Tips for Creating and Reviewing Results Chains

By Quinn Shurtliff

When teams create results chains, they often make one or more of the following mistakes:

1. They create an implementation flow diagram rather than a results chain;
2. Their chain contains logical gaps;
3. They fail to identify unintended consequences.

How to Detect and Avoid these Pitfalls in Your Results Chains

Creating an implementation flow diagram:

- Read it out loud: "if [result] happens, then the change we will see is…."
- Remind yourself that *results* are the most important part. You may have done a good job showing how things will be implemented, but forgot to be clear on results. Usually what is missing is a result that demonstrates why people's incentives will have changed such that they will change their behavior.
- Work from the right to the left of the results chain.
- List out the major activities and see how much overlap there is with your results.
- Be more explicit in your language when you are reading the chain out loud (e.g., "if…then the change we will see is…")
- Did you show how people's incentives will have changed such that they change their behavior?
- To avoid calling your implementation chain a results chain, consider listing out all the activities that would need to be done first, then consider what changes these activities would result in.

Logical gaps:

- Have colleagues review your results chain and ask specifically that they look for logical gaps.
- Read it out loud: say "if [result A]…then [result B] will happen." Say that for each result.
- Read if from the right to the left (moving from the threat reduction statement toward the strategy. E.g., "To get result B, what would need to have happened in result A?
- Ask, "Do we really believe that?"
- Ask, "what else might need to happen?"

Unintended Consequences

- After 1st draft is complete, ask, "could there be any unintended consequences?"
- Ask for peer-review, with specific instructions to look for unintended consequences.
  - Ask those with on-the-ground knowledge
  - Ask under-represented groups