

Faculty of Design

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## Balancing Acceleration and Systemic Impact: Finding leverage for transformation in SDG change strategies

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# RSD10 | November 2021



## Balancing acceleration and systemic impact

Finding leverage for transformation in SDG change strategies



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# The takeaways: Context

- The Joint SDG Fund supported a portfolio of 35 Joint Programmes (JPs) across 39 countries
- What is the form, quality, and effectiveness of Theories of Change (ToCs) in these JPs? How do they account for leverage?

# The takeaways: Discoveries

- Vast differences between JPs in terms of both:
  - the nature and quality of their ToCs; and
  - the innate systemic leverage embedded in their strategies



# The takeaways: Tensions

- Acceleration in the short-term **vs.** momentum for long-term change
- Acceleration as the means **vs.** acceleration as the ends: accelerationist goal-seeking

# About the Joint SDG Fund





# About the Joint SDG Fund

- Supporting Integrated Policy for Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) and enabling environment for SDG Financing
- Joint SDG Fund's investment in SDG acceleration has reached US\$200M

Integrated policy:

39



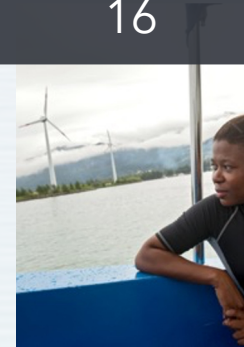
SDG Financing:

69



SDG Investment:

16



# Focus of the analysis:

## Portfolio on integrated policy for LNOB



- Integrated Social Protection for Leaving No One Behind
- Accelerating progress across 11 SDGs (53 targets)
- Integrated approach to vulnerabilities, gender and systemic inequalities
- Testing 100+ transformative policy solutions
- Leveraging eco-system: 138 UN country offices involved with over 600 partners
- Supporting UN Development System reform

Fund's Investment Integrated Social Protection	Overall Funding Integrated Social Protection	Countries Integrated Social Protection
\$ 70m	\$ 102m	39

35 Joint Programmes (JPs) in 39 countries





# Emerging results



## Women & Employment

- **Mexico:** multi-stakeholder social protection policy in 5 priority states to professionalize domestic work for 11 million women
- **Costa Rica:** e-commerce platform and 3 local innovation labs for women entrepreneurs in the most vulnerable area



## Child Benefits

- **Thailand:** benefits for 80% of families with children and 60% of pregnant women who do not receive any social welfare support
- Adding 1 mill new beneficiaries of the early child benefit in **Brazil** and 860K in **Argentina**



## Youth

- **Ecuador:** closing social protection gap for 7 out of 10 young people without a formal job



## Older Persons

- **Chile:** Digital platform for social support to reach 17% of the overall population
- **Cambodia:** providing pensions for additional 1.5 mill



## Disability

- **Overall portfolio investment:** \$US 43 mill - including 1 mill more PwDs to be covered in **Uzbekistan**



## Access to Social Protection

- **Rep. of Congo:** registration of 25% of population from indigenous communities
- **Gabon:** registration of 10% of newborns in rural/indigenous communities



## SP Funding & Financing

- **Vietnam:** Leveraging \$US 2.5 billion of Government's social protection package for COVID-19
- **Indonesia:** joint implementation mechanism for MPTF-O COVID-19 Fund



## Shock-Responsive SP

- **Indonesia:** addressing the impact of pandemic on food security
- **Barbados/S. Lucia:** new model for combined impact of multiple crises



## Integrating Healthcare

- **12 JPs** integrate healthcare into social protection for the most vulnerable

# The set-up...

- Acceleration: less than 10 years left until 2030
  - Also: Leaving no one behind
- Focusing on *SDG targets* rather than *SD Goals*
- Synergies and trade-offs
  - Cannot impact one without impacting several other
- Entry points for systems change & catalytic investment



# Approach

- Would a more systemic design-oriented approach be more effective for acceleration?
  - Compare and contrast different JP strategies with a systemic design perspective

# Issues with conventional Theories of Change





# Issues with conventional Theories of Change

- Oversimplified to the point of misdirection.
  - Necessarily incomplete, vague, optimistic – “Just-so stories”
  - Linear ToC formalisms shape mental models toward idealized future states – rendering action vulnerable to social complexity
- “If it’s not in the ToC, it’s not in the plan”
  - Yet ToCs cannot be guaranteed by planning / action
  - Evaluation of their fitness happens too late to “change the theory”
- With systems change, they usually fail basic systems theory
- The ToC logic model (Logframe) is an outdated change model

# Towards Systemic Theories of Change

- Theories of Change can be designed to much better represent how systems change unfolds in a complex world
- Yet, today, we don't have agreement on how to show SDG impact, acceleration, or leverage in change models



# Four sensemaking logics (Jones, 2020)

## 1. Action-outcome

- The structure of the logframe

## 2. Influence Pathways

- A complex strategic roadmap style

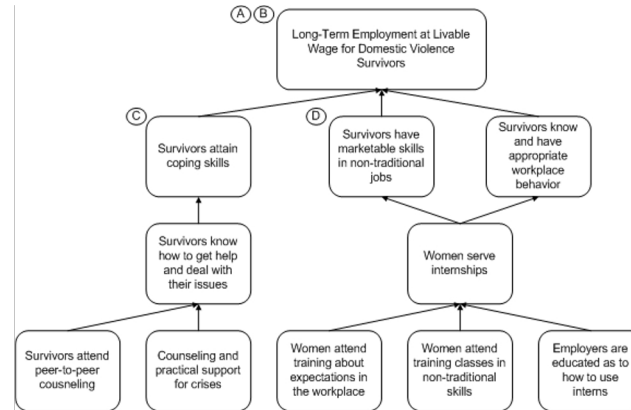
## 3. Complexity Process

- Reveals complex dynamic changes

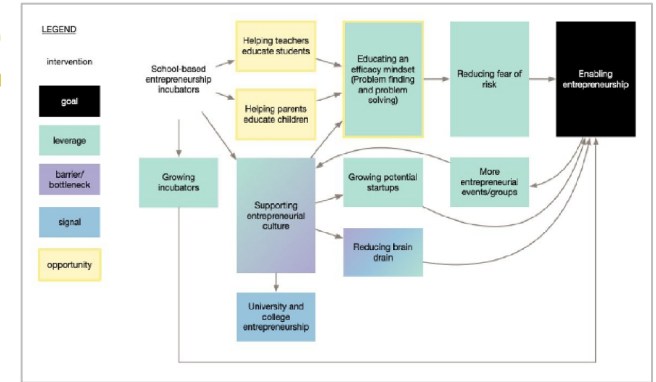
## 4. Movement of Movements

- Change created by many actors

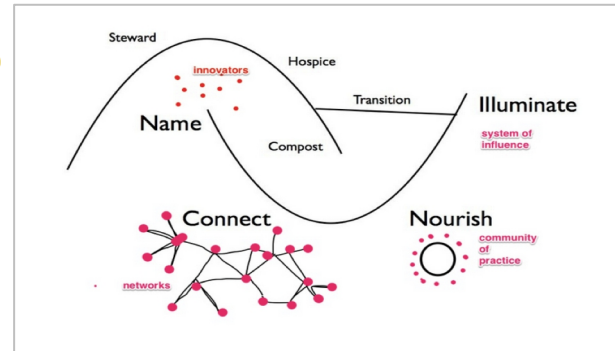
1



2



3



4



# Evaluation of the Joint SDG Fund JPs

- Questions
  - Does systems reasoning in ToCs lead to a richer (better) change models?
  - Do some show more complex program conditions in the ToC?
  - Do they recognize more assumptions, reinforcing factors to achieve SDGs?
  - How is leverage presented, if at all?



# Analysis



- From 35, sampled (12) across all 5 world regions
  - Initial analysis to determine if complexity => performance
  - Only 3 of 12 show both SDG targets & acceleration in ToC
- Cluster analysis
  - 20 Standard Logframe
  - 5 Graphic Logframes
  - 7 Systemic types
  - 3 Other (indeterminate)
- Clustered by model type
  - 20 Action-Outcome (3 "Weak A-O")
  - 4 Influence Pathways
  - 3 Complexity Process
  - 5 Simple, or no apparent logic
  - 0 Movement coordination

# Qualities of a Systemic ToC

Systemic Criteria	Assessment today
Degree of integration	50% good
Systemic performance risks	Generally unclear
Shows relevant complexity	Most No
Identifies SDG targets	Many not shown in ToC
Shows acceleration on SDG targets	Very few
Identifies leverage of key factors	Very few
Feedback between levels	Most No
Reveals influence relationships	Most No
Evaluable (via GUIDE principles)	Mixed



# Recommendations

- A first step: Align Theories of Change with real world complexity
  - Fit for purpose to answer “How are SDGs accelerated”
- Systemic ToC models enhanced to promote transformative change
- Leverage = SDG acceleration. Leverage inherent in connecting activities / targets that mutually reinforce
  - Acceleration demonstrated in programme management or results.
- SToCs can help Communication & Planning for urgent & complex projects
- Shared mental model & guidance for: Proposals Guidelines Checklists
- Future Joint SDG Fund should advise the SToC for system-level change
  - And use the criteria in systemic evaluation (e.g. Patton, Blue Marble)

# Finding leverage to accelerate systems change





# Finding leverage to accelerate systems change

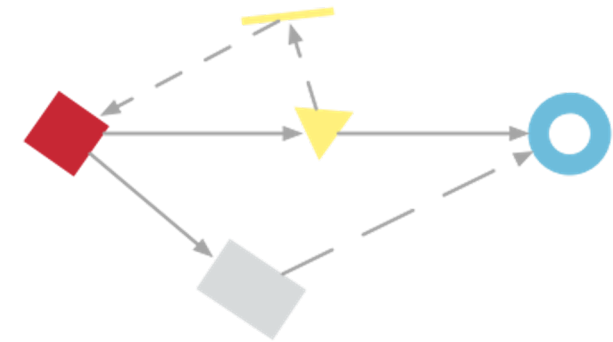
- We can only accelerate complex systems change by finding leverage within our systems
  - Change initiatives sometimes fail to appreciate the broader system they're working within
  - By modelling and analyzing the structure of the system, initiatives can identify phenomena with high potential to change the whole system
  - These phenomena can be used as seeds for accelerating strategies

# What is Leverage Analysis?

- Using the structure of systems to inform change strategy
  - Complex systems can be hard to navigate with conventional approaches
  - Leverage analysis is a dialogue with the system and its stakeholders to identify key phenomena
  - Graph theory provides tools to analyze systems structures to reveal these phenomena



- **Leverage points (◆)**
  - Places within a system where a little effort yields more impact
- **Bottlenecks (▲, —)**
  - Places in the system through which change often “passes through”



# Inquiry 1: Leverage Analysis of the Social Protection SDGs & Targets



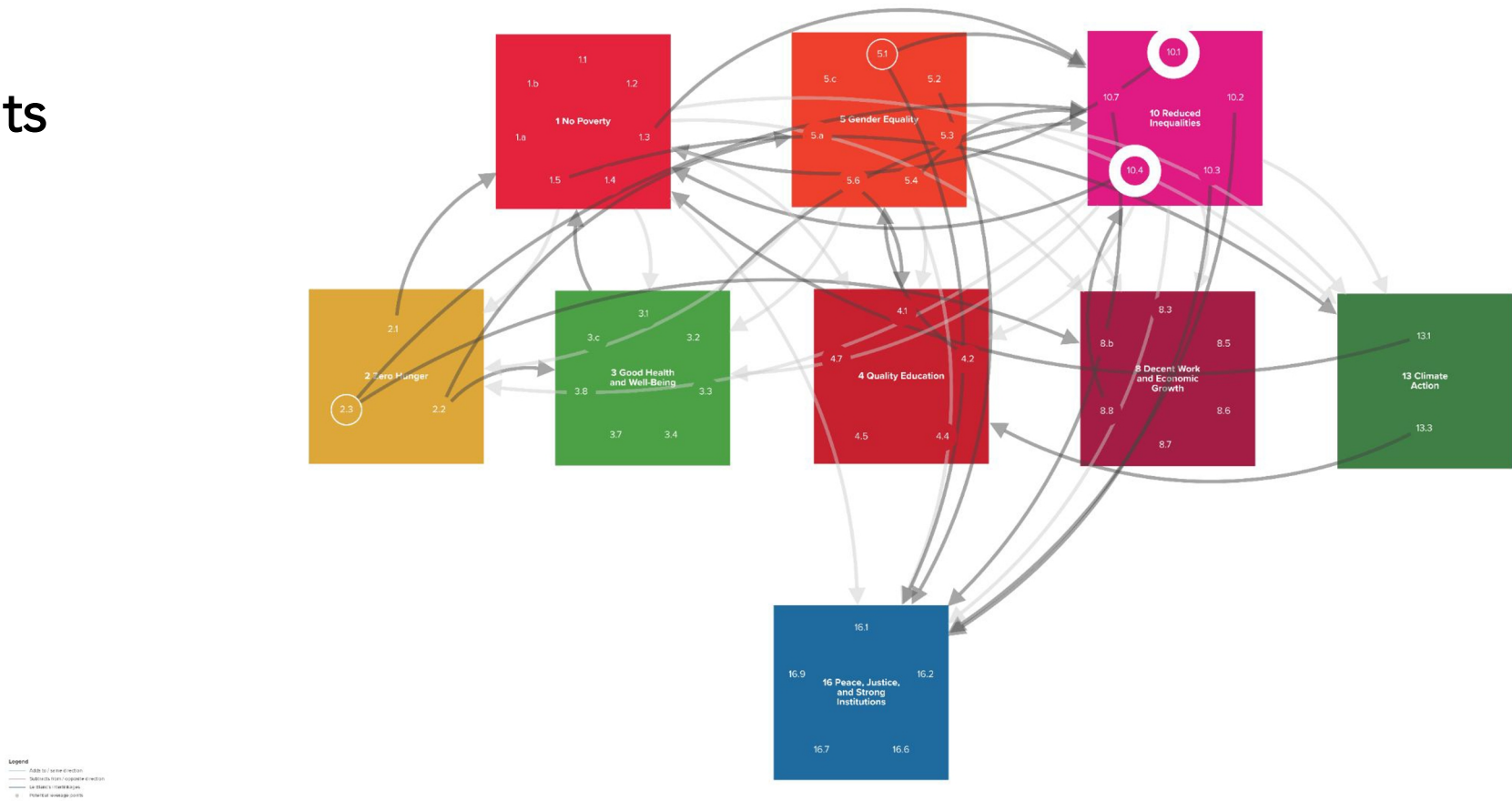
- What is the **structure of systems change for social protection**, according to the Joint SDG Fund's Joint Programmes (JPs)?
- What are the **leverage points or bottlenecks** of this system of targets?
- **Methods:**
  - Extracted the chosen priority targets from the 35 JPs
  - Assembled a causal loop diagram of targets using a baseline Social Protection ToC and past work on the interlinkages of SDG Targets
  - Conducted graph theory-based leverage analysis on the resulting system



# Inquiry 1: Leverage Analysis of the Social Protection SDGs & Targets



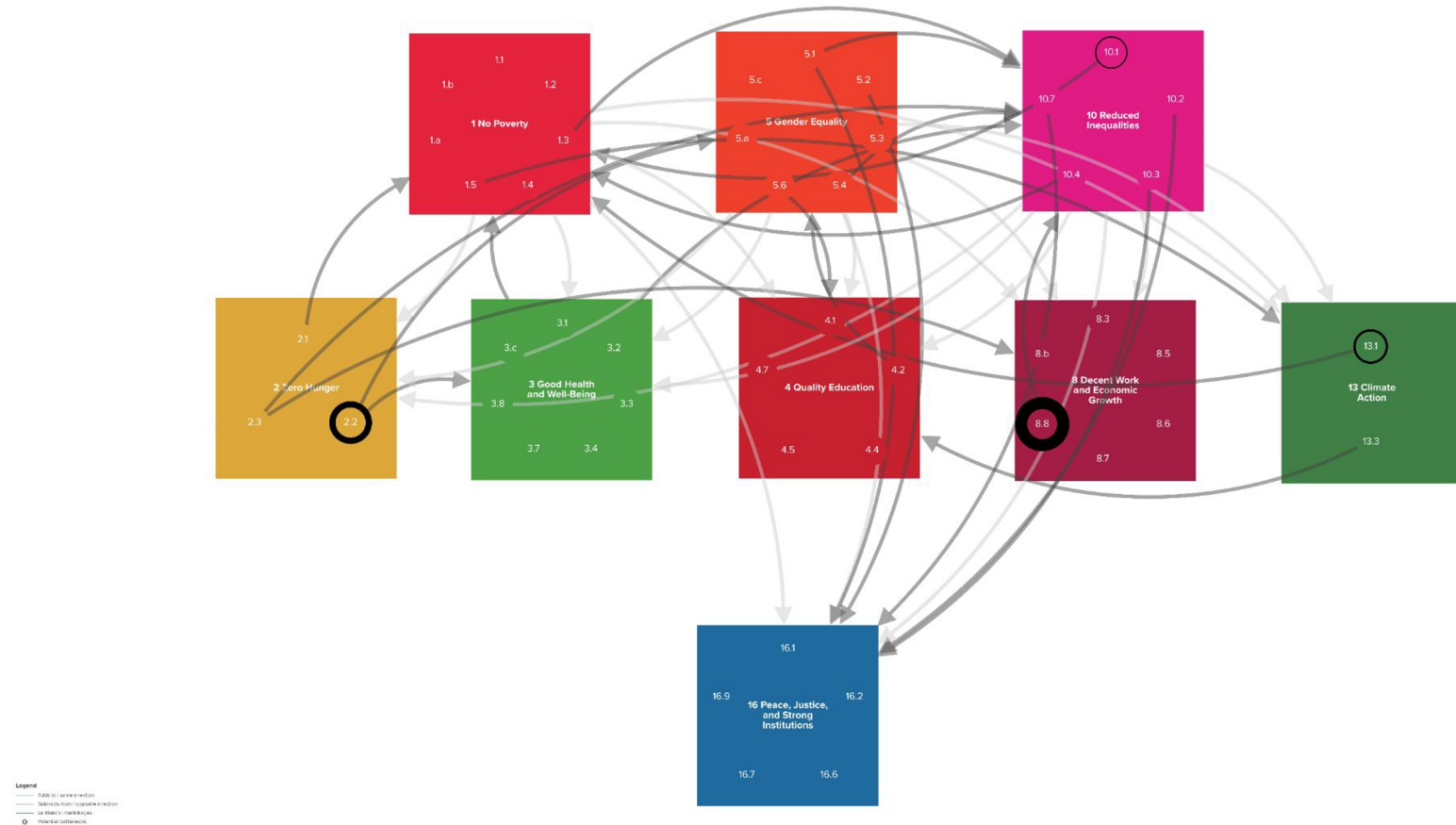
Leverage points



# Inquiry 1: Leverage Analysis of the Social Protection SDGs & Targets



## Bottlenecks





# Inquiry 1: Leverage Analysis of the Social Protection SDGs & Targets



## Leverage point

Target 2.3 ("Enhance the productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, especially marginalized populations")

- helps foster decent work and economic growth while reducing inequality

## Bottleneck

Target 4.2 ("By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education")

- progress elsewhere in the system **may fail to materialize** as systemic acceleration if children are not properly supported in early childhood
- **girls may not be covered** by social protection mechanisms if they cannot appropriately access primary education

## Both

Target 10.4 ("Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality")

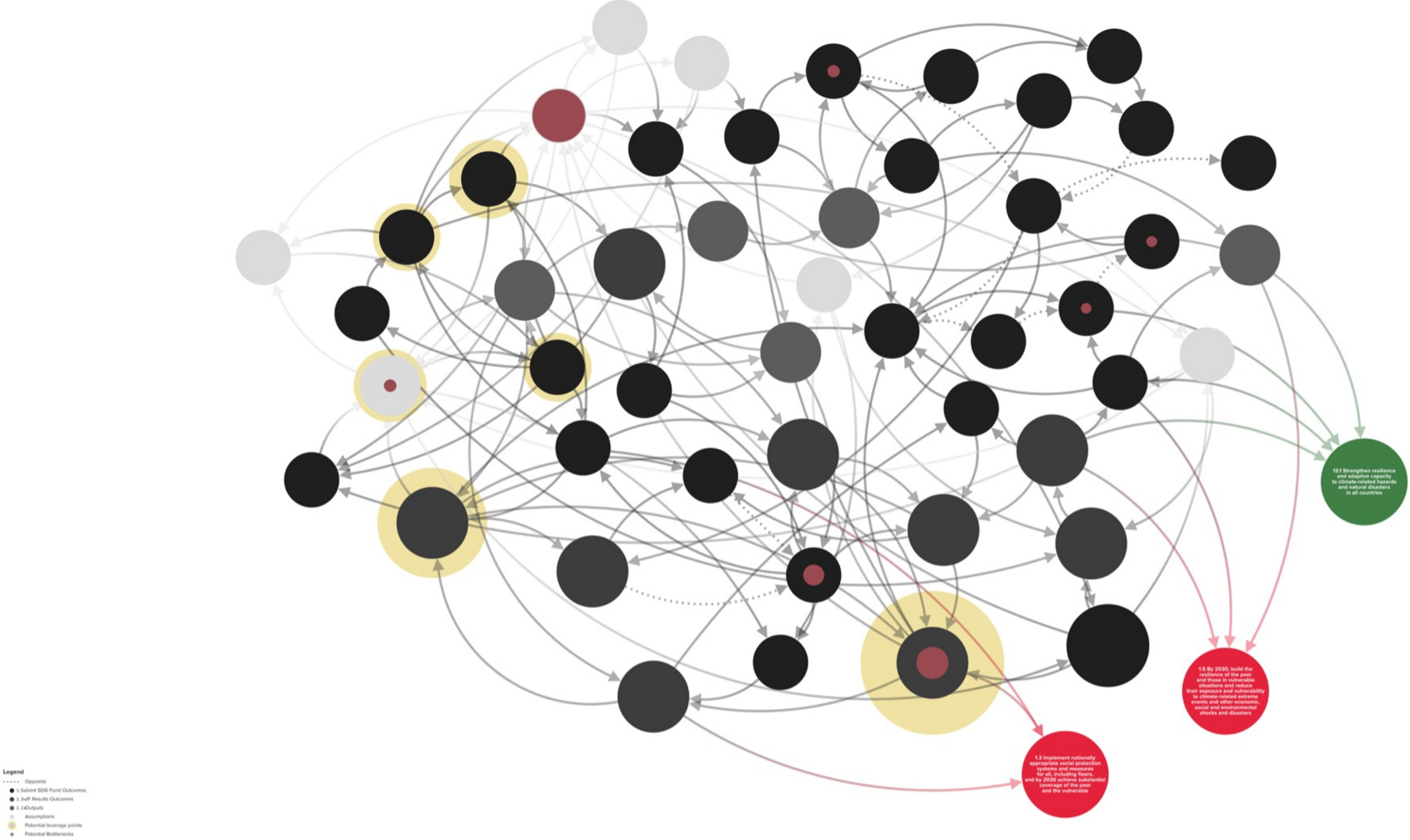
- policies are **enabling factors** for many other mechanisms of social protection, yet
- policies may be in place (or even advanced) that **limit the ability of social protection initiatives** to have impact

# Inquiry 2: Leverage analysis of JP strategies

- **Evaluating change strategy potential through systems analysis**
  - **What are the leverage points and bottlenecks of each JP?**
    - How effectively does the JP plan to address these phenomena?
    - Based on this analysis, what is the propensity of each JP to achieve systemic change for SDG acceleration?
  - **Methods:**
    - Generated a systems model from a deep reading of the JP strategy
    - Analyzed the structure of the model for leverage points and bottlenecks
    - Compared JP plans with identified phenomena



# Inquiry 2: Leverage analysis of JP strategies



# Inquiry 2: Leverage analysis of JP strategies

- **Conclusions**
  - JP planning **does not necessarily effectively account for leverage**
  - JPs seem to **design strategies for the implementation of short-/medium-term initiatives, not whole systems change**
- **Recommendation**
  - **A systemic design approach may help JPs more effectively accelerate large-scale long-term change**



# What's next?

- Exploring the use of SToCs with major new economy and SDG-oriented organisations
  - Bounce Beyond
  - Social Stock Exchange (SSX)

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