CAUSAL PATHWAYS VIRTUAL SYMPOSIUM 2023

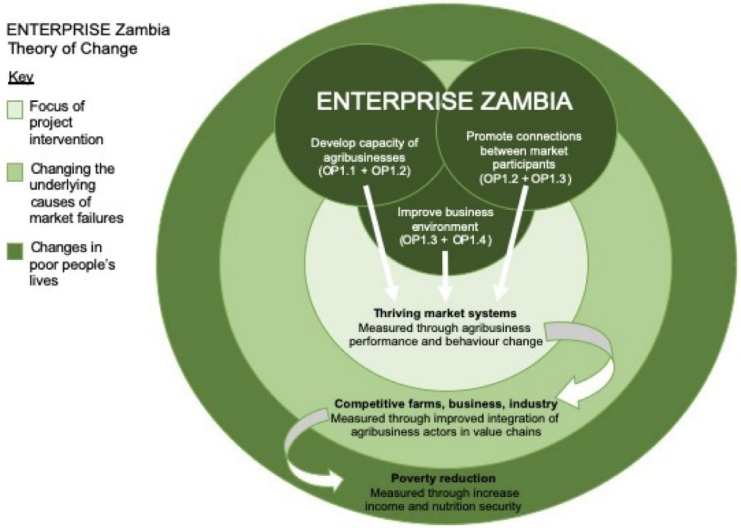
Causal Pathways:

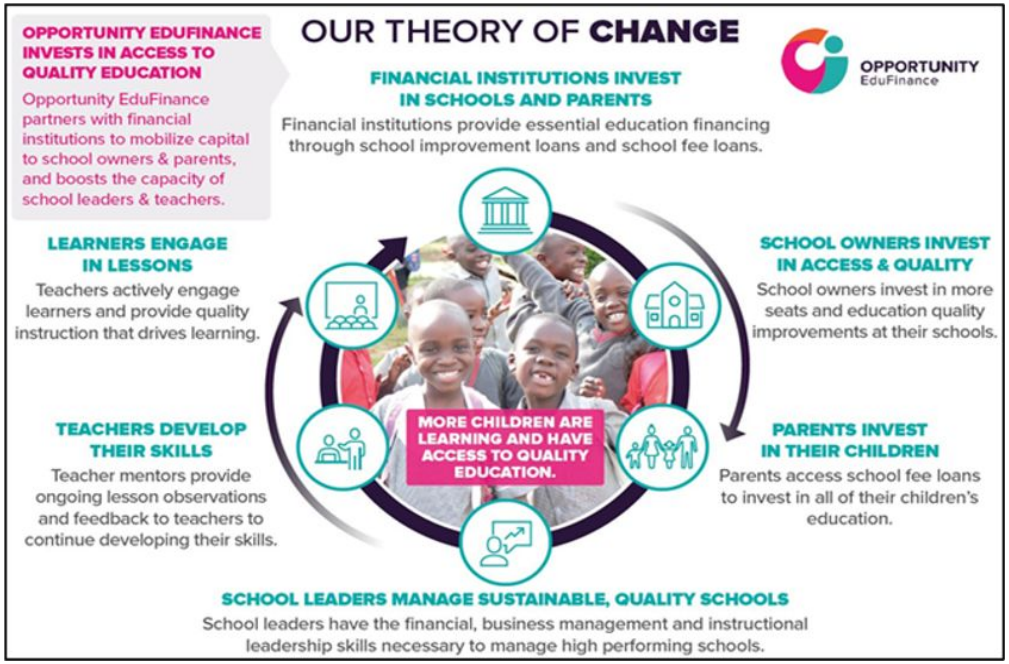
Introduction to the Qualitative Impact Protocol - QuIP

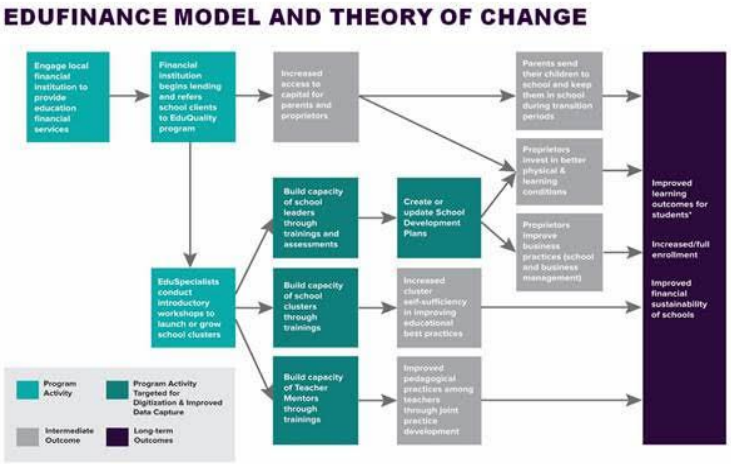
Fiona Remnant, Bath Social & Development Research Ltd

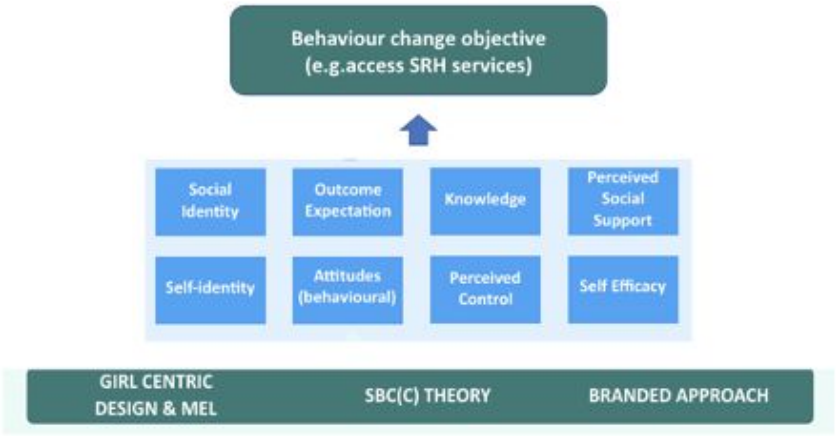
Professor James Copestake, University of Bath & Bath SDR

What do you think causes what?

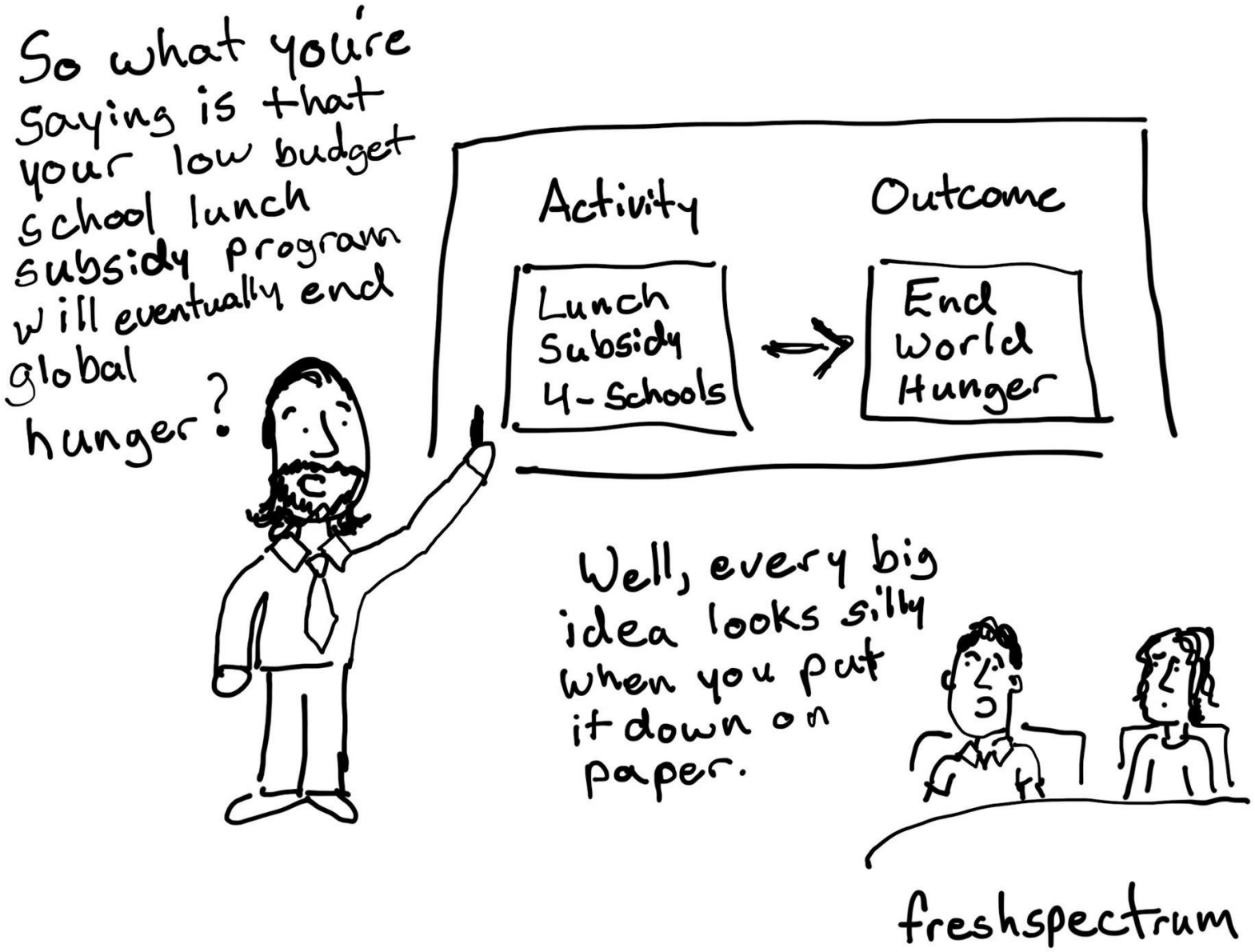




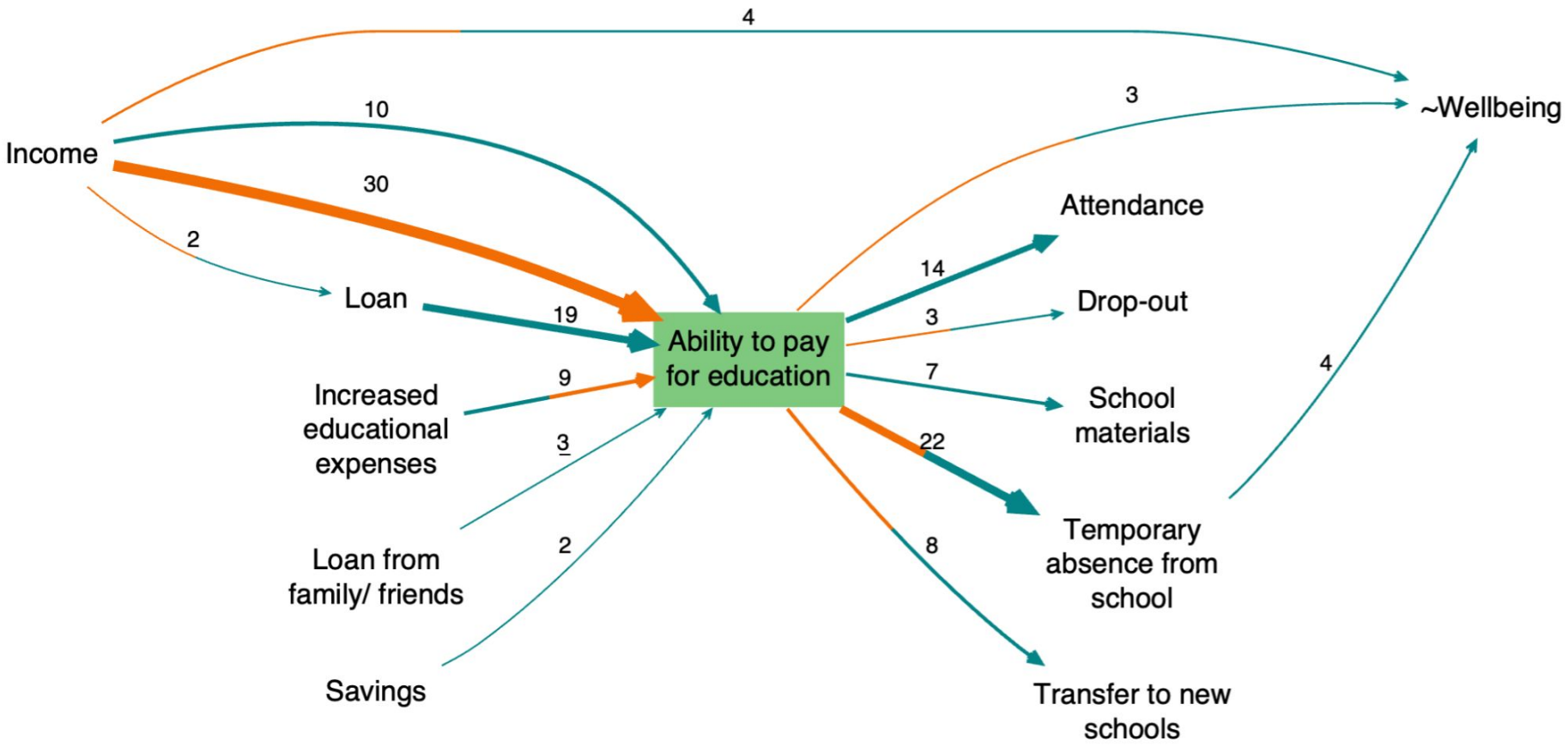




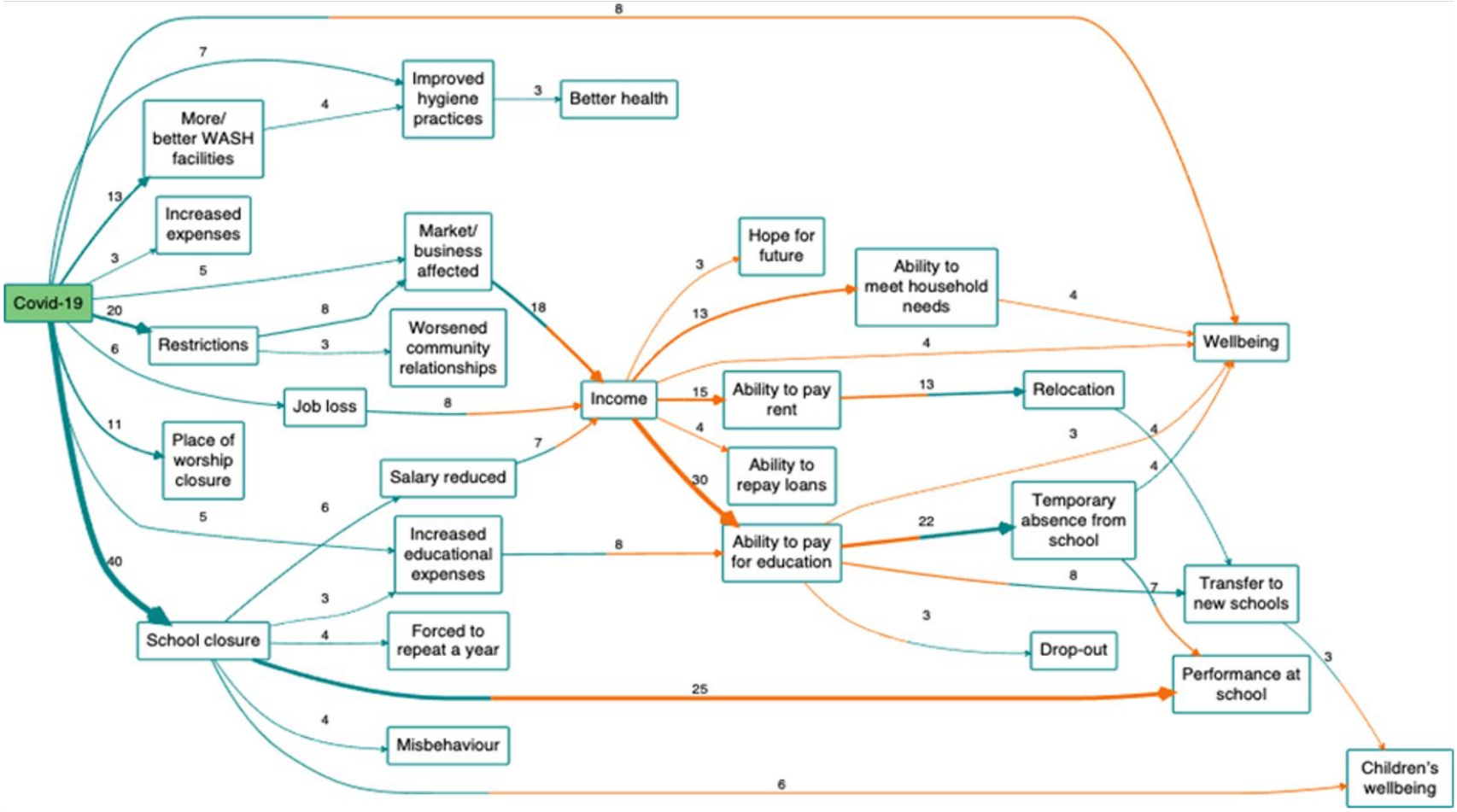
Does your programme need a reality check?



Would your stakeholders agree with your ToC?



Do you know the consequences of unexpected shocks?



How to understand and differentiate the causes of impact?

Method	Issues
Performance management based on operational data	• Cognitive biases • Vested interests • Mission drift • Weak external credibility
Quantitative impact assessment (including RCTs, D-i-D and CBA)	• Costly (large sample sizes) • Narrowly framed (little scope for unexpected) • Misses causal detail: how, why & for whom
Qualitative social research (including ethnography)	• Costly (complex analysis of long interviews) • Complex presentation of results • Hard to generalise results • Biased feedback from participants
Participatory learning and action	• Hard to generalise results • Weak external credibility to non-participants
Theory led qualitative impact evaluation methods (including QuIP)	• Process tracing, contribution analysis, outcome harvesting, realist evaluation

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 a large (representative) sample size
- Exploratory, allows participants to tell you what is important to uncover diverse causal mechanisms: 'for whom, how and why?' (**not** how much)
- Analysis of qual data is natively causal - visual summary maps of perceptions of change with counts to understand relative significance
- Combining findings across multiple studies will allow you to generalize theory at 'mid-level' and then zoom in to specific contexts

Qualitative Impact Protocol: Busting those myths!

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Why not ask people **how** and **why** things have changed?

Individuals **experience**, understand and can articulate causation!

We become more persuaded of causation the more instances of causal links we observe, but this does not need to be statistically 'representative' numbers

Leave yourself open to learn about unexpected impacts, good & bad!

Qualitative data analysis can be transparent, rigorous and useful!

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 and **when**? Identify groups who may experience change differently.

2. Goal-free interviews:

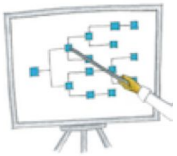
Independent, local researchers with little or no knowledge of the programme ask guided questions about change **without any prompting about inputs**. Let respondents explain the reasons for change as **they** perceive it.

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

4. Integration and sensemaking:

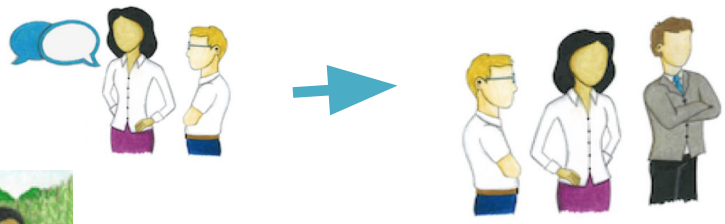
What does this mean for your intervention? Are your stakeholders being impacted as you expect, what are the blockers, derailers or positive reinforcers?

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.

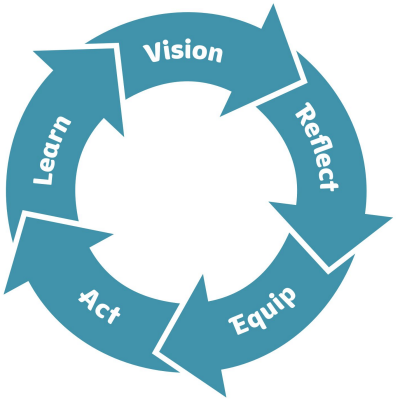


A case study: Tearfund

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

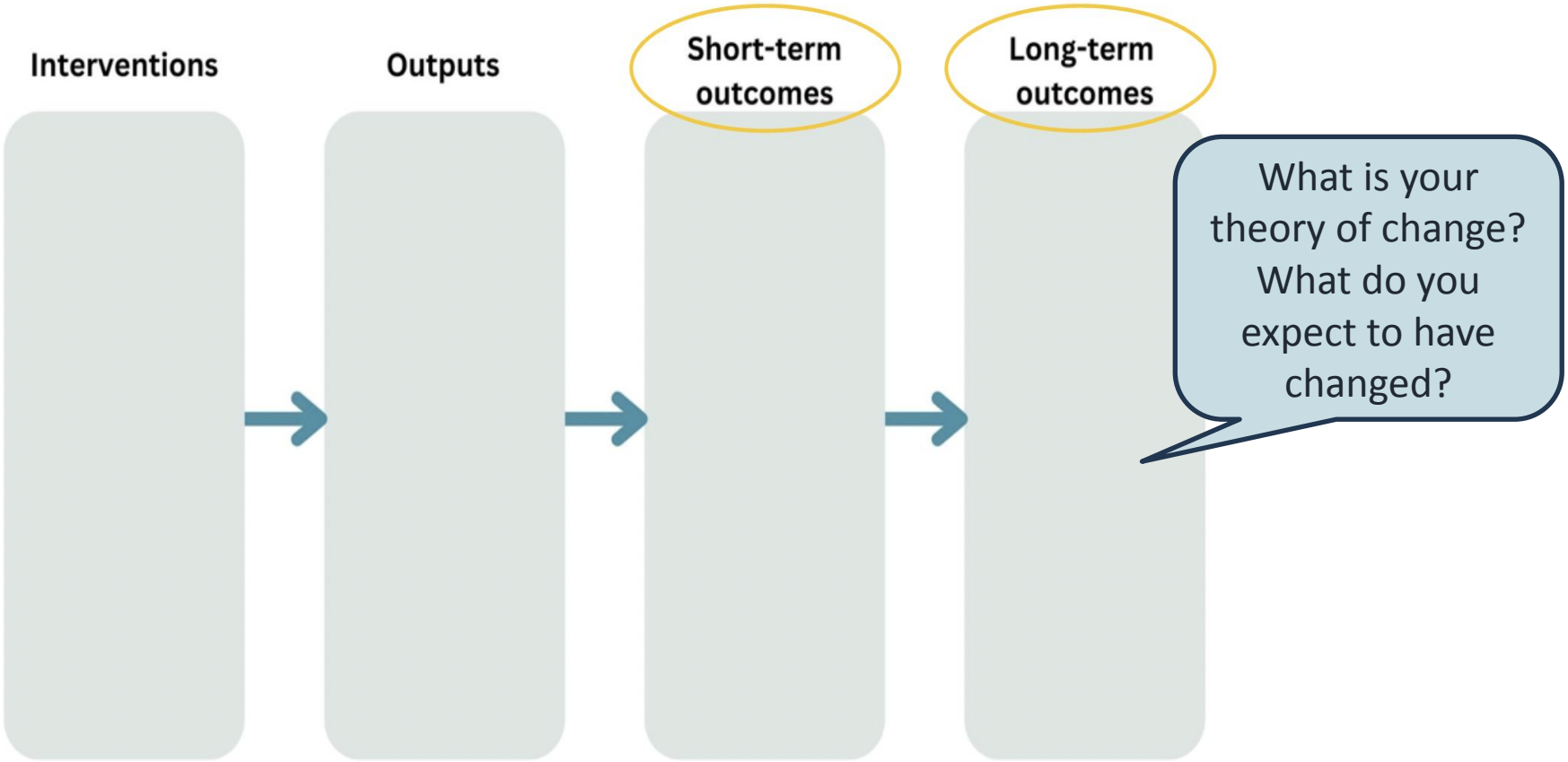
3. Commitment to learning about what works, what doesn’t and how **directly** from those affected by the programme.

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?

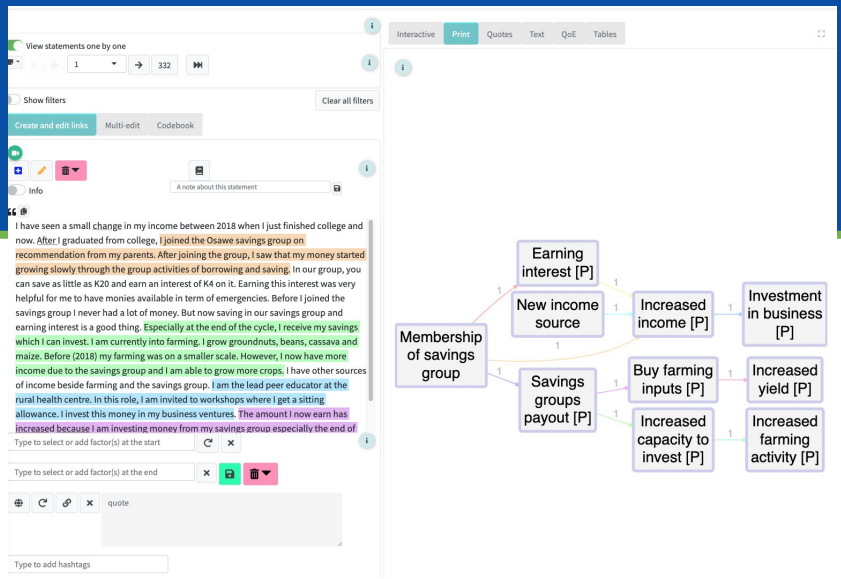
- *Have any changes happened or are planned to improve the wellbeing of the community?*
- *If yes, why have these changes happened?*
- *If no, what is hindering the community?*
- *Do you feel the community has the resources and ability to make these changes?*
- *Is there any change in how people feel 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

Collecting data

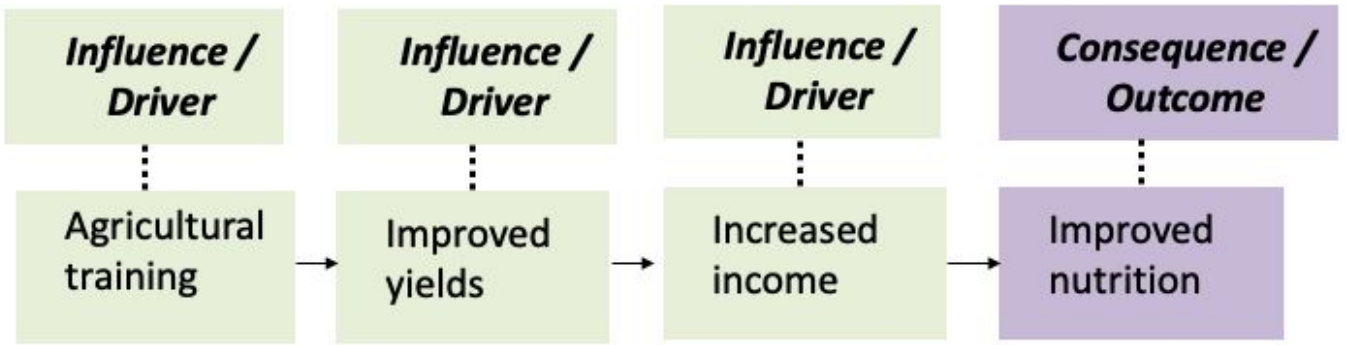
- Typically 24 interviews (+ 4 focus groups) per ‘cluster’, usually between 1-4 clusters
- Interviews last approx 1 hour, usually recorded
- Transcript focuses on changes and **reasons for changes** mentioned by the respondent
- 50-70 pages of narrative text per cluster?

Analysing data



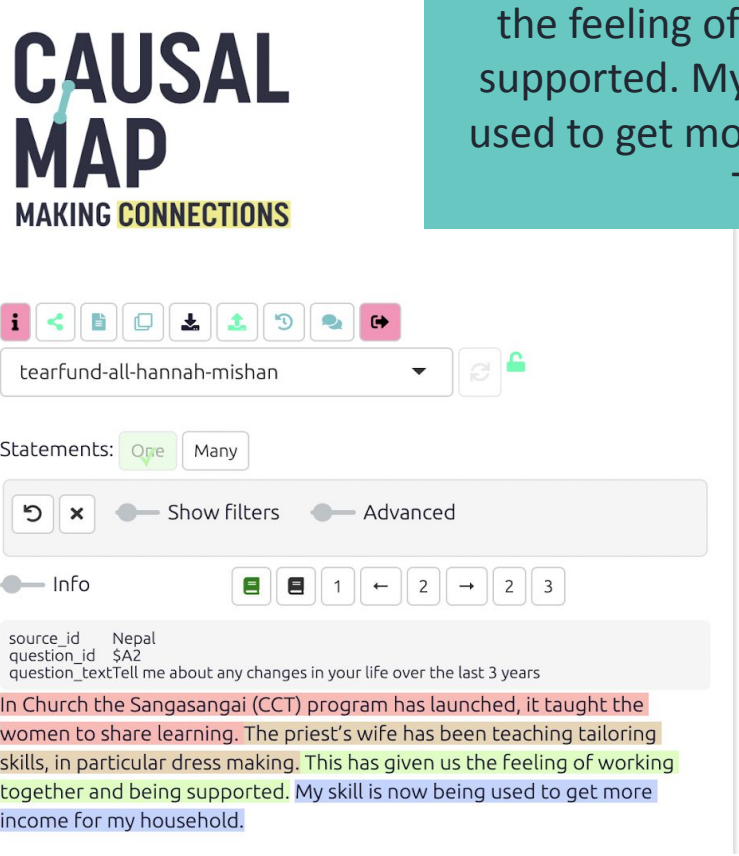
Standardised data coding and analysis process, causal mapping:

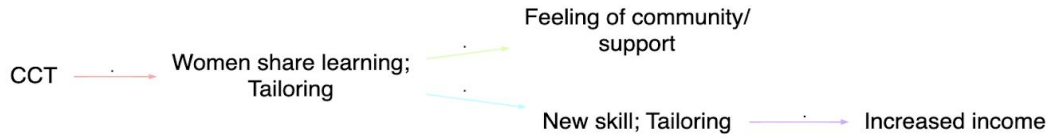
1. Exploratory coding of **drivers and outcomes**
2. Confirmatory **coding of impact evidence** (attribution)



"In Church the Sangasangai (CCT) program taught the women to share learning. The priest's wife has been teaching tailoring skills, in particular dress making. This has given us the feeling of working together and being supported. My skill in tailoring is now being used to get more income for my household."
Tearfund, Nepal

CAUSAL MAP
MAKING CONNECTIONS





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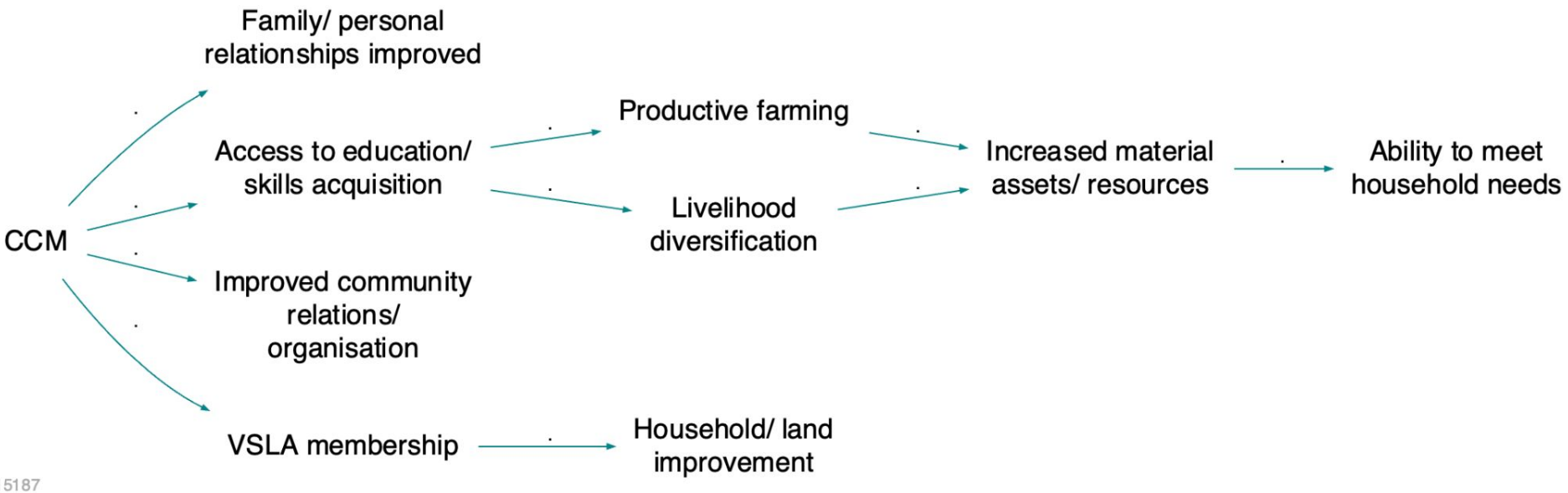
Margaret's story: a causal map



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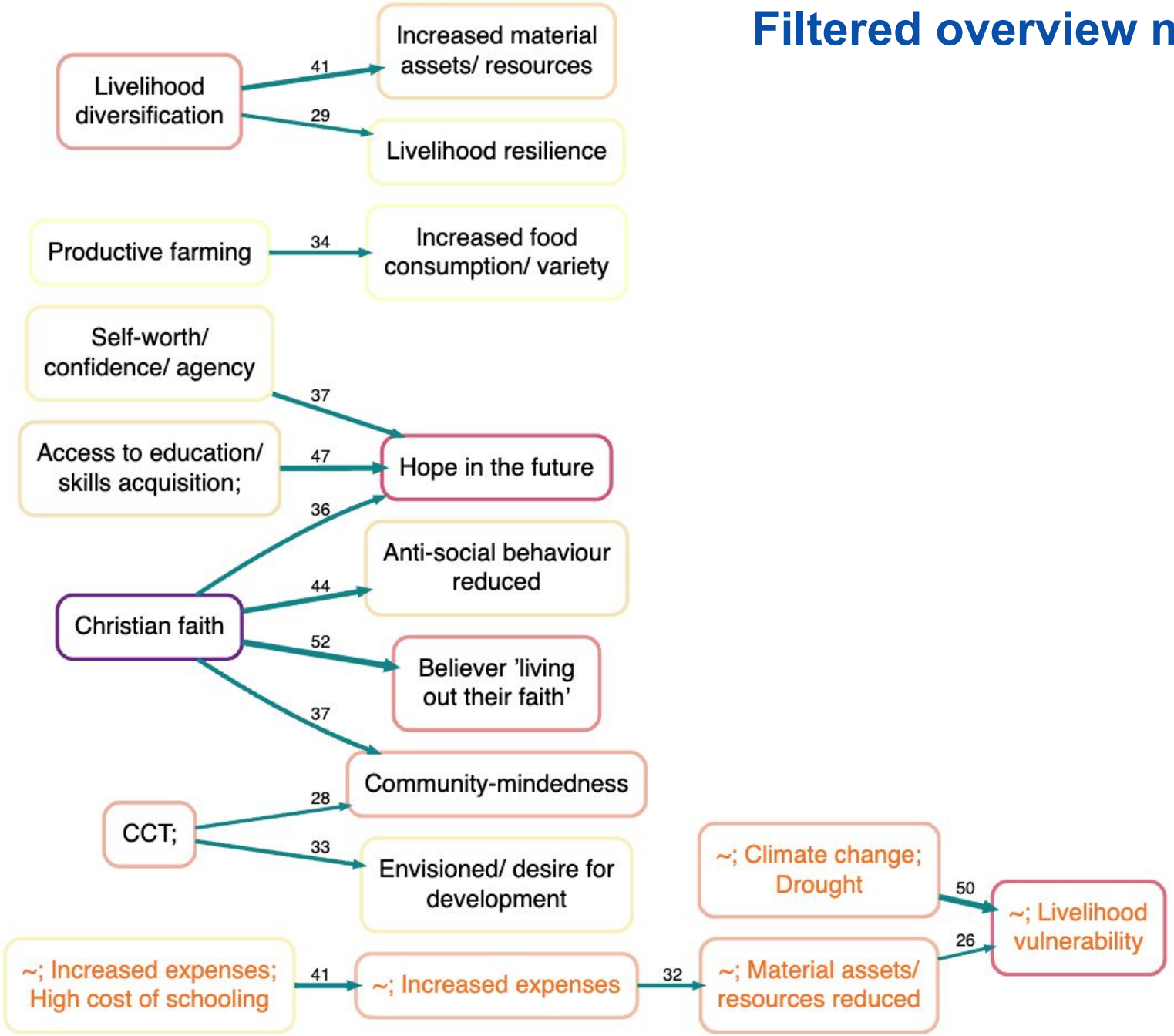
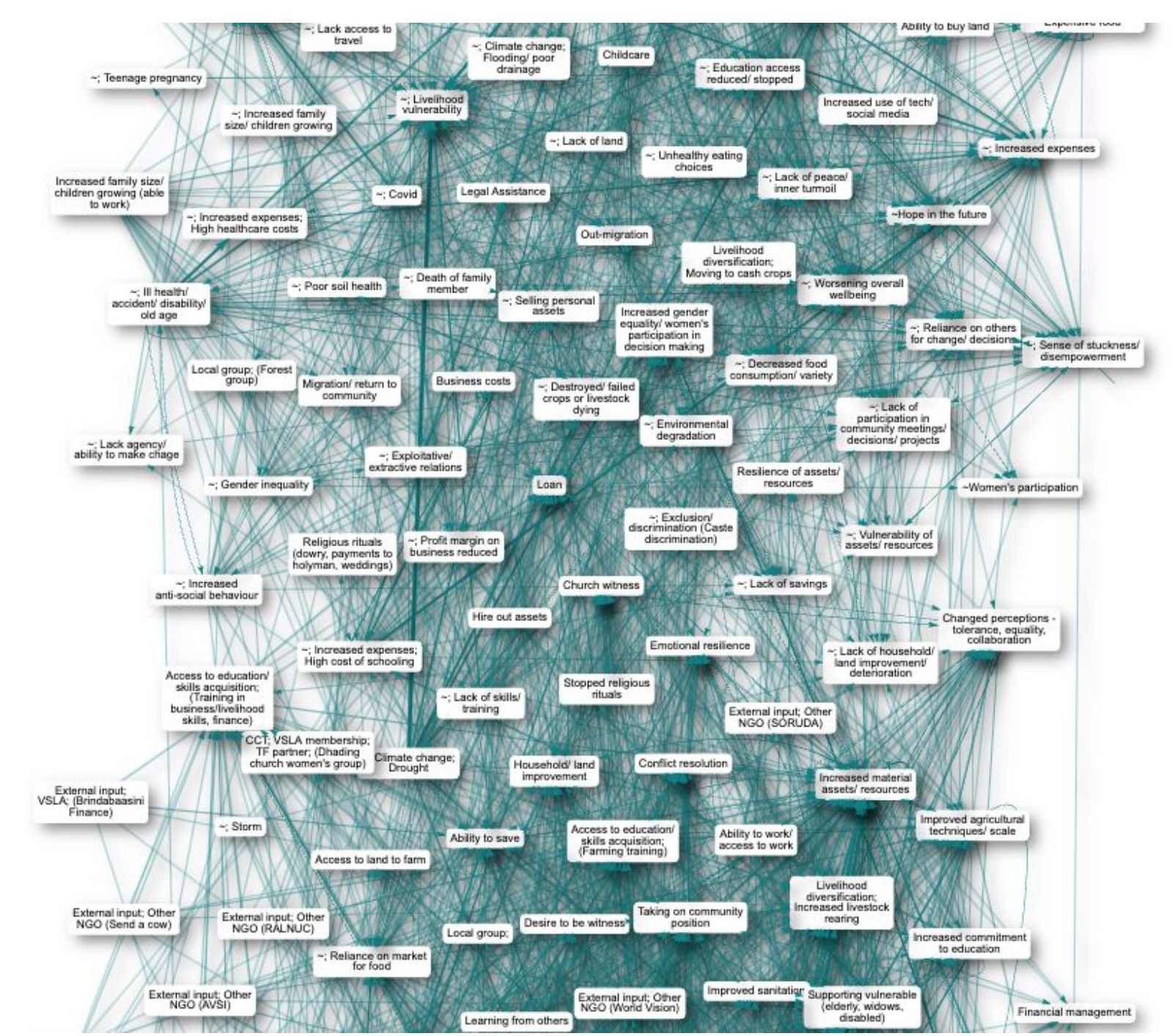
Filtered overview map




~; 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

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

What a QuIP can reveal

- Changes in self-reported wellbeing (outcomes) across selected domains
- Perceived causal drivers of those changes
- Detailed mapping from drivers to outcomes
- Attribution of outcomes to selected interventions
- Analysis of variation in responses (e.g. by age, gender, geographical context, exposure to intervention)
- Aggregation of evidence based on frequency counts, auditable back to text source

Evidence of causal pathways to:

- explain trends and associations identified through quantitative M&E
- challenge and revise prior theories and to aid better generalization

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!

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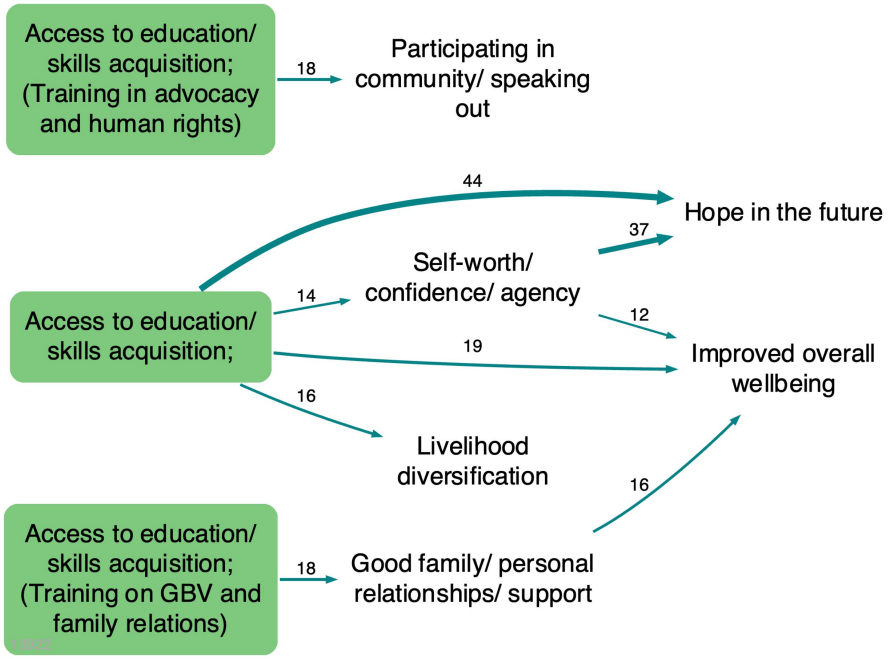
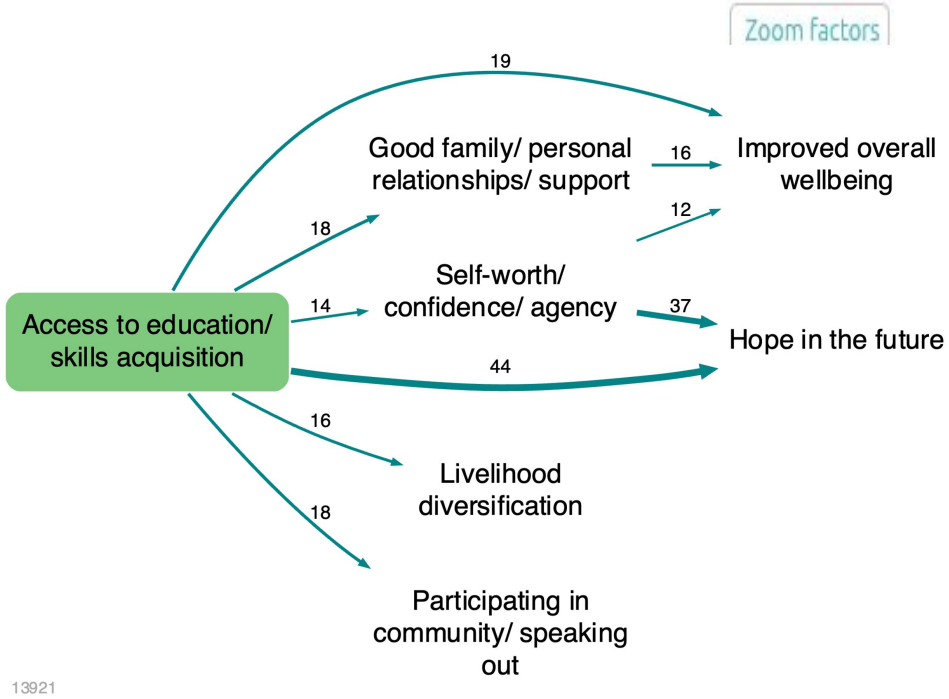
Hierarchical coding





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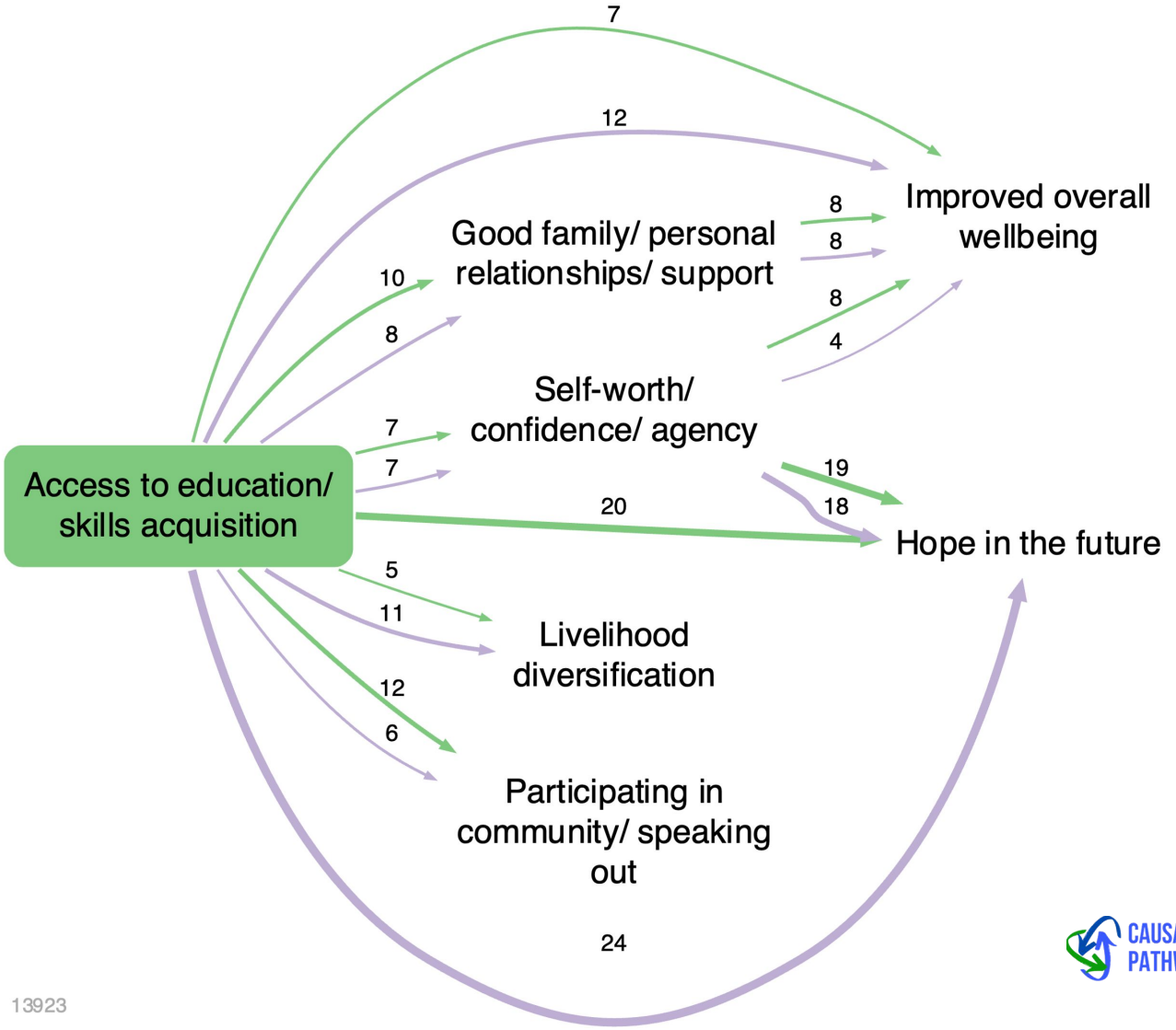
Split by group; gender



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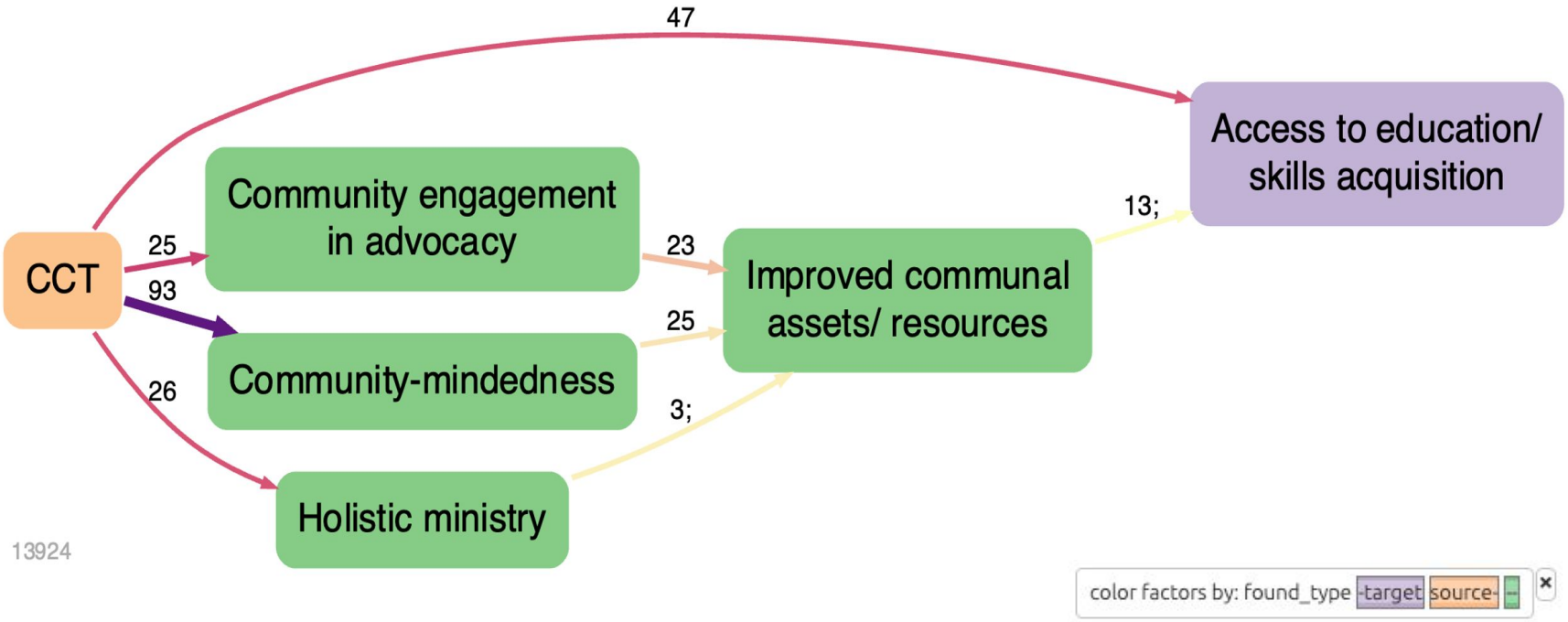
Thread tracing from one factor to another