TOOLS FOR INFLUENCING INFORMAL RULES IN VALUE CHAINS

microREPORT #166

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The environment in which value chain actors operate is shaped by rules and regulations that can be informal as well as formal. These informal rules include norms, customs and codes of conduct that affect people's attitudes, behaviors and access to resources and markets. Influencing informal rules involves changing the attitudes and behaviors of actors within the system. While the difficulty of this task should not be underestimated, SDCAsia has developed some practical activities and methods that can facilitate the process. These tools are summarized below and presented in detail in the sections that follow. The tools are not necessarily intended to be used in sequence; rather, practitioners should choose the tools and processes needed for their specific project goals.

1. **Root cause analysis** helps practitioners understand the underlying causes of constraints in a value chain.
2. **Identification of practices to keep, improve or discard** helps groups come to consensus on practices or norms that need to change for better value chain functioning.
3. **Communicating the change agenda through comics** is a creative way for projects to convey project messages about the desired changes in the system.
4. The process for **overcoming barriers and strengthening drivers of change** takes stakeholders through a process of analyzing forces that inhibit or encourage change and then identifying ways to diminish or enhance the effect of such forces.
5. **Identification of social or behavior influencers** is the process by which value chain actors and project staff understand which other stakeholders can have an important impact on the change process and create strategies for working with those stakeholders.
6. Once a vision of change has been established, it is helpful to **break the big picture into small, riskable steps** that will be easier for value chain actors to take on.
7. Finally, the process for **obtaining a commitment** used by SDCAsia helps generate stakeholder buy-in to the process of changing practices and norms.

I. ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS

Peeling the layers of the onion to get to the root of the problem
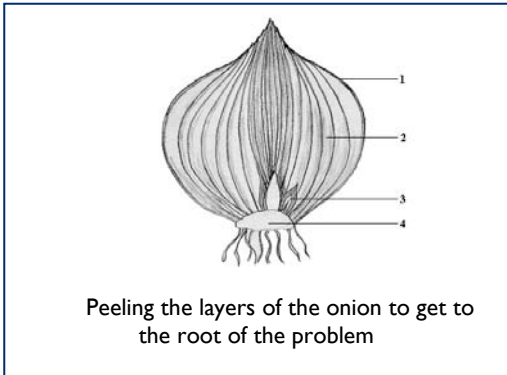
Even when constraints affecting value chain actors are relatively well-defined, stakeholders and project implementers often neglect to think beyond the obvious symptoms, or the apparent effects of the problem. In other words, there is the tendency to overlook the root causes or deeper issues (such as social institutions and norms)that may be causing the problem. Likewise, constraints usually contain many different factors and interactions that are hard to conceptualize in formal settings such as stakeholders workshops.

A tool for moving stakeholders and implementers to think and focus beyond obvious symptoms to root causes is the "Why Exercise." This exercise digs beneath the surface to uncover underlying factors that must be addressed for the project to achieve the impact it seeks. If a project addresses symptoms without an understanding of the root causes, interventions may be limited in their effectiveness and outcomes may be very different from what is anticipated.
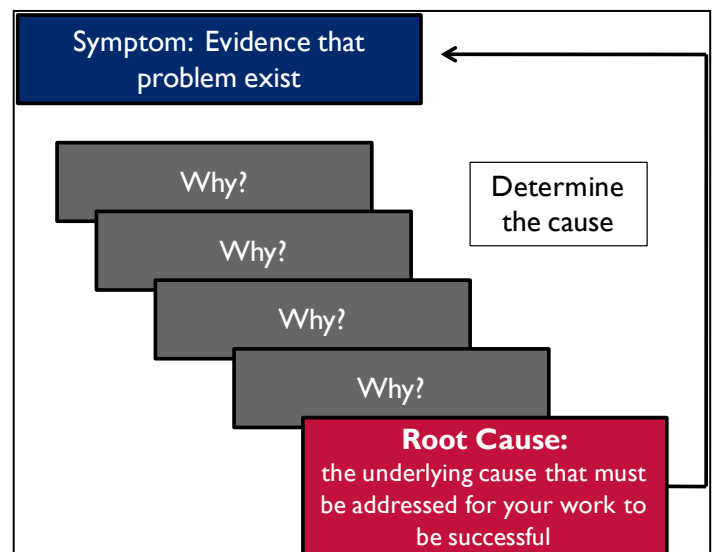
Root cause analysis is community- and situation-specific. The same issues may exist in many different communities but for very different reasons. For example, in the timber value chain in Papua New Guinea, buyers and millers complain that community-based enterprises are unreliable due to intermittent operations. Value chain analysis indicated that this lack of reliability was due to land tenure/property rights problems as well as poor farm-to-market roads. Conversations during a stakeholder workshop revealed that another major cause of intermittent operations is the general inclination of indigenous peoples to prioritize social obligations over their work in timber concession, as negligence in the social sphere can cause ostracism. Based on this revelation, the project realized that improving these value chain relationships would require integrating commitment to work and employers into the social norms of the community.

A. USES AND APPLICATIONS

Root cause analysis is useful in demonstrating how constraints can be linked to broader social, political and economic issues. A cause and effect diagram breaks complex problems down into easier, more simplified components so that the root cause of each component can be determined. The "Why Exercise" will also provide a visual understanding of the problem for all parties involved, leading to a better understanding of the problem and a focus on the correct issues to discuss and analyze. This process can help determine the level of constraints on which stakeholders and the project need to focus their attention. The "Why Exercise" can be repeated throughout the value chain development process, as more information becomes available and new issues arise.

B. STEPS

The "Why Exercise" may be carried out with all stakeholders represented or with group of players that carry out functions at each link of the chain or by geographic areas (if there were differences perceived

Symptom: Evidence that problem exist

Why?

Why?

Why?

Why?

Determine the cause

Root Cause: the underlying cause that must be addressed for your work to be successful

during the earlier stage of the value chain analysis).

If subgroups are formed during the exercise, it may be possible to get different perceptions of the constraints, which would otherwise have been missed. For example, women, youth and the elderly may have different perspectives, or farmers may look at the constraint differently from lead firms.

Subgroups are advisable if:
- there are serious power differentials within the group;
- only a few participants are talking, while the others seem reluctant to voice their concerns; or
- there is some degree of hesitancy among players to speak publicly in front of people not among their peers (e.g., suppliers may not be comfortable to voice out concerns in the presence of their buyers).

Steps for carrying out the exercise are as follows.

1. Ask the participants to discuss the constraints and immediate causes. They should write each on a card and place these below the appropriate constraint headings. If some of the participants are illiterate, it is advisable to use pictures to represent the causes.

   Working outwards, participants keep asking themselves the question "Why?" for each of the immediate causes. This step is repeated three to five times until the participants have reached some basic or root causes of the constraint or issue being addressed.

   It is important to explain to the participants that they should not get bogged down in arguments about whether or not a "Why?" is valid. This is an exploratory activity and the truth or relative significance of each "Why?" can be determined later.

2. Ask the participants to connect the answer to each "Why" question to show the linkages between causes and effects. Remind them to check their logic by repeating the process of asking "Why?" through the levels of causes.

3. If subgroups have been formed, reconvene them into the overall group after the subgroups have finalized their own analyses. Discuss the similarities and differences of the analyses in the overall group and let the participants discuss: a) the reasons why different subgroups may have different views of the conflict; b) what the main group can do to find common ground in the analysis of the constraint; and c) root causes directly connected to social institutions/norms.

   Rank the root causes in terms of significance and distinguish which issues are immediate and require urgent action and which are underlying, presenting significant obstacles in addressing the constraints and needing to be addressed over a longer time period

The group session on root cause analysis is completed when the participants have:
- agreed on an overall analysis of the causes of the constraints;
- identified information gaps that need further differentiation; and
- identified key root causes that need specific attention.

II. IDENTIFICATION OF PRACTICES TO KEEP, IMPROVE AND DISCARD

A. OBJECTIVE

This activity facilitates group consensus on the need and directions for change in a group or community's norms/practices as a means of improving the competitiveness of their enterprise and the industry as a whole. The main objective is for the target group themselves to express concerns about current norms/practices and present arguments for change or for strengthening an existing good practice.

B. STEPS

The tool combines the problem-solving approach to change management (focus on the negative aspects of the current system) and the appreciative inquiry approach (focus on the positive aspects of the existing and proposed system). The exercise breaks down the complexity of systems change into small behavioral steps.

1. Participants identify dominant existing norms and practices and their effects/impact on farms and livelihoods.

2. Facilitator and/or resource persons (as much as possible similar in profile to audience/participants and respected by participants) provide a brief introduction and lead discussion on standards and norms that have possibilities of "making things work better" for households, community and the industry.

3. Participants identify the best of the current system, thereby creating a nonthreatening environment for sharing ideas and building confidence and self-esteem. Identifying the best of the existing system is important because there may be some elements that are worth keeping; improving the system does not necessarily mean changing it entirely. Retaining elements that work well will contribute to getting community/players' buy-in during the design and implementation phases.

4. Participants identify what is not working in the existing system or those norms and practices that significantly reduce income generation capacities and industry competitiveness. This step allows participants to voice negative feelings but, at the same time, minimizes possibilities of turning the workshop into a complaint session. A guiding question could be framed as "Thinking about your business/farm, what are the things you are unhappy about and would like to change? What are the practices associated with things that you are unhappy about and should be changed?"

   It is advisable to remind participants that for the "not-so-good" norms that cannot be totally eliminated at a short span of time, it may be best to think of ways to minimize its impact to the extent possible.

5. Based on the overview and discussion of potential ways of doing things better, participants list the norms that they think should be created or established in order to improve their conditions and that of the community and industry. These are, in effect, the proposed changes and the new norms. The proposed norms may be classified in terms of short-term and medium-term.

6. Participants identify the norms and elements that could potentially destroy or lessen the effectiveness of the whole new system. These are the potential pitfalls that should be avoided.

7. Participants identify one major concern they may have in implementing the new set of norms incorporating good practices from existing system and new practices identified as essential for improving competitiveness and, consequently, livelihoods.

	Best	**Not-so-Good**
Existing Norms	Keep (Step 3)	Discard/ Reform (Step 4)
Improved Norms/System	Create (Step 5)	Avoid (Step 6)

C. EXAMPLE OF HOW THE TOOL WAS USED

Implementating Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) standards for cardava banana farming required changing the informal norms on how farmers typically managed their cardava farms. SDCAsia's B-ACE project conducted a series of round table discussions with representatives from farmers, traders, processor/exporters, government agricultural technicians/extension workers, commercial plantation managers and input suppliers. The stakeholders collectively identified best and not-so-good practices that ranged from: those that have been generally accepted by the industry, "trade secrets" in farming previously unknown to the majority of the players, indigenous practices handed down from generations, and results from field studies or research conducted by agriculture extension workers, input suppliers and researches. Generic templates from previously drafted GAP facilitated by SDCAsia for other crops were presented as reference/benchmarking parallel to identifying the not-so-good aspects of implementing GAP. Through this process, producers developed a sense of ownership of the implementation measures and—to a significant extent—aligned informal norms with Good Agriculture Practices. This helped avoid the sense of outwardly imposed requirements. Immediate benefits included lower transaction costs, as traders and processors had less rejected produce, as well as a significant reduction of conflicts caused by differing understandings and interpretations of standards.

III. COMMUNICATING THE CHANGE AGENDA THROUGH COMICS

Handouts on Postharvest Practices

Research indicates that pure information campaigns have minimal effect on changing behavior (e.g., a high level of awareness of food contamination and importance of personal hygiene does not necessarily translate into personal action). Yet information is critical for communicating that a problem exists, that there is a practical solution, and to assist in identifying the costs of inaction and benefits of taking action. Adults learn best: in a non-threatening climate of respect, acceptance and trust; where there is cooperative evaluation and self-evaluation; and when the focus is on the process than on the content of learning.
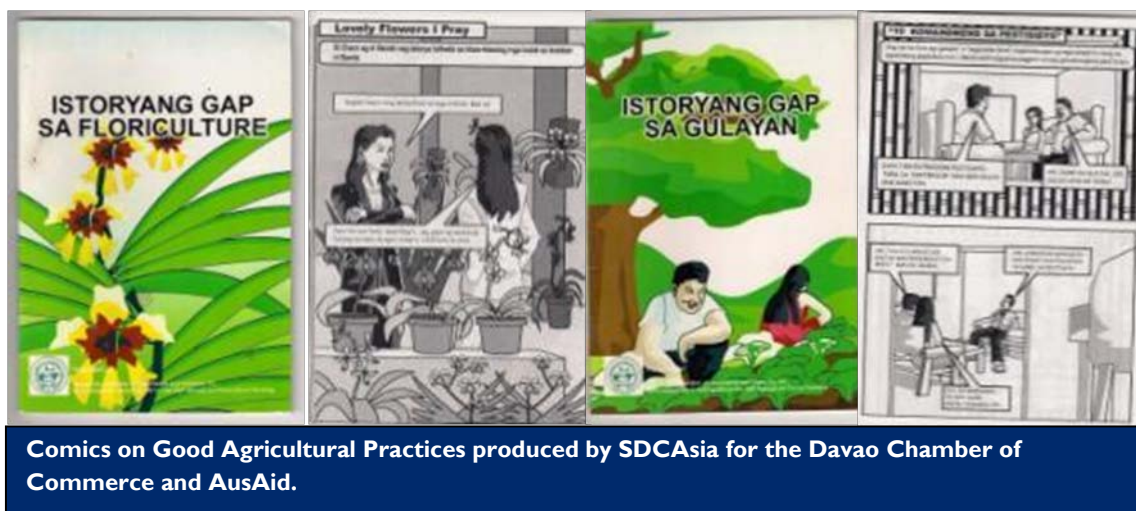

Comics on issues related to cheating and calibration of weighing scales.

Training Aid – Good Agricultural Practices – developed in collaboration with communities.

Paying attention to how the information is presented can improve its effectiveness. People are more likely to pay attention to information that follows the guidelines below.

- Vivid: Use of visual images that makes it easy for the audience to visualize

- Personal:The use of data that is personally relevant; wherever possible, it is important to show the target groups how the issue will affect them, their children, their house, their incomes, their communities, the region, etc.

- Specific and concrete: Specific recommendations on how to modify current practices and messages that clearly show target groups each of the specific steps involved in engaging in the behavior are more likely to be successful.

- Stated in terms of loss rather than gain: Research suggests that messages which emphasize the losses are consistently more persuasive than messages which emphasize savings as a result of taking action.

- Told as a story: Real stories and experiences that the target communities can relate to can be more effective can be much more effective than a set of abstract instructions or information about the long-term effects of actions. Empathy can be triggered in your audience through telling a moving, personal story

- Emotional: People tend to be persuaded more by emotional messages than logical ones. If messages relate to something people care about, they may be more likely to take action. Emotions can be powerful motivators as well as disincentive for change. Experiences indicate that strong negative emotional responses such as fear and despair and complete can end all desires and discussions on change. Likewise, making people feel manipulated or guilty will often result to strong resistance.

Comics on Good Agricultural Practices produced by SDCAsia for the Davao Chamber of Commerce and AusAid.

Based on the above, SDCAsia has increasingly used comics as a means of incorporating development messages into entertainment formats that communities enjoy reading or watching. Comics allowed sensitive topics that otherwise may be avoided to be treated in a nonthreatening way and sparked dialogues that facilitated self-realization. It should be noted, however, that we avoided focusing the comics on just one set of actors but always presented in a supply chain perspective.

Comics Power … Why Comics? (From Grassroot Comics)	
	1. With comics you can dramatize your message! A story is always stronger than a mere statement. With a story you leave it to the reader to make up his/her mind about the message in it.
	2. You can use both pictures and text, and add effects. One picture says more than a thousand words, but pictures and words combined, multiplies that.
	3. You increase reader interest - your message becomes lively.
	4. You can be technically very specific. You can show, rather than explain.
	5. Comics are low-tech compared to video and film.
	6. The reader can return to the story anytime.
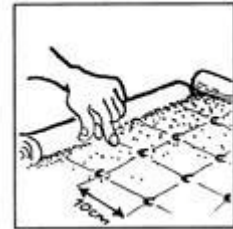
Comics Power … Why Comics? (From Grassroot Comics)	
	7. When made by local artists, the visual language and the meanings of the words are correct.
	8. You can deal with sensitive issues - comics are non-aggressive.
	9. Drawing has a distinct human quality; it is more appealing than photographs.

A. TIPS FOR PREPARING COMICS

1. It is best to focus on one particular aspect that you want to change or point out. A specific message is always more powerful than a broad one.

2. Think of a short real-life story that will express the point you want to make. In many cases, our stories are taken from the field surveys during the value chain analysis or from stories recounted by participants during the stakeholders workshops or focus group discussions.

3. A message with drama and some comedy in it works better than a strictly educational one.

4. Use minimal text. Make it as visual as possible. Sometimes, to create some dramatic effect and to emphasize a point, exaggeration in size or movement may be needed. However, avoid too many exaggerations in one comic strip.

5. Make sure that drawings do not resemble any real person in the industry.

6. If possible, tell the story from a supply chain perspective—chain of behavior and effects.

IV. OVERCOMING BARRIERS & STRENGTHENING DRIVERS OF CHANGE

Individuals' participation in a change process is not dependent solely on their own desires. The changes they make occur within the broader environment in which they live. A crucial task for projects seeking to change behaviors is therefore to enhance people's capacity to modify their environment. As such in the development of strategies for change in social institutions, it is essential to find out about their barriers to change and drivers for change and the ratio of one to the other. External barriers may include prohibitive costs, lack of accessible technology, and conflicting laws. Personal barriers include failure to recognize the problem, lack of understanding of the steps required to overcome the problem, inadequate awareness of the importance of the problem, and perception of the problem as insurmountable partly due to the lack of examples (friends or family) taking similar actions.

While driving forces support and motivate people to take action and achieve desired norms and behavior change, barriers are those factors that discourage people from taking an action they would otherwise do. To facilitate the achievement of positive change and its adoption by the target groups, common driving forces must be strengthened and common barriers to action must be removed or minimized. This may involve reducing costs (price), expanding distribution (place), or improving information and communication systems and technology.

The analysis of forces that help or obstruct change is useful in drawing a strategic change plan and assessment of the feasibility of a strategic change objective. It is also useful for identification of focus areas in any associated action plan.

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│          LIST FORCES THAT SUPPORT OR RESTRAIN CHANGE          │
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         ▼                        │                    ▼
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│  HOW CAN DRIVING │              │          │ HOW THE BARRIERS CAN │
│    FORCES BE     │              │          │ BE MINIMIZED/ELIMINATED? │
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│  ASSESS VIABILITY OF SOLUTIONS (INVESTMENT REQUIRED, RATIO   │
│   OF BARRIERS TO DRIVERS WITH PROPOSED SOLUTIONS)            │
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A. STEPS

1. Write a brief description of the proposed change. Each proposed change should be analyzed individually.

2. List the forces.

   Driving forces: List all the driving forces you can think of at the left.
   - Be very specific (i.e., what, who, where, how many, etc.)
   - Forces can be internal as well as external
   - Indicate how the force will contribute to meeting the objective

   *Barriers*: List the restraining forces on the right
   - Be very specific
   - List all the factors, both internal and external, which will work against the change process
   - Indicate what effect each force is likely to have on achieving your objective

Proposed Change:					
Driving Forces			**Barriers**		
Description	**Contribution to Meeting Objective**	**Score**	**Description**	**Effect on Objective**	**Score**

3. Prioritize of the forces.

   Determine the strength of each driving force using a scale of 1 to 5 with 1 as extremely weak and 5 as extremely strong. Those factors with a score of 4 and 5 are the ones that will have a significant effect on whether or not you can achieve your objective.

   Total the scores for *Driving Forces* and the *Barriers*. Is the result as expected? Do your heart and head agree? If not, review briefly the factors you listed. Are there any missing? Are less important factors overshadowing the more important factors? Are the scores realistic, and spread across the full range?

BALLONS: Driving Forces

PROPOSED CHANGE

STONES: Barriers
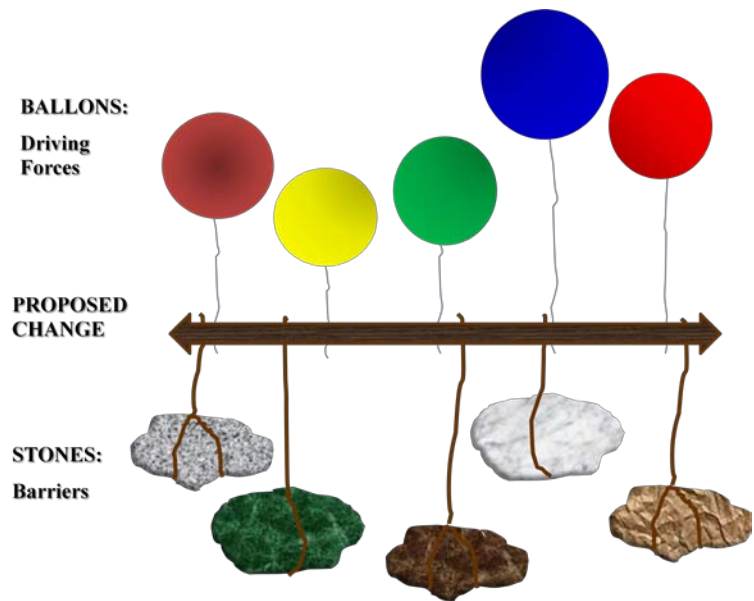
In communities where people have some difficulty in writing the scores, the scoring may be done by using pebbles or seeds. The number of seeds or pebbles assigned to a force denoted the extent of the effect of the given force on women's participation in local women's group. Visual presentation of forces and the use of pebbles or seeds make it possible for individuals who could not read and write to participate meaningfully in the analysis. Seeds or pebbles also provide participants with ample flexibility to modify the scoring of the forces as discussion progresses.

4. Identify potential solutions and change strategies.

   Identify ways in which *driving forces* can be promoted, strengthened or maximized to enhance the achievement of change. Identify ways of eliminating, weakening or minimizing the *barriers*. Review if there are additional driving forces.

Driving Forces	How to Strengthen
1	
2	
3	
Barriers	How to Address
1	
2	
3	

5. Analyze the viability of solutions.

Discuss level of investment (human resources, logistics, time, etc.) required for each of the potential solutions. Indicate via scoring whether investment required is possible within the scope of the project with 5 as very feasible and 1 as not feasible.

Driving Force/Strategies		Investment Requirement	Feasibility Rating
Barriers/Strategies		Investment Requirement	Feasibility Rating

6. Prioritize barriers and driving forces and the corresponding strategies using the matrix below.

Driving Forces/ Strategies		Relevance	Viability	Relevance and Viability	Rank
Total					
Barriers/Strategies		Relevance	Viability	Relevance and Viability	Rank
Total					

- Relevance: With the scores in #2 as your basis, indicate degree of importance with 1 as the lowest and 5 as the highest (highly relevant)
- Viability: Copy scores from # 5

- Relevance and Viability: Multiply scores in relevance and viability
- Total: Add the scores in the relevance and viability columns
- Compare the total scores for Driving Forces vis-à-vis Barriers. If total score for Driving Forces is higher than Barriers, there is a greater probability that the strategic change objective can be achieved.
- Rank: Highest total assigned the Rank of 1

7. Prepare an action plan focusing on those barriers/driving forces and corresponding strategies with high ranking.

V. IDENTIFICATION OF SOCIAL/BEHAVIOR INFLUENCERS

Identification and analysis of social/behavior influencers are central parts of managing change. This involves the following steps:

- Identify the individuals or groups who have a stake in or the ability to impact the change process that the target groups will undertake.
- Identify and assess the dependency and power of stakeholders in relation to a particular group of players.
- Develop a strategy to manage these stakeholders.

Identification and analysis of social influencers can be applied as either an internal mental model to structure the project team's analysis or a facilitation tool used to guide stakeholders in their own analysis.

For example, if the objective is for outgrower poultry caretakers to adopt good feeding practices and greater transparency, the stakeholders analysis is first conducted with them. The main objective is to facilitate the identification of people that would support or hinder the efforts to fully address the issue. In many cases, stakeholder analysis at one level lead researchers to another group of stakeholders who perform another function in the chain that also require behavioral change so as to effect change in the target groups. In other words, one has to identify the chain of stakeholders in the change process.
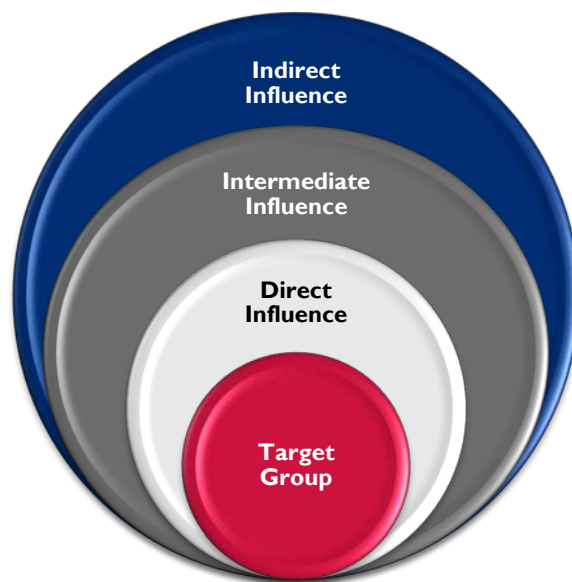
A. STEPS

1. Ask the group to think of all the people who are affected by the behavioral issue, who have influence or power over it, or an interest in its successful or unsuccessful transformation.

2. Ask the group to prioritize the stakeholders they have identified according to degree of influence and their importance to their trade

	Significant Influence	Some Influence	Little Influence	No Influence
Significant Importance				
Some Importance				
Little Importance				
No Importance				

For the project team: Those in the high importance/influence category will be the first ones to consult since they carry a heavy weight in the direction of the change process.

3. Ask the group to create profiles for stakeholders classified under the high importance/influence category and elaborate on how their behavior affects their actions.

Stakeholders and Description	Role	In what way do they influence the way you act? How does he/she affect you?	Why do you think he/she acts that way?	For you to change your behavior for the better, what changes do you expect from the person/group of players?	

In addition to workshops, we rely on informal interviews to elicit this information. Information above is then triangulated with stakeholders' analysis for that particular group of influencers until we reach the "root influencer/s." This exercise has been very helpful in identifying potential change catalysts as well as in the development of our communication strategy.

# VI. BREAKING DOWN THE BIG PICTURE INTO SMALL STEPS

An overall vision of change may need to be broken down into more manageable steps that stakeholders are willing to take. A good analogy for this need comes from video games. Video game manufacturers keep the attention of people in a challenging game by breaking the game down into stages and levels. After a quest or fight, there is a period of rest. The player gains treasure and experience points and goes up to the next level. They also get a sense of closure about the previous stage and can look forward to what comes next.

Using the same strategy with our target groups, SDCAsia's B-ACE project facilitated the participatory development of the big picture—their vision of change. B-ACE encouraged groups to make this picture vivid and visually appealing, while also allowing people to clearly see the benefits they would derive from it. From the big picture, three-month period action plans were prepared. These plans were designed to contribute to the incremental achievement of medium-term objectives parallel to providing members and the group with tangible benefits in the shorter term. The action plan began with simpler, lower-cost and lower-risk activities. Their drawings of the "Big Picture" were displayed in their meeting areas and every three months they checked on what had been achieved, what needed to be modified, and the remaining things to be done. As facilitators, we checked that their action plans were achievable, exciting and attractive at both the self and group levels.

Breaking things down into small steps has a number of advantages. Smaller changes are easier to plan and manage. When people look at a big change, they are easily overwhelmed by the size of it. A pause between stages gives time to re-think and re-plan. The groups usually end each three months with a celebration. It also helps create a sense of closure and reduces tendencies to revert to old ways.

VII. OBTAINING A COMMITMENT
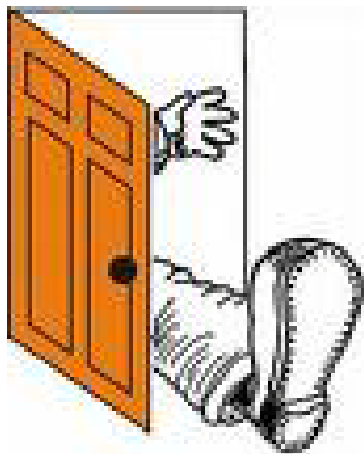
Getting involved is the first step to making a commitment, and commitment makes people more likely to act. People who are committed to an activity are more likely to agree to a subsequent, more demanding activity. Inconsistency is considered a fault and is associated with a host of other negative qualities (e.g. untrustworthiness, instability). As a result, when people commit to an act, belief, attitude, etc. they wish to maintain that stance, in order to be viewed as consistent. Importantly, commitment will only be felt if the person accepts inner responsibility for the actions we want them to take. In other words, if people feel forced to take an action, they will not "own" that decision and will not feel sustained commitment.

This tool is aimed at seeking a person's or group's pledge or agreement to carry out the changes identified as necessary for competitiveness. If people cannot initially commit, it not mean they do not care, but rather that they have some doubts. A process of working through doubt precedes every meaningful commitment. This tool is aimed at catalyzing this process so that the critical mass of people can pass through this stage efficiently on their way to genuine commitment and innovative strategies.

A. STEPS

The B-ACE project used the following steps to overcome doubt and obtain commitment from individuals and groups.

1. Build interest among target groups to conduct simple activities related to the change.

   The B-ACE project led participants through a number of preparatory stages before asking them to sign a pledge. Preparatory events included participation in festivals/competitions, a participatory market assessment, and transect walks to heighten the sense of urgency to address problems (e.g., food safety, pest and diseases, etc.). The objective at this step is to create some pressure that would provide target groups with the push to to do something about the existing situation.

2. Start with small short-term commitments and gradually scale up to bigger and more difficult decisions and tasks.

   The "foot in the door" technique is a persuasion method popular among door-to-door salesmen. The idea behind "foot in the door" technique is basically to get someone to agree to something small, so that they might agree to something bigger later on. The "foot-in-the-door" technique involves the following:

Transect walk to heighten sense of urgency to address widespread incidence of pests

- Make an easy, not easily refused request
- Thank and take on an "obliging" character to the person with whom one made the request
- Follow up with a more important demand or slightly more difficult task

In projects, the "foot-in-the-door" technique can be used as a means of getting people involved and soliciting short-term commitment. For example, to encourage people to deliver to the first fry processing plant

operated by the cooperative, the first step was to ask their commitment to deliver a portion of their one-day banana harvest. The names of farmers who delivered during the day were posted and acknowledged. During the delivery, they were then asked if they would want to allocate at least one-day harvest per week to the plant. Commitments are then placed on the bulletin board. Similarly, after each action planning sessions, mayors or other personalities respected by the communities were invited to witness the signing and pledge of commitment ceremonies.

Another example would be the case of agrarian reform beneficiaries in the Philippines. For many years, the lands awarded to them by the government were unproductive. To move farmers to make productive use of the land and to collectively take up additional functions in the chain, SDCAsia started with the promotion of a communal farm with the fence construction as the very first step—which did not require significant investments and skills upgrading. After some months of good experiences and capacity building, the group decided to expand to cardava nursery operations. They are now engaged in collective trading and are waiting for the GAP audit.

Often, if a group is confronted with resource-intensive and complicated tasks early in the process, they will abandon the change initiative. Self-confidence and choice increase commitment and create a sense of control.

Pledges should be done publicly (if possible, in the presence of peers and personalities that the group respects, which in the Philippine context include mayors, governors, buyers, etc.) and written. When a person makes a commitment to others, they will want to keep that commitment to ensure that they are viewed as "consistent" by others. Anonymous, private pledges (private commitments) have been shown to be less effective than those shared with others (public commitments). Written pledges are likely to have a more lasting effect than oral ones. In general, commitment has the greatest influence in facilitating change when the behavior to be done or norm to be followed is clearly stated, it is relatively convenient to perform, and the person can choose what he or she is committing to do.