the warning signs and address the risks of child marriage. It means ensuring that health services are adolescent-friendly, and tailored to the needs to both unmarried and married girls. It also means providing married girls with the support they need to leave the marriage and pursue an alternative life course.

Recognising that poverty and economic insecurity are major drivers of child marriage in many regions, the model also highlights the need for services that provide girls with skills and opportunities necessary to increase their economic security and reduce their financial dependence on those around them.

Laws and policies

Laws and policies provide an important backdrop for improvements in services, changes in social norms, and girls' empowerment. Systems to monitor the implementation of laws and policies are important, so that expectations on the part of girls, communities and communities as to the relevance of these laws to their lives are raised, and so they can actually use them.

The Theory of Change lists critical steps that form part of a comprehensive response to child marriage. Legislation that sets 18 as the minimum age for marriage is not enough; loopholes – related to parental consent or customary laws – must be removed, and related laws must be in place which

protect women and girls' rights, including property rights, access to remedies, support for those wishing to leave a marriage, protection from violence, access to health services, etc. Strengthened civil registration systems which record births and marriages are also important.

Government policy frameworks must define roles and dedicate resources across ministries – including justice, women and children, education, health, social protection, and security – to expand opportunities for girls at risk and to support married girls. This is closely linked to the achievement of many of the outcomes listed under "Services".

Results

The results (or intermediate impacts) reflect the demonstrated changes in behaviour on the part of individuals, communities and communities, programme implementers, and law enforcement officials as a consequence of surrounding changes in attitudes and conditions. The results are deliberately framed in an active manner, to emphasize *whose* behaviour has changed.

We have assumed that any changes in the behaviour of policy-makers does not constitute a "result" within this framework, but rather creates the conditions necessary to change the behaviours of actors who have a more direct impact on the lives of girls. Depending on the context, different combinations of the results will be necessary to prevent child marriage and support married girls.

Impact

If we are to have a lasting impact on child marriage, girls need to be able to achieve their aspirations. It is when girls can choose *whether* to marry as well as when and whom, that marriage-related decisions will reflect a true choice, a shift in decision-making power to girls and new social norms. Similarly, if married girls lead healthy, empowered lives, this will reflect our success in separating the harmful conditions associated with child marriage from the practice itself.

Vision

Our vision articulates what we believe can be made possible by ending child marriage. Our ultimate objective is not only to prevent children from marrying before the age of 18, but also to ensure that they acquire the skills, connections and capacities that child marriage impedes, and have the opportunity and freedom to thrive. Since child

marriage determines the fate of so many women around the world, the vision includes explicit reference to the achievement of gender equality. This is fundamental for the realisation of girls' rights and to the transformation of communities and nations.

E. How the *Girls Not Brides* Theory of Change has been developed

How to find out more

Eco-Agric Uganda is a member based non-governmental organization established in 2007 as a Ugandan community based organization . This Theory of Change was developed in consultation with *Eco-Agric Uganda* members and other experts on child marriage. It endeavours to incorporate the opinions and feedback from a wide range of stakeholders. The process adhered to several important principles:

The Theory of Change was open to interested parties both within the *Eco-Agric Uganda* membership (through the *Eco-Agric Uganda* newsletter and targeted outreach), as well as to a range of other stakeholders engaged in efforts to end child marriage;

To ensure the Theory of Change reflected the diversity of approaches among *Eco-Agric Uganda* members and the broader movement to end child marriage, it consciously and proactively engaged with individuals and organisations from different regions and working on diverse approaches.

Over 150 individuals and organisations contributed to this Theory of Change. They included civil society organisations engaged in advocacy, research and programmes, District Local Governments, donors and government representatives. A total of 8 member organisations, and key experts from other partner organisations, participated in three workshops and gave their feedback. Others reviewed the documents presented and shared comments via email and telephone. The constructive nature of input received throughout the process was invaluable.

The Theory of Change and accompanying guide are available to download via the Eco-Agric Uganda website www.ecoagricuganda.org

To request a print copy of the Theory of Change or this accompanying guide, or to send comments or feedback on the Theory of Change, contact ecoagricuganda@gmail.com

Eco-Agric Uganda is a member based National Civil Society organisation with over 60590 members in the three districts of Uganda. It is committed to improving livelihoods of rural poor community members especially girls and women sustainably.

Registered Charity No: 115111

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