



UNITED NATIONS
SYSTEM
STAFF COLLEGE

Theory of Change for UN Practitioners: Theories of Change for Design, Management, and Evaluation

Fall Edition: 19 October – 13 November 2026

Introduction

In today's complex and interconnected global landscape, the United Nations operates through initiatives that aim to achieve transformative and sustainable impact. Most programme and policy work within the UN system increasingly relies on the use of Theories of Change (ToCs) to articulate how specific interventions contribute to broader organizational mandates and collective results.

A well-designed ToC helps UN practitioners make explicit the logic of change behind the interventions, linking activities to outcomes, surfacing assumptions, and identifying the conditions necessary for success.

This course responds to the growing demand across UN entities for stronger analytical and design capacities in programme planning. Over four weeks, participants will explore the essential components of ToCs and how to apply them in real UN settings, supporting adaptive learning and strategic communication. Through self-paced material, interactive webinars, group work, and individual feedback, the course will equip UN staff to create actionable and context-sensitive ToCs that enhance coherence, effectiveness, and shared understanding across teams and partners.

Target Audience

This course is designed for:

- Programme managers and planners seeking to strengthen design and results frameworks.
- Monitoring, evaluation, and learning professionals who use ToCs in planning and assessment.

- Development practitioners and team leads who coordinate or oversee multi-stakeholder initiatives.
- Anyone interested in using ToCs for reflection, communication, and learning.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, participants will be able to:

- Explain what theories of change are and how they are broadly used in different UN contexts
- Identify and describe the key components of an effective ToC
- Use theories of change to support design, management, and reflection
- Apply strategies to engage diverse stakeholders in developing and refining ToCs
- Critically review and communicate ToCs for different audiences
- Develop and present a clear and coherent ToC for a chosen initiative

Scope of work and format

The course is organized in four weekly modules, as follows:

Week 1 – Understanding Theories of Change

- Key Concepts in Theories of Change
- Uses of Theories of Change

Week 2 – Designing your Theory of Change

- Constructing and reconstructing theories of change
- Practical examples of theory of change in different UN contexts

Week 3 – Communicating and Applying ToCs

- Visualising and Communicating Your ToC
- Using ToCs for Learning, Planning, and Adaptation

Week 4 – Reviewing and Strengthening ToCs

- Assessing the Quality of a Theory of Change
- Integrating ToCs into Evaluation and Results Management

Overall course activities:

- **Video lessons and quizzes:** Participants will complete weekly video lessons covering key Theory of Change (ToC) concepts before joining the live sessions. They will also complete knowledge checks to assess their understanding of the material and reinforce key learning points.
- **Live sessions:** Participants will attend one instructor-led webinar each week. Each session will last 60 minutes and will be highly interactive, with opportunities to work in groups, engage in discussions, and apply key concepts through practical exercises. To get the most out of these sessions, learners are expected to complete the video lessons beforehand.
- **Discussion forums:** Participants will be encouraged to share reflections, insights, and experiences with their peers in discussion forums following each session.
- **Final assignment:** A final assignment will be due one week after Week 4. Participants will be required to develop or refine a Theory of Change for an initiative of their choice, such as a programme, project, or policy. Alternatively, a case study may be provided. Learners will receive written feedback, along with a pass/fail assessment of their submission.
- **Resources:** A curated collection of resources, including videos and publications, will be available throughout the course. Participants may consult these materials at any time to support their learning.

Recordings will be available after the sessions for those that cannot attend. **However, we highly encourage to virtually attend the synchronous sessions.**

Participants will get access to the UNSSC UN Learn platform, where they will find all relevant resources. The webinars will be conducted in Zoom.

Time and Dates of Live sessions

- **Week 1:** 21 October from 15:00 to 16:00 CET
- **Week 2:** 28 October from 15:00 to 16:00 CET
- **Week 3:** 4 November from 15:00 to 16:00 CET
- **Week 4:** 11 November from 15:00 to 16:00 CET

Training Needs Assessment

Participants will be asked to fill in a training needs assessment to know more about their past experience in order to fully meet their specific learning goals.

Certification

To receive the **UNSSC Certification of Achievement** participants will be expected to:

- Watch the video lessons and successfully pass the quizzes
- Attend the live sessions
- Post in the discussion forums
- Pass the Final Assignment

Faculty

- [Mark Oldenbeuving](#)
- [Andrew Kolderos](#)

UNSSC Team

- [Itziar Arispe](#)
- [Maria Fernanda Villari](#)