Causal Mapping – the evaluation evidence broker

Marshalling causal evidence at scale for Contribution Analysis and beyond.

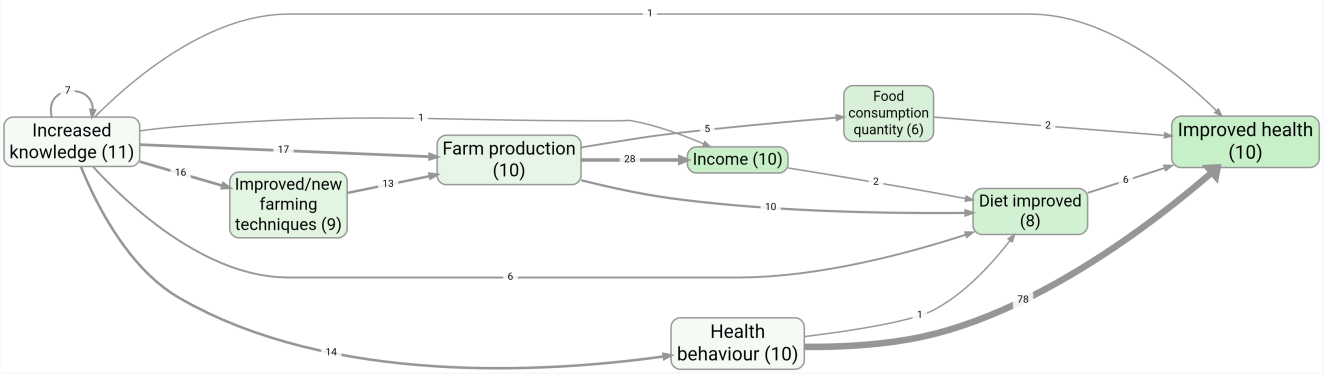
Causal Mapping is not primarily an evaluation method; it is a way of identifying and organising causal claims in support of evaluative judgement.

- It fits naturally with **Contribution Analysis (CA)**, while still adding value to other evidence-based frameworks...
- **Outcome Harvesting:** strengthen contribution claims by identifying the precise causal chain from outcome back to intervention.
- **Realist Evaluation:** identify Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) linkages mentioned by sources.
- **QuIP:** strengthen causal contribution claims through explicit, source-grounded chains.

1 Link = 100 Claims

An arrow in a map can look simple (for example, *Training -> Knowledge*), but that single link can represent dozens or hundreds of auditable claims from different sources.

- It lets evaluators “double-click” on it and examine the different quotes behind each link as well as how often it was mentioned.
- Every claim has verbatim text attached to it.



Scaling analysis with AI

When you move from 10 interviews to 200, manual coding alone is too hard. "Asking ChatGPT" surrenders human judgement to a black box: we don't really know how it reached its conclusions.

Causal Mapping uses AI as a low-level assistant to automate the extraction of traceable causal claims according to strict rules, leaving evaluative judgements to the evaluator.

How causal mapping can help with Contribution Analysis

John Mayne's six Steps, plus one

1 Set out the Attribution Problem

Define the evaluation questions and the level of evidence required.

2 Develop the Theory of Change

Establish the logic of how the intervention is expected to lead to results.

Often there are multiple versions of the "official" theory, or none at all.

Causal mapping helps: Assemble theories of change from official documents.

3 Gather Evidence on the ToC

Collect existing and new evidence to populate the causal links.

Causal mapping helps: Assemble "empirical theories of change" from stakeholder evidence and test if the official theory matches up. There is even a *metric* for that.

4 Assemble the Performance Story

Build the contribution narrative based on synthesised evidence.

Causal mapping helps: Synthesises individual claims into verifiable chains with *path tracing* and *source tracing*.

5 Assess Alternative Explanations

Account for external influences and other drivers of observed change.

Causal mapping helps: Explicitly maps non-project influences mentioned by sources.

6 Revise and Strengthen

Refine the story based on gaps identified in the evidence base.

Causal mapping helps: Highlights weak links where evidence count is low.

7 Extend

Causal mapping helps: A single causal coding of all documents creates a causal database which can provide inputs to all the above steps, and a lot more too.

See how different stakeholder groups view the project differently.

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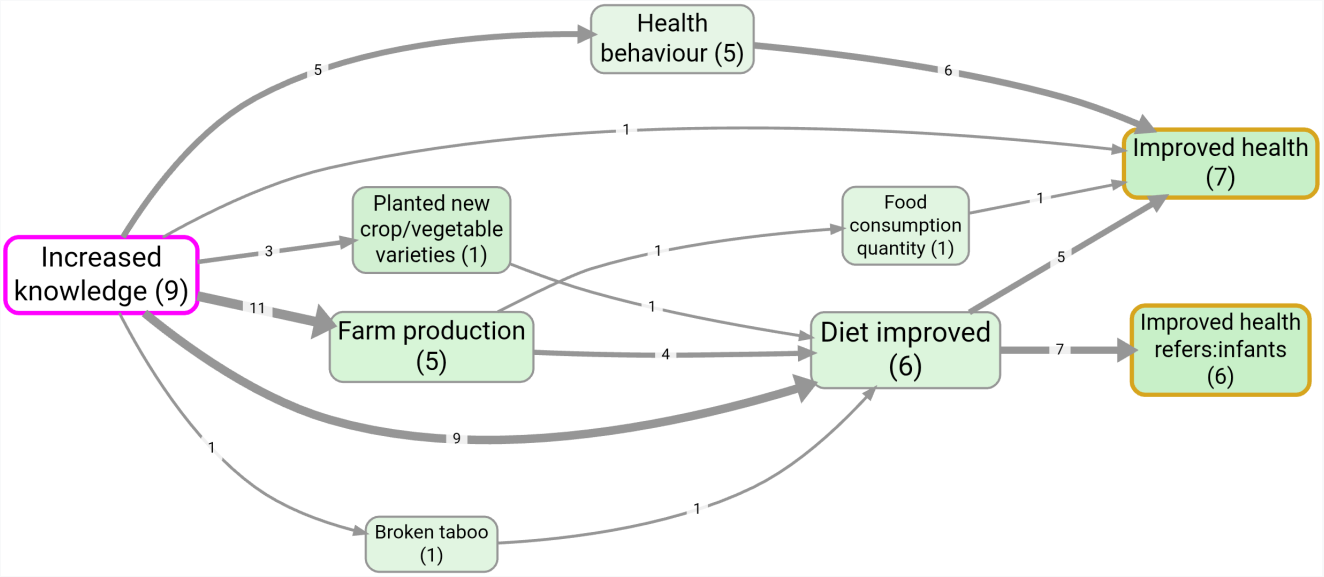
Factor	Significant	custom_# Age of the main respondent - 20-45	custom_# Age of the main respondent - 46+	# Citations	# Sources	In-Degree	Out-Degree	Outcomeness	Avg Incoming Sentiment
Increased knowledge	No	158	72	230	18	22	208	0.096	0.000
Farm production	Yes	89	68	157	16	76	81	0.484	0.000
Health behaviour	No	93	58	151	17	26	125	0.172	0.000
Improved health	No	89	54	143	17	136	7	0.951	0.000
Diet improved	Yes	78	23	101	18	81	20	0.802	0.000
Income	Yes	44	44	88	15	47	41	0.534	0.000
Planted new crop/vegetabl	No	42	20	62	13	28	34	0.452	0.000
Improved/new farming tec	Yes	20	24	44	14	21	23	0.477	0.000
Ability to buy food	Yes	14	23	37	12	17	20	0.459	0.000
Food consumption quantit	No	22	15	37	17	31	6	0.838	0.000

Visualise pathways.



Provide evidence for individual narratives.

Bundle: Diet improved; Diversified >> Improved health

Source: MNY-5

The meals I buy in the market have changed because I have the option to buy various goods. The spare food type has change as I now have access to better seeds for my farm and some material.

Increased

The motive for this change is in the varieties of foods cultivated in my farm, in my livestock creation and also in the food varieties from the market.

More variety

The reason is as a result of the varieties and the different foods. We have a variety of good in the market. Some from my garden and it is the reason I am healthy.

Source: MSX-1

Increased

MORE FOOD VARIETIES THAT GENERATED A GOOD NUTRITION IN THE FAMILY overall AND WE ALSO CONSERVE MORE FOOD. Increased from the introduction production of horticulture such as tomatoes, onions these enabled more food. With tomatoes and onions we could now do stew to avoid only eating green vegetables.

More variety

AFTER, THE GOOD WAYS OF CONSERVATION OF FOOD AND VARIETIES IN FOODS HELPED A GOOD RESULT IN THE HEALTH OF THE FAMILY.

Why causal mapping ?

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