THEORY OF CHANGE
for Faith and Positive Change for Children, Families and Communities

(based on UNICEF Communication for Development Theory of Change for Social and Behaviour Change;
Joint Learning Initiative TOC on Mobilization of Faith and Local Communities;
Global Evidence and Consultations with Faith Actors and Religions for Peace)

A. **INTRODUCTION**

A1 Background

This theory of change sets out a framework to show how faith-based organisations and groups can contribute effectively to social and behaviour change. It forms part of the 'Faith for Social and Behaviour Change Initiative' partnership between UNICEF the Joint Learning Initiative on Faith and Local Communities (JLI) and multi-faith global organization Religions for Peace The TOC is based on the UNICEF Communication for Development Global Theory of Change for Social and Behaviour Change ; the JLI TOC on mobilization of local faith actors and the Mothers Union grass roots TOC on faith action.

UNICEF has a long history of working with faith-based organisations (FBOs). However, many partnerships have been short-term and focused on a single sector, rather than taking a more long-term multi-level, integrated, systems focused and coordinated inter-faith partnership approach, as required to effect change in complex behaviours and social norms. JLI is an international collaboration on evidence for faith groups' contribution to local community wellbeing and to ending poverty. The partnership vision is to develop the capacity of UNICEF staff and their faith partners to support more effective approaches, specifically in relation to UNICEF's priority results for children.

A2 Aims

A more effective way for UNICEF to engage with faith groups on social and behavioural change (SBC): The initial aim of this theory of change is to enable UNICEF to move from sometimes instrumental partnerships and traditional models of engagement to promote more integrated, holistic and systemic programming for children's development, protection and empowerment through co-created change processes with faith groups. It will also provide a framework with better defined process and outcome results for better monitoring, evaluation and learning about the faith contribution to SBC.

More effective work by FBOs in social and behavioural change: In the longer-term, an adapted theory of change, developed with faith networks, will promote faith group best practice in social and behaviour change. An advisory group comprised of JLI membership, including RfP was established as part of this initiative will take forward this process, helping to field test the learning and input more voices from their communities.

A3 Process

The development of this theory of change follows good quality principles as far as feasible within existing time and organisational constraints. It builds on evidence from a variety of sources:

- **Previous research**: a global mapping of UNICEF general engagement with religious communities ; a UNICEF C4D theory of change; and a JLI theory of change for faith group and community mobilisation that was broader than this focus on social and behaviour change.

- **Research for this initiative**: a literature review on facilitating social and behaviour change; a content review of relevant resources; and seventeen case studies of UNICEF work with FBOs in SBC.

- **Stakeholder participation:** a workshop organised with UNICEF, Religions for Peace, and JLI, bringing together over 100 UNICEF officers, faith-based UNICEF partners, and government partners from 20 countries across all regions and faiths; and a one day consultation with JLI partners representing different faiths, including practitioners and pracademics, from 13 different institutions. It also draws on a grassroots theory of change consultation with communities carried out by JLI partner Mothers' Union that has involved over …..people in ….different countries.

The theory of change development acknowledges the complexity of change in a wider system; it challenges underlying assumptions about how change happens; and it is part of an ongoing process of learning that will involve further partner consultations with communities; testing the theory of change with UNICEF and its partners; and that will influence future work with Religions for Peace.

A4 Representation

This theory of change diagram draws together the learning in a summary representation (p3). Change is not a linear process but a combination of different influences and approaches that help to bring about the desired impact. The circles and arrows indicate that these processes are not one-off but ongoing; and not always sequential but may vary according to the different context. This narrative explains the diagram briefly but is not intended to capture the detailed analysis that took place in order to arrive at the diagram.

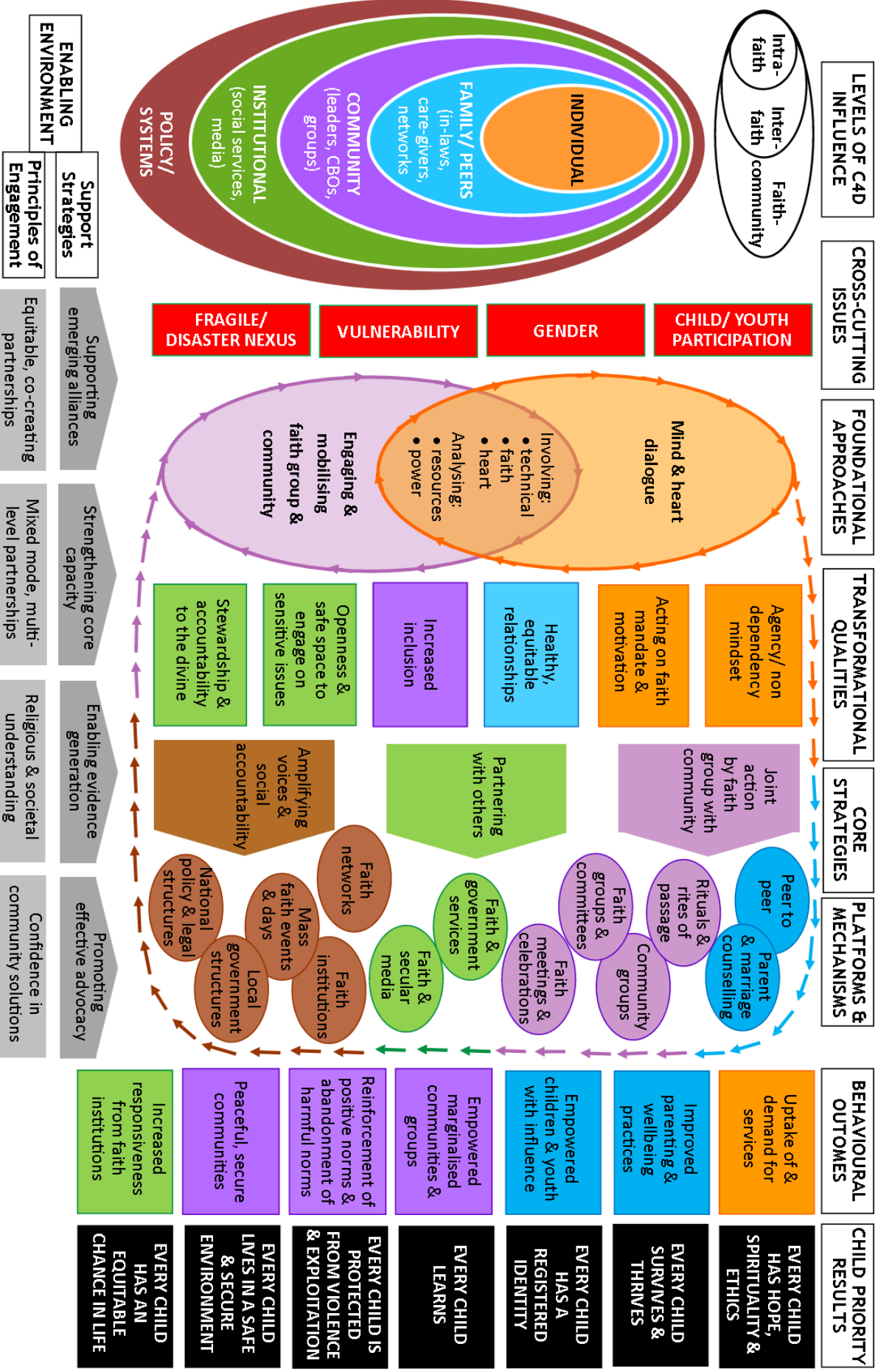## B. THE THEORY OF CHANGE IN BRIEF

B1 The context for change

The theory of change shows the different levels at which change happens, aligning with the Socio-Ecological Model (see left side of diagram p3). At each level attitudes, beliefs, groups, systems, institutions, mechanisms and policies influence change, whether positively, negatively or mixed. Each context will be different and needs deep analysis but some examples of frequent barriers and opportunities that emerged from the initiative workshop and from JLI partner community consultations analysis include:

- **Policy and systems level**: Mistrust in big institutions has led to increased focus on localisation, presenting opportunities for local faith groups to exert greater voice and influence. Governments are more open to partnership with FBOs to achieve SDGs; but there is risk of instrumentalising them. Faith groups find that government bureaucracy and restrictive regulations and unequal partnerships impede their work at community level.

- **Institutional level:** A growing body of evidence shows that FBOs may have strong credibility and relationships; access and reach to more marginalised communities; a long-term footprint; faith networks and media for influencing wider change; and motivation derived from their beliefs and values. However, frequent barriers to SBC change include lack of coordination; poor systems especially for monitoring and learning; patriarchal structures; and lack of leadership support.

- **Community level:** Each culture has both positive and harmful beliefs, rituals and norms which influence behaviour, for example in regard to gender or to practices for behavioural reform. Religious intolerance, ethnic conflict and other forms of fear and mistrust between groups hinder change. Religious and community leaders often have a strong influence on behaviours and values; but informal power is also exerted by community groups and activists.

- **Family and individual level:** The greatest barriers to change are negative mindsets of dependency, judgement of others, unwillingness to take responsibility and fear of change. Sometimes interpretations of scripture or existing rituals lead to harmful behaviours and practices. A spirit of volunteerism, particularly among women and youth, can support change; but lack of space for their voices and actions can inhibit their opportunities.

As well as these different levels of society, the theory of change also shows that change needs to happen in the faith community at the levels of: **inter-faith; intra-faith; and faith with community.** Evidence is still limited in showing the optimal interaction between these. Some programmes focus on change within a faith group as a pre-condition for engaging effectively with others. However, evidence is clear that sustainable programmes need collaborative work not only with faith groups alone but always in conjunction between faith groups and broadercommunities.

Framework diagram. Text content (rotated layout):

LEVELS OF C4D INFLUENCE
- POLICY/ SYSTEMS
- INSTITUTIONAL (social services, media)
- COMMUNITY (leaders, CBOs, groups)
- FAMILY/ PEERS (in-laws, care-givers, networks)
- INDIVIDUAL
- Intra-faith
- Inter-faith community
- Faith-community

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

Support Strategies
- Supporting emerging alliances
- Strengthening core capacity
- Enabling evidence generation
- Promoting effective advocacy

Principles of Engagement
- Equitable, co-creating partnerships
- Mixed mode, multi-level partnerships
- Religious & societal understanding
- Confidence in community solutions

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES
- FRAGILE/ DISASTER NEXUS
- VULNERABILITY
- GENDER
- CHILD/ YOUTH PARTICIPATION

FOUNDATIONAL APPROACHES
- Mind & heart dialogue
  - Involving: technical, faith, heart
  - Analysing: resources, power
- Engaging & mobilising faith group & community

TRANSFORMATIONAL QUALITIES
- Agency/ non dependency mindset
- Acting on faith mandate & motivation
- Healthy, equitable relationships
- Increased inclusion
- Openness & safe space to engage on sensitive issues
- Stewardship & accountability to the divine

CORE STRATEGIES
- Joint action by faith group with community
- Partnering with others
- Amplifying voices & social accountability

PLATFORMS & MECHANISMS
- Peer to peer
- Parent & marriage counselling
- Rituals & rites of passage
- Community groups
- Faith groups & committees
- Faith meetings & celebrations
- Faith & secular media
- Faith & government services
- Faith institutions
- Faith networks
- Mass faith events & days
- Local government structures
- National policy & legal structures

BEHAVIOURAL OUTOMES
- Uptake of & demand for services
- Improved parenting & wellbeing practices
- Empowered children & youth with influence
- Empowered marginalised communities & groups
- Reinforcement of positive norms & abandonment of harmful norms
- Peaceful, secure communities
- Increased responsiveness from faith institutions

CHILD PRIORITY RESULTS
- EVERY CHILD HAS HOPE, SPIRITUALITY & ETHICS
- EVERY CHILD SURVIVES & THRIVES
- EVERY CHILD HAS A REGISTERED IDENTITY
- EVERY CHILD LEARNS
- EVERY CHILD IS PROTECTED FROM VIOLENCE & EXPLOITATION
- EVERY CHILD LIVES IN A SAFE & SECURE ENVIRONMENT
- EVERY CHILD HAS AN EQUITABLE CHANCE IN LIFE

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B2 Results and outcomes

This theory of change is situated in the UNICEF framework of results for children, based on the Convention of the Rights of Children, and evidenced behavioural and social outcomes. While not always expressed in the terms faith groups use, they resonate with core outcomes of many FBOs working with children, as well as with the social and behavioural changes captured in the JLI theory of change. However, the process showed that faith groups also contribute to other outcomes.

Lasting results for children

UNICEF's strategic plan identifies its core results as: **every child survives and thrives; learns; is protected from violence and exploitation; lives in a safe and secure environment; and has an equitable chance in life**. This theory of change process also highlighted the contribution of faith groups to enabling children to have **hope, spirituality and ethics,** expressed by some as 'closer to God', 'love for God and neighbours', 'spiritual maturity' and linked to increased resilience. It also showed the need for **registered identity** as so many marginalised groups, such as refugees, displaced, migrants or street connected, cannot access government and other services and schemes without this.

Behavioural and social change outcomes
- **Uptake of and demand for services:** When services are adapted in line with people's needs and expectations, they are more likely to improve in quality and be used more.
- **Improved parenting and well-being practices**: Community consultations demonstrated, for example, improved dialogue within families, shared decision-making between parents and budgeting for the interests of the whole family.
- **Empowered children and youth with influence:** Voice to participate according to their evolving capacities and changed community attitudes that create space for them to influence decisions.
- **Empowered marginalised groups and communities:** Including increased women's voice and leadership; space for decision-making; and influence on family, community and government.
- **Reinforcement of positive norms and abandonment of harmful**: Strengthening existing positive behaviours and changing perceptions and practices that result in stigma and discrimination.
- **Increased responsiveness from faith institutions** for social and behavioural change: For example, incorporating SBC approaches into policies, strategies, budgets and curricula.

Transformative qualities

The learning demonstrates that certain qualities within faith groups as well as inter-faith and community are essential to achieve behavioural and social change outcomes. Some may exist already, but cannot be assumed, so may need developing. These qualities therefore form both intermediary outcomes in the change process but also lasting qualities that underpin the transformation process.
- **Agency/ non-dependency mindset**: Improved knowledge, skills and attitudes for behaviour change so people recognise and use existing and new resources and skills to identify and solve problems.
- **Acting on faith mandate and motivation**: Increased understanding of their role; and confidence to make decisions and take appropriate action leading to social and behaviour change.
- **Healthy, more equitable relationships** (family, peer and intra/ inter faith/ community/ development partner/ government partner): Improved trust, gender balance, parent-child relationships, faith collaboration, fair partnership practices with large institutions, and social cohesion.
- **Increased inclusion:** Decreased judgement, stigma and discrimination.
- **Openness and safe spaces to engage on sensitive issues:** Faith groups need to create an environment to explore more hidden issues like gender violence and to challenge perceived norms.

- **Stewardship and accountability to the divine**: Individual and institutional accountability for using resources, skills and environment well.

B3 How faith contributes to social and behaviour change

Cross-cutting issues

This theory of change shows that four issues cut across each approach and strategy. In applying this within a specific context, each would need specific strategies to incorporate them in practice.

- ○ **Child/ youth participation:** Ensuring children and youth influence the change progress by engaging their faith and secular groups, clubs and networks; developing their role in leadership; and facilitating space for their voices to be heard and for them to influence decisions at all levels.
- ○ **Gender:** Promoting and supporting greater engagement of women of faith and from the wider community in both formal and non-formal leadership positions in faith-led SBC initiatives; and working with men and existing structures to remove gender barriers in faith and the wider society.
- ○ **Humanitarian:** Engaging local faith actors more systematically in emergency preparedness, response and recovery, especially at the local level and for children, recognising the increased frequency, scale and intensity of humanitarian crises due to climate change and conflict.
- ○ **Vulnerability:** Ensuring that faith-led SBC efforts engage and give space to the voices, perspectives, and experiences of those from marginalised groups including and not limited to women, children, ethnic or religious minorities, and those that do not practise a faith.

Foundational faith for SBC approaches

The most important and clear learning to emerge in this theory of change process is the critical importance of two foundational approaches in working more effectively and systemically with faith organisations and groups at all levels: intra, inter and faith-community. They involve moving away from more traditional SBC approaches of messaging and cascade training to:

- ○ **Engaging and mobilising faith and community:** Getting faith and community leaders and their spouses, members, and activists/ champions on board through formative research to understand barriers; individual and small group meetings; peer to peer showcasing of work; visits; and strengthening faith and community groups and structures to help create a momentum for change.
- ○ **Creating safe spaces for mind and heart dialogue**: Engaging groups in multi-step participatory reflection processes that enable them to review learning; surface doubts and discuss beliefs; and develop clear action plans that lead to behaviour change and form a basis for monitoring. Holding follow-up meetings for sharing experiences, monitoring and learning.

  Carrying these out effectively means including participatory exercises and activities that are:
  - **technical** (drawing on research that shows the benefits of adopting the new practices)
  - **faith** (reflecting on and reinterpreting teachings, and prayer/ meditation space/ support)
  - **heart** (empathetic space through stories and testimonies by early adopters/ positive deviancy)

    and that involve analysing:
  - **existing resources and skills** to release local action
  - **power and influences in the context** including institutional power, to define with whom to work and identify how to mobilise other resources and skills

Core strategies

The foundational approaches are ongoing processes that continue to support the development of the transformational qualities. Three core strategies ensuing from the approaches ensure that the SBC

changes reach the whole system and not only individuals and groups.

1. **Joint action by faith groups *with* community**: Effective mobilisation includes but reaches beyond incorporating issues in faith structures and work to collaborative work *with* and not merely *for* the community so they identify priorities together and take joint action to address them.

2. **Partnering with others**: Working with existing government, community and faith services, such as health centres and schools, rather than duplicating them, to improve delivery and uptake; incorporating issues in the curricula; and mainstreaming issues in national faith and government systems such as for child protection and justice.

3. **Amplifying voice and social accountability**: Tracking implementation of government mechanisms and policies; mobilising networks and lobbying for change in policy where needed – for example, scheduling tours to show government officials the programmes that policy change would affect, joining national working groups, inviting government officials to training and individual meetings.

Mechanisms and platforms for engagement

These strategies are more effective and attain greater scale when interactions take place across many different available platforms and mechanisms at all levels which already exist. Faith groups and communities can map out those opportunities as part of their process of dialogue and mobilisation, prioritising the most influential and strategising how to engage with them.

○ **Family and peer level:** Many faith groups already have mechanisms through which they support family and peer relationships, such as parent training, marriage preparation/ counselling, baptisms and life-skills training, which can incorporate dialogue and mobilisation on issues. Identifying and supporting community activists and champions to influence and mentor peers can also be effective.

○ **Faith group and community level:** Within a wider social mobilisation and dialogue approach, religious and traditional leaders can change rituals that discourage demand for services and rites of passage; and use faith meetings such as weekly services and celebrations to share messages and promote reflection. Programmes can engage faith and community groups and committees, such as for children, youth, men and women's groups, caregivers, HIV support and disaster preparedness.

○ **Institutional level**: Faith based services provide a significant proportion of health and education particularly, yet this has not been leveraged to support SBC for children in many instances. Faith groups and communities also can work with government-run services to become more inclusive and change behaviours which form barriers to people accessing and using them.

○ **Secular and faith-based media** (mass media, mid-media, community media and social media)**:** In many countries, religious media (including radio, television and social media) have large audiences and can be mobilised to promote attitudes and practices that support children's wellbeing. Listening groups facilitate dialogue and help shift people into action. Programmes can better harness the power of community radio and narrowcasting.

○ **National and international level:** Mass faith and inter-faith events and days can provide opportunities to amplify the voices of children, youth and other marginalised groups; faith institutions, such as seminaries, can incorporate learning in their curricula and programmes; and faith networks can mobilise to influence national policy and legal bodies/ structures.

B4 Enabling environment

UNICEF and other development actors need to support the whole change process effectively (the central sphere encircled by arrows that represent the ongoing process of dialogue and mobilisation).

This means avoiding instrumentalisation by not delivering piece-meal parts of the process but ensuring that underpinning support strategies and principles for engagement are put in place.

Support strategies

○ **Supporting emerging alliances**: Convening and bringing together diverse faith groups with each other and/ or with government and promoting alliances is important, but sustainable alliances need to emerge from dialogue, not be artificially created by external development partners.

○ **Strengthening core capacity:** FBOs may need support in governance, financial systems and safeguarding; in developing facilitation skills and best practice standards; and in access to appropriate long-term small-scale funding (rather than large project inputs) for sustainability.

○ **Enabling evidence generation and learning:** Establishing relevant systems is challenging in a context that may be highly dependent on volunteers. Participatory monitoring using story-based approaches (e.g. Most Significant Change) can work well. External evaluations that use methods like interpretative social sciences to help assess the attribution of behaviour changes to faith.

○ **Promoting effective advocacy:** Faith groups have often done less well at engaging in advocacy and may benefit from support in understanding the policies and mechanisms that are already in place and that need to be tracked and implemented; in getting a place at the table (e.g. on national working groups); and in creating opportunities for government field visits and personal meetings.

Principles for engagement

These principles below are still under development by the initiative working group of UNICEF and JLI partners. They are critical in establishing a new way of collaboration between faith groups and development partners that avoids instrumentalising them but instead promotes all partners to achieve their outcomes and results in the wellbeing, protection and empowerment of children. An initial list derived from the initiative workshop and consultation with JLI partners is below:

RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES	DRAFT PRINCIPLES
WHY WORK WITH FAITH GROUPS	
Assuming that faith groups bring assets/ unique value such as relationships of trust, volunteerism, scriptural mandate, reach to marginalised and long-term footprint – and mitigating negative attitudes and beliefs	**Equitable, sustained and co-creating partnerships** - protecting trusted relationships; establishing long-term partnership agreements; clarifying values/ underlying theology of change – dialogue to surface differences and find common ground
WHO TO WORK WITH	
Assuming that an institutional structure exists that represents the complexity and voices of faith actors	**Mixed mode/ multi-level partnerships** - mapping faith actors, leaving no one behind, involving local groups and promoting inter-faith cooperation
HOW TO WORK WITH FAITH GROUPS	
Assuming that one size fits all – religious universalism Deciding the priorities without full engagement of communities minimises the opportunities for systemic and sustainable change and leads to instrumentalisation	**Religious and societal understanding** - analysing the secular/ faith and faith/ faith dynamics, including political/ government interaction with faith and the different community structures **Confidence in community solutions** - genuine dialogue enables communities to prioritise issues and take action sustainably

C. TESTING AND APPLYING THE THEORY OF CHANGE

C1 Assumptions

Much of this theory of change rests on strong evidence gained from the reviews carried out as part of the initiative and the inputs from partners. However, developing and testing this theory of change is an ongoing process that includes steps for:

- **Listening to community voices:** JLI partner further consultations with their communities.
- **Validating and adapting the theory of change** with participants from the initiative workshop.
- **Identifying the evidence gaps** from the evidence review and in consultation with partners to develop a research agenda for faith-led SBC for children, youth and women.

C2 A framework for monitoring, evaluation and learning

The detailed analysis that underpins this theory of change provides much of the content needed for developing a monitoring, evaluation and learning framework that can track progress and assess results of faith for SBC programmes and strengthen the evidence base for faith contribution. It involves:

- **Identifying indicators:** Working with stakeholders and using the existing evidence to develop indicators to measure transformative qualities and behavioural change outcomes.
- **Developing relevant processes:** Sharing learning about appropriate monitoring tools and processes that are possible to implement in a context that may be dependent on volunteer contributions.
- **Agreeing points to review the theory of change:** Identifying opportunities to share learning in relation to the theory of change and adapt it as needed.
- **Disseminating learning:** Agreeing strategies and forums for sharing the learning from the initiative, both on how faith contributes to SBC and for learning about further developing capacity.

C3 Other next steps

UNICEF and JLI with their partners plan to use the theory of change as a basis also for:

- **Developing global guidance:** Using the theory of change as a framework for developing global guidance and tools for good standards in implementation.
- **Rolling out a training of trainers programme:** Using the theory of change and global guidance to develop UNICEF and partner capacity through a training of trainers process.
- **Identifying advocacy priorities and strategies:** UNICEF's convening of the Global Alliance on Social and Behaviour Change provides the opportunity to influence advocacy and programming on FBO engagement with the development community.