Supplementary Programme Note on the Theory of Change

Peer Review Group meeting, 11 March 2014
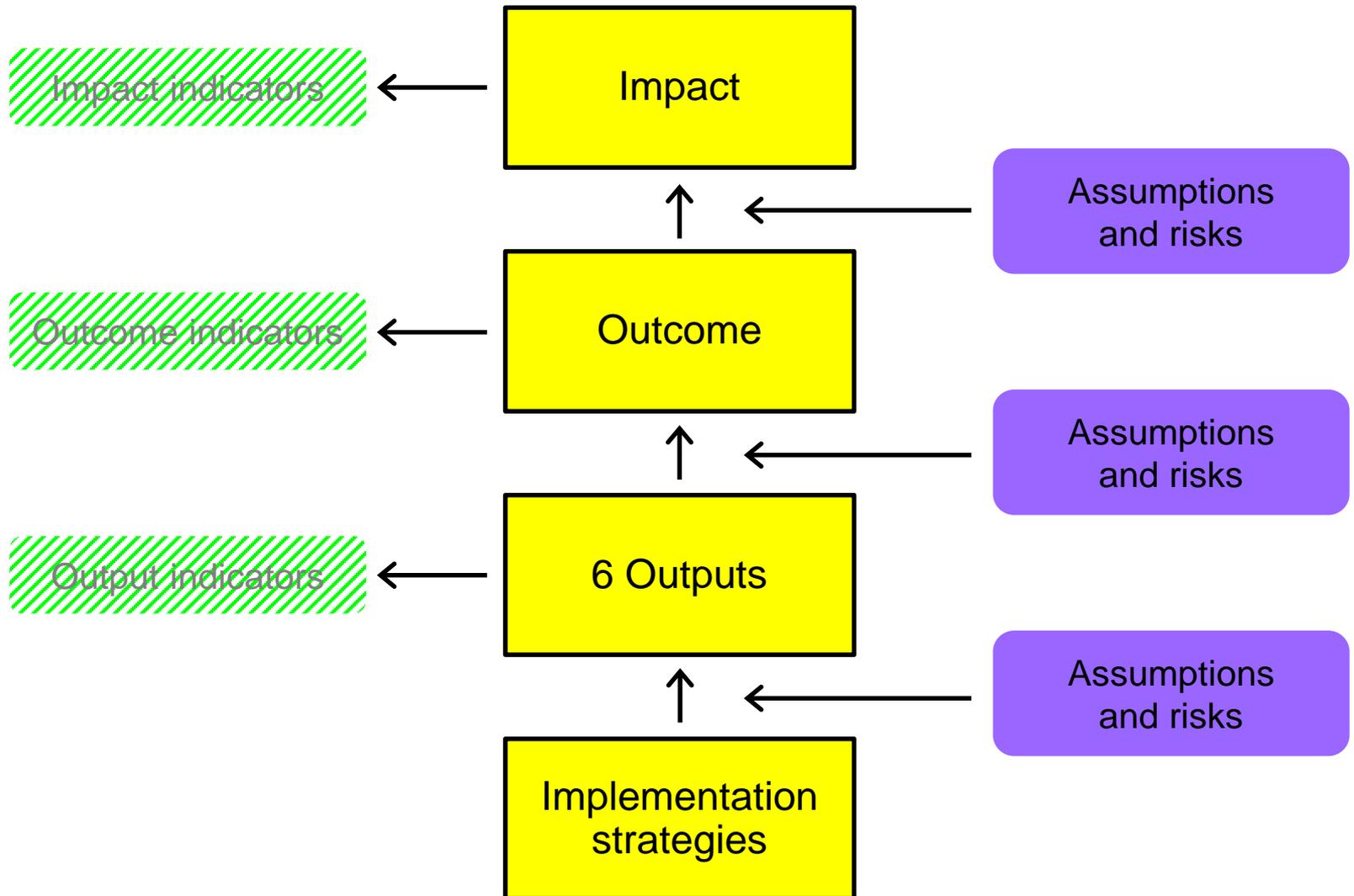
unite for children

unicef

Purpose

- No standardization in use of theories of change internationally
- UNICEF approach based on guidance from Executive Board, inter-agency discussions, and internal consensus on what would be most useful
- Key elements:
  - Explanation of ___why___ UNICEF is focusing on certain areas and approaches, and ___how___ it will achieve results in them (causal pathways), as set out in results framework
  - Assumptions and risks
- Fundamental challenge:
  - UNICEF is a decentralized organization working in partnership with others in 152 countries, and so programming decisions must be context-specific and nationally-led

Key principles

- Built on organization's comparative advantages to support the realization of the rights of children
  - Normative mandate
  - Proven capacity in multiple sectors
  - Dual development and humanitarian mandate
  - Large-scale field presence
  - Capacity to engage concurrently globally, regionally, and nationally
- Equity
- Partnership

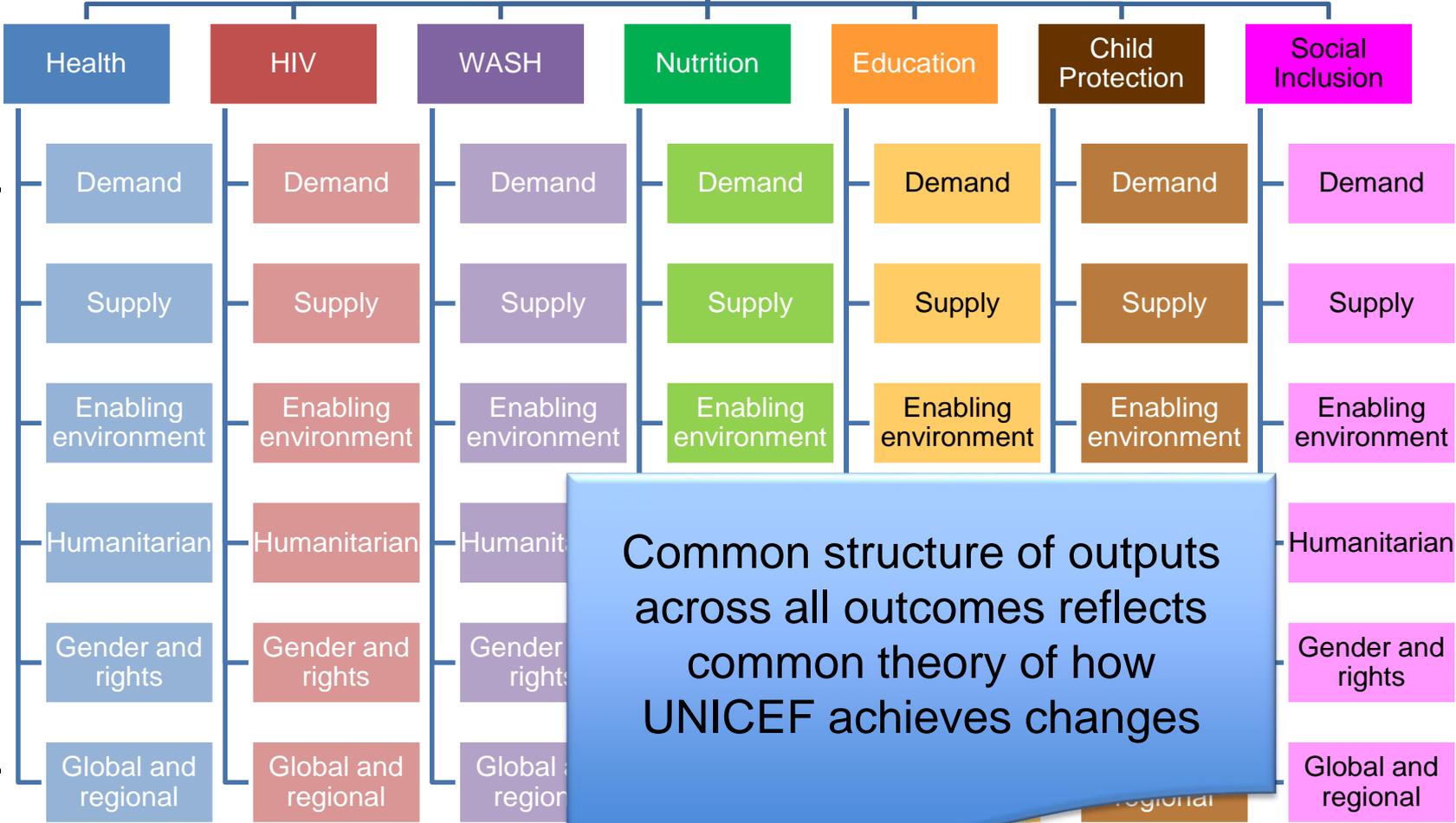# Schematic depiction of theory of change

SP structure

Outcomes

Outputs

Impact

Health	HIV	WASH	Nutrition	Education	Child Protection	Social Inclusion
Demand	Demand	Demand	Demand	Demand	Demand	Demand
Supply	Supply	Supply	Supply	Supply	Supply	Supply
Enabling environment	Enabling environment	Enabling environment	Enabling environment	Enabling environment	Enabling environment	Enabling environment
Humanitarian	Humanitarian	Humanitarian				Humanitarian
Gender and rights	Gender and rights	Gender and rights				Gender and rights
Global and regional	Global and regional	Global and regional				Global and regional

Common structure of outputs across all outcomes reflects common theory of how UNICEF achieves changes

Outputs

- Knowledge, behaviour change and participation
  - Enhanced support for children, families and communities to promote knowledge, behaviour change, demand for services and opportunities for participation
- Availability and access to services
  - Increased national capacity to ensure availability of and access to services and to strengthen systems
- National policies, laws and budgets
  - Strengthened political commitment and national capacity to legislate, plan and budget for children

Outputs (continued)

- Humanitarian response
  - Increased country capacity and delivery of services to protect and provide for children in humanitarian settings
- Gender equality and rights
  - Increased capacity of governments and partners, as duty-bearers, to identify and respond to specific challenges related to the protection and promotion of the rights of children and gender equality

- Global and regional results
  - Enhanced enabling environment at global and regional levels to realize child rights

Key additional issue: programme areas

- Outcome areas are broad, so UNICEF prioritises key topics within each for 2014-2017, which are the programme areas

- Example from education: early learning, equity, learning outcomes, and education in emergencies

- Each outcome contains the rationale for focusing on each programme area

Humanitarian response and gender equality

- ## Humanitarian response:
  - Strengthening involvement in systematic reduction of vulnerability to disaster and conflicts through risk-informed country programmes that help build resilience
  - Strengthening linkages between humanitarian and development programming

- ## Gender equality
  - Global Action Plan, 2014-2017
  - Normative principle guiding all work
  - Mainstreaming

Assumptions and risks

- ## Assumptions:
  - Defined as contextual factors that must hold true for the transition to occur
  - Considered highly likely to occur as predicted (based on UNICEF's experience and knowledge)
- ## Risks:
  - External factors that jeopardize each assumption

- ## Issue for discussion:
  - Current approach focuses on external factors rather than those under UNICEF's direct control (although UNICEF influences many assumptions through its work)
  - No consensus in theory of change literature on whether assumptions and risks should focus on external or both external and internal factors (internal relevant mostly for transition from implementation strategies to outputs)

Assumptions and risk: outcome to impact

- Numerous humanitarian crises do not overwhelm the capacity to respond
  - Key risks: novel pathogen; widespread geopolitical conflict; climate change tipping point → extreme weather events; the global economic system melts down

- Political support for addressing inequity remains strong
  - Key risks: vested interests build global coalitions for status quo; research emerges showing equity focus does not improve lives of disadvantaged and does harm the better off

- Evidenced-based laws, policies, and implementation plans combined with technical solutions can make a difference in the lives of disadvantaged children
  - Key risks: shifts in technology → children's lives are shaped by new forces that cannot be addressed by traditional forms of programming; existing technical solutions stop working

Assumptions and risk: outcome to impact (con't)

- Global consensus on the importance of partnerships continues
  - Key risks: post-2015 process collapses acrimoniously; global geopolitical conflict → breakdown in world order and isolationism; UN system disintegrates in the face of scandals or global economic collapse
- Set of issues covered by outcomes is complemented by progress in other areas necessary to realize the rights of children
  - Key risks: collapse of other actors with important roles addressing key issues outside UNICEF's purview; governments globally stop devoting domestic resources to a key issue; new issues critical to children emerge but are not addressed adequately

Assumptions and risk: output to outcome (cross-cutting)

- ## Resources do not vanish
  - Key risks: global economic system melts down; new threat emerges that requires massive investments; shifts in migration patterns → massive loss of human resources
- ## Political support does not vanish
  - Key risks: new issue emerges that attracts attention and political focus; global scandals affect multiple outcomes simultaneously
- ## Governments commit to acting to remove barriers and bottlenecks
  - Key risks: Entrenched interests lead reorientation; post-2015 process leads to refocusing on laws and policies
- ## Outputs are combined in optimal ways
  - Key risks: vested interests systematically favour one output over another; MoRES approach does not work

Implementation strategies

- Capacity development
- Evidence generation, policy dialogue and advocacy
- Partnerships
- South-South and triangular cooperation
- Identification and promotion of innovation
- Support to integration and cross-sectoral linkages
- Service delivery

Annexes

- Annex 1: Implementation strategies
  - Description of each implementation strategy

- Annex 2: Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting
  - Description of UNICEF's approach
  - Progress and challenges
  - Status of system

For more information, please contact

Robert Jenkins

Deputy Director, Division of Policy and Strategy

+1 917 265 4501

rjenkins@unicef.org

United Nations Children's Fund

3 United Nations Plaza

New York, NY 10017, USA

Tel: 212-326-7000

www.unicef.org

unicef