

The Theory of Change of Red een Kind

Red een Kind sees every child as a unique gift of God. We want to give a future to children in poverty. In order to do that in an effective and transparent way, a Theory of Change has been developed, showing the rationale of our approach.

What we want to achieve?

Red een Kind wants each child to live a dignified and loving life and have a promising future. Wellbeing of children through supportive communities, that is our goal.

Borrowing from other like UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank our TOC is based on the principle that Children's wellbeing consist of different dimensions:

- Physical development to become healthy and strong;
- Cognitive development to foster lifelong learning and a growth mind-set;
- Social & emotional development to become self-confident, respectful and emotionally stable
- Spiritual development to live a life with purpose, hope and dignity.

It is through a combined and balanced development of these four domains that a child comes to full development and well-being. However, in many areas where Red een Kind works, one or more of the mentioned areas is compromised. This hampers the well-being of children. Even more because the areas are interlinked and influence each other. An imbalance on of the dimensions also impacts the other dimensions.

The logic of our ToC is that it is aimed at the development of the four areas impacting children's wellbeing. It is expected that this will lead to our goal: well-being of children through supportive communities.

Rationale

The rationale of our approach (theory of change) is that it values the contribution of key stakeholders directly responsible for the well-being of children. These are the children and youth themselves, but also their parents and the broader community. In order to reach our goal, ReK envisions interventions focusing at different target groups:

- Interventions with children themselves to encourage and empower them so they are able to develop well at all levels.
- Interventions with the youth, to provide them with skills (vocational, business, entrepreneurial and life-skills) they will need to sustain themselves
- Interventions with their parents in order to ensure they are able to take care for themselves and for their children
- Interventions with the whole community and other stakeholders to set up systems which can take over the work of our partner organization.

This is also reflected in the anticipated changes:

- A. Children are able to overcome barriers to participate successfully in life;
- B. Parents are able to take care of themselves and their children;
- C. Youth are self-reliant and ready for work;

- D. Communities are able to link to and make use of economic opportunities and services and gradually take full ownership of their own development.

Only when these four groups are reached well, children will be able to grow up in a safe and supportive environment and turn into responsible adults. In the TOC this is reflected by four major outcome pathways being linked to the area(s) of children's well-being. It is important to notice that the four pathways do not stand in isolation, instead, they often relate to each other in one way or another. This is also reflected by the arrows in the TOC. Because of this interrelatedness between the target groups and the four areas of well-being, Red een Kind applies an integrated approach.

What is the strategy?

A basic assumption underpinning our theory of change is that *all people* have qualities and the intrinsic ability to develop themselves to their potential. However, due to the circumstances and environment they lack the power to develop these capacities and make full use of them. To make long-lasting and sustainable changes in the lives of peoples this potential needs to be unleashed. This is also true when it comes to children's well-being.

Our strategy is therefore to empower **marginalized children, families and communities** to escape the poverty trap by strengthening their resilience and their voice.

In all communities both **social and economic development** are taking an important place. Social development influences the empowerment of people, which will influence their ability to develop themselves economically. At the other hand, economic development influences the social wellbeing of people as it provides them the opportunity to get access to (pay or self-establishment) means to enhance social conditions (e.g. education, health, food). Therefore Red een Kind aims to release the potential of self-development in the community by strengthening social resilience. This also prepares (selected) community members for participation in economic programs. The combination of both social and economic interventions contributes to sustainable development that benefits the community as a whole, and specially the children.

The approach of Red een Kind is **inclusive**. This means that people can participate regardless their social, political, religious, ethnic or economic background. Also the participation of people living with a disability or with an illness (like HIV-AIDS) is actively pursued.

Children, youth, parents and the broader community are not living in isolation. They are influenced by the **systems** and **other actors** in the environment they live in. In the context of children's well-being this can be positive (e.g. effective education system) and negative (e.g. mal-functioning child protection system). For this reason working closely with different type of actors and relate directly or indirectly to existing systems is part of the strategy.

How will we reach this?

In practice, the identified strategy results in three pathways.

1. Transfer of Knowledge and Skills

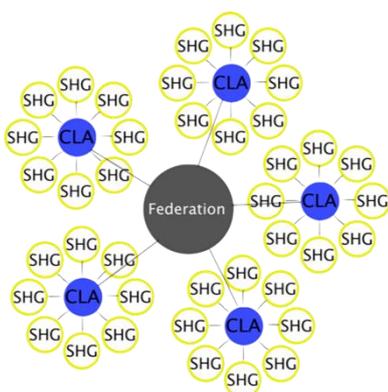
The first pathway starts from the assumption that to unleash peoples potential they need to acquire knowledge and skills. The first building block (a) shows that children, parents, youth and community/farmers

need to acquire the knowledge and skills that results in improved attitude and practice for children's well-being.

Red een Kind works with local partner organizations who build the capacity of the communities to acquire these knowledge and skills. To be able to do so the capacity of our implementing partners will be built where needed (b), since they are crucial players in working with groups and communities. ReK will built the capacity of our partners and/or to transfer knowledge directly to the target groups. This means that ReK staff requires relevant knowledge about children's development, youth and how adults can support them. ReK has also developed two knowledge desks (for child development and economic development). Good practices and lessons learned of others need will be collected, and if needed, existing materials are adapted to the specific context we work in (c).

2. Working in groups

We consider social exclusion one of the important aspects of poverty and lack of resilience: for people living on their own it is hard to escape the cycle of poverty. For this reason, we *organise* people in groups. Working together in groups fits also very well in the context of Africa and Asia. First this takes place at community level. Depending on the context and local needs women, men and youth are either in mixed or separate groups. Having a number of different groups stimulates involvement and active participation of a large part of the community. In addition, each and every group can work on issues that are of particular interest for their group (e.g. children on youth issues, parents on parenting). This makes it possible to enables to apply an integrated approach whereby a broad range of challenges are addressed simultaneously and within a relatively short timeframe. We assume that development is boosted by sharing and learning. Sharing and learning in a group also increases feelings of solidarity and recognition and creates synergy. The established groups are therefore used as a vehicle to transfer knowledge and skills (see 1 above). It is expected that sharing and learning in



the groups leads to increased resilience and self-esteem. Also because, a single voice is not easily listened to. But thousand voices make a better tune. Working together provides the people thus with the ability to speak out and claim their rights. The strength of this ability to lobby and advocate increases when the network develops itself: as the number of groups grows in a community or geographical area these groups are encouraged to establish a network or association of groups (often called 'Cluster Level Associations'). The Cluster Level Associations can be organised at the next (national) level into a Federation. Being active at high(er) levels these groups are able to bring about change at high(er) levels. This can be related

With whom?

In recent years we have discovered the vast potential of **working together at different levels:**

- We work together with local partner organizations, since they are near the communities, they are knowledgeable about the context and the culture;
- We work together with the communities, since they know best what their problems and strength are, and they need to participate and own the solutions that fit their context best. We do this at three different levels: at local, regional and national level;
- We work together with other stakeholders like churches and other NGO's, since there is so much to be done and to be known, that we cannot do this alone;
- We work together with the governments since it is their responsibility to deliver services needed by the communities.

to social issues, but also to economic development as from an economic perspective working in groups has an added value as well. For example, for an individual smallholder farmer it is almost impossible to produce sufficient volume and to adhere to market standards. However, when a group of farmers join forces, they become able to produce high volume of good quality which makes them an interesting market player. For these reasons, we believe that working in groups empowers and that group empowerment is able to generate a multiplier and sustainable effect contributing to the well-being of children.

3. Cooperation with external actors and systems

Communities are part of a larger environment that influences the well-being of children and the ability of communities to support children's development. Also ReK and partners do not work in isolation but need to take into account external actors and systems that influence our interventions positively or negatively. This local context is different for each community. As a first step, it is therefore crucial to identify relevant actors and systems and their potential role (a). The strength of ReK is in the area of community-based systems. ReK supports these systems and strengthens them where needed. Often these systems are community-based

but they develop further to the higher level of districts, provinces and sometimes even national level. It is our experience that strengthening these systems is contributing to sustainable changes and development. For this collaboration with other relevant players like churches and local government is sought for this (b1). However, we acknowledge that in some contexts there are other actors that are better placed to work with certain systems. In those cases, the strategy is to link up with them in order to create multiplier effect (b2).

Who is doing what?

REK:

1. Gathers relevant knowledge and good practices, by linking with other NGOs, with knowledge institutions and knowledge networks in the Netherlands and internationally;
2. Adapt this knowledge and good practices to the local context of the partner organisations; developing inspiring tools;
3. Shares with the partner organisation and builds their capacity in the relevant content;
4. Facilitates linkages to external service providers if needed and lobbies and advocates for quality services.

The partner:

1. Designs the program to improve the well-being of children, in close cooperation with the community and with technical support from ReK;
2. Facilitates the set-up of groups and empowers members through transfer of skills and knowledge to the members; and other implementing activities;
3. Coordinates with other stakeholders and lobbies and advocates for quality services.

The community:

1. Participates actively in the design of the program;
2. Organises themselves in people's institutions where capacity of the members is built in order to create supportive communities for the well-being of children.

It all starts with... (outer circle)

Context

Our TOC is based on the perspective that all people have a unique personality and that this personality is shaped by the natural and social environment someone lives in. As a consequence of this, what works in one location might not be successful elsewhere. Therefore we consider the **context** we work in very important. Hereby it is also essential to realize that cultural traditions and rites do influence our world view.

Related to context it is important to notice that our TOC is also based on the assumption that we work in relatively peaceful communities where basic facilities (like schools, market, health system) are in place and where the government provides space for non-state actors.

Participation and inclusion

The target groups know their local context best. Their knowledge and insight is key to develop programs that contribute to children's well-being in their own communities. Also for sustainable change it is required that the target groups participate in their own development. For this reason, ReK works in a participatory way. Community members, including the children themselves **participate from the start** and are made the owners of their own development. Programs are designed taking into account actual needs and opportunities and with active involvement of (representatives of) the whole community (e.g. children, community leaders, females, people living with a disability). Together the best entry point to improve the well-being of children is chosen. To illustrate this; in some of our programs we work directly with children. In other cases however the best way to enhance the wellbeing of children is through improving the environment children live in, such as an increased family income. In that case our programs focus more on assisting adults such as parents and caretakers. The active involvement is key throughout the program: from design to running to the programs to monitoring and closing evaluation activities.

Where relevant active collaboration with others is sought (and we assume that all participants are actually willing to participate and play their expected role for the benefit of the well-being of children).

Related to participation and inclusion is our focus on **child rights**; which also includes their active participation in their own development.

Sustainability

Red een Kind's length of stay is limited. Normally we work in communities for a period of five to eight years. In this period we facilitate a process in which community members embrace the benefits of helping themselves together in groups. We assume that community-based structures are an effective tool for people to take their development in their own hands. Therefore we support the formation of **people's institutions** like self-help groups and producer groups or cluster level associations and federations that represent the community groups at a higher level. These cooperative groups are empowered to take over the work of ReK and its partners both in setting up groups and in working with other stakeholders. It is our experience that healthy structures composed of intrinsically motivated people are a key to success and to sustainability.

Our assumptions are

From the narrative description provided above, it becomes clear that our TOC is based on a number of assumptions. The most important assumptions are summarized below. Distinction is made between assumptions related to causal links, belief systems, other actors and the context.

Causal links:

- The formation of community-based groups leads to sustainable structures. These structures provide local communities with the possibility to take the cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual development of their children in their own hands. And we assume that they indeed take over the leading role and Red een Kind consequently can leave the community after 5-7 years;
- The transfer of skills and knowledge helps marginalized groups unleash their potential. It is possible to establish a network of people's institutions up to district/province or national level that is able to take the cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual development of their children in their own hands; which enables ReK and partners to withdraw and move on to another community after 5-8 years;
- Working together creates synergy (1+1=3) – both in the groups as well as in the cooperation with partner organizations, other systems and external actors;
- The three-fold working method aimed at 1) transfer of knowledge and skills 2) working in groups and 3) systems and external actors is sufficient to bring about the anticipated changes for each target group (children, parents, youth and community/farmers). Transfer of skills and knowledge in groups within the context of the community thus contributes to empowerment. And working in groups where sharing and knowledge transfer takes place, brings about sustainable change for people;
- Empowerment of the community, families and children contributes to the well-being of children;
- Working in a participatory manner from the start, contributes to ownership as it makes people aware of their own potential. Ownership and active participation for the beneficiaries leads to more sustainability.

Other actors:

- Relevant actors are willing to participate and to play their expected role.

Belief systems:

- An integrated approach that addresses all four identified areas of children's well-being is the most effective way to improve children's well-being;
- Addressing all four areas of child well-being requires cooperation with the key stakeholders directly responsible (children, youth, parents and community/farmers) as well as important influencers and agents of change like the government and economic actors;
- Every child is an unique gift of God, therefore we value inclusion.

Context:

- We work in relatively peaceful communities where basic facilities (like schools, market, health system) are in place.
- We work in areas/countries that provide space for non-state actors.