
d. Stakeholder Workshops

What are stakeholder workshops?

Stakeholder workshops are structured, facilitated discussion with participants from various parts of the industry with the goal of designing an action plan for making the target industry more competitive. They are typically facilitated after a value chain analysis has been conducted in order to have key value chain actors understand any recommendations from the analysis and make a plan for the sector moving forward. They can be used when there are recognized constraints within the value chain, such as marketing bottlenecks between producers and buyers.

Key term:

Stakeholder Workshop: A structured, facilitated discussion with participants from various parts of the industry with the goal of designing an action plan for making the target industry more

When do we use stakeholder workshops?

Stakeholder workshops can be very beneficial under the following conditions:

- Market actors at all levels of the value chain have the potential to recognise similar issues that hinder the efficiency of the value chain
- The government is actively supportive of pro-poor private sector development (where Government needs to support activities and strategies emerging from workshop or where Government is already a significant market actor)
- There is a willingness of participants to work in collaboration to improve the whole sector
- There are market actors interested in the needs of very poor producers
- The workshop can be held within a reasonable distance for very poor producers to travel, especially female producers
- At the beginning of a value chain development project, and at semi-regular intervals from then on (e.g., annually, semi-annually)
- Local NGOs are present and willing to be involved
- Producers and other market actors are able to attend without major disruption to their activities

Stakeholder workshops may not be the best option under the following conditions:

- There is a tangible animosity or history of violence between different market actors
- Market actors are totally dismissive of producers and not likely to change their views
- Producers have to travel unreasonable distances to attend the workshop
- Producers and market actors are in a very busy business cycle (e.g., harvest time)

What is the common format of stakeholder workshops?

Stakeholder workshops can take the following format:¹¹

- Introduction of participants and explanation of the purpose and format of the workshop
- Presentation of the value chain with general information including the value chain map
- Discussion of what a more competitive value chain would look like
- Presentation of the major findings of the value chain analysis, including constraints and opportunities identified during the analysis
- Discussion to determine the causes of the constraints
- Participatory identification of action needed to achieve this vision of a more competitive value chain
- Agreement on next steps

How do we prepare very poor producers for stakeholder workshops?

It is important that the producer groups are ready for the opportunities that the stakeholder workshop can provide. When the consumer is satisfied, the businesses of both the seller and the buyer will grow. The chain can only satisfy the consumer when the value chain actors cooperate. This is the idea that underlies any attempt at building relationships.

Producers should understand how value chains work. Specifically, they should:¹²

- Understand the chain as a network of specialised enterprises that need each other to make money.
- Acknowledge the position of other chain actors, and respect that their interests are also legitimate.
- Understand the need for cooperation rather than fighting against each other.
- Understand that sellers and buyers may have interests that are opposed to one another - a high price and a low price, respectively. Nevertheless, they also have a shared interest - that is, to satisfy the final consumer in an effective and efficient way.
- The producer's representatives need to be prepared but not instructed on what to say. They should be aware of the purpose of the workshop and the importance of being able to voice their opinions and concerns.
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Things to consider in preparation include:

- The goal of the stakeholder workshop. An important message to convey to the representatives is that they are going to have an opportunity to meet other market actors to address market problems and possible solutions.

¹¹ USAID. Guide to Facilitating Stakeholder Workshops

¹² KIT, Faïda MaLi, IIRR. 2006. *Chain Empowerment: Supporting African Producers to Development Markets*. Accessed June 10, 2011. <http://www.mamud.com/Docs/chains.pdf>. p. 155-6

- Making explicit and discussing sensitive social and political issues that could affect the interactions and negotiations with other public and private actors (for example caste exclusion or political violence)

How are producer representatives selected?

Selecting good producer representatives is an important process as a way to ensure that the needs of very poor producers are considered in the way commercial relationships are structured within the value chain. Representatives should:¹³

- have the trust of the other producers,
- represent the opinions of others, especially very poor producers,
- have the ability to participate effectively without personal biases,
- articulate and communicate well with other market actors,
- be able to go back to the community to report and share with others the key points and findings of the discussion,
- be able to relate to the key barriers and proposed solutions, and
- be known and trusted by market actors.

At least two representatives from the producers should be chosen to attend the stakeholder workshop. However, if the workshop size is 30+ people, then you can have up to seven producer group representatives at the stakeholder workshop. The actual number of producers will depend on the size of the workshop. Fewer producers run the risk of having their opinions outweighed by other market actors, and they could end up feeling marginalized. Taking into account the fact that the very poor producers in particular are likely to be quieter than other participants, more rather than fewer participants should attend the workshop.

The stakeholder workshop participants who often talk the most are government representatives, NGO representatives, and technical experts (i.e., research institutes and universities). Market traders are sometimes reluctant to say too much as they don't want to release too much information or draw too much attention to themselves—but if they are drawn into the discussion, they will often provide some very insightful information on the level of functioning at their part of the value chain.

Stakeholder workshops and the very poor

Participating in stakeholder workshops can seem especially difficult for the very poor. They may feel out of place and that their opinions will not be taken into consideration.

¹³ Practical Action. 2010. Learning from Practice: Lessons on Facilitating Participatory Market Mapping Workshops p. 5.



Guiding Principles for Conducting Stakeholder Workshops¹⁴

Table highlighting guiding principles for facilitating stakeholder workshops that include very poor producers

| General Facilitation of Stakeholder Workshops | |
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| Guiding Principal | Practical Application |
| Keep it short and simple | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participant time is valuable. Focus on activities that stakeholders have an incentive to overcome, whether or not there is an external subsidy. Workshops should never exceed two days—one or one and a half days are better. Some workshops can even be done in two or three hours. |
| Emphasise short-term activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Successful execution creates incentives for participants to come together to work on constraints with longer-term solutions |
| Plan for sustainability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make it clear that the process you are initiating will only work when stakeholders take ownership of it. Make sure you focus on those activities that stakeholders will quickly take ownership of. |
| Pick participants carefully | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on those stakeholders who have or could have incentives to drive solutions. If there are not clear incentives to drive upgrading, your participants will not be able to take ownership of the process. If per diems are the only incentive for stakeholders to come you will not get the buy-in and commitment to upgrading you need. |
| Prepare well | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spend more time on selecting the right participants, convincing them of the merits of participating, and on the identification of opportunities and constraints in the value chain analysis. |
| Reward champions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce the behaviour of stakeholders coming together to develop plans by arranging press coverage, project and public recognition. Use the opportunity for the press to follow-up on action plan results as an incentive for stakeholders to implement their action plans in a timely manner. Local stakeholders are generally responsive to local feedback. |
| Move seamlessly from planning to action | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure that resulting action plans include who will do what, when, and who will follow-up. Where project resources are available, follow up quickly with technical assistance. Lack of follow through, especially early on, can lead to stakeholder disillusionment. |
| Look for incentives in business transactions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find individuals for whom new business services have commercial value. Emphasise new business relationships as an indicator of success. Nothing motivates as quickly as opportunities with relatively quick returns. |
| Find the balance between quick and catalytic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of a shared community or industry vision is an important part of the process but is often best built upon short-term results. Private sector ownership of a strategy to build industry competitiveness is a process with many steps: the first ones are often small and must be successful. |
| Don't feel pressured to resolve conflicts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is more important to help participants understand the conflicts, as the stated conflict is rarely the real issue. Instead of trying to resolve the conflict, hold to the goal of clarifying the perceptions, including assumptions and facts. However, facilitators should |

¹⁴ USAID. Guide to Facilitating Stakeholder Workshops, www.microlinks.org.

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| | not let the conflict get out of hand during the workshop. |
| Address the underlying issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In public, people will ask a question that is one step away from the real question. It is best to try to address the real question in order to get real commitment. |
| There is no one right way | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is critical for the facilitator to refrain from preconceived notions of the “right” process. Always keep in mind the end destination: increased collaboration and specific action plans. How you get there will be determined by the stakeholders. |
| Be genuine | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although some stakeholders will try to push the facilitator into an expert role, it is important to not accept it. If you do, conflict will be seen as a question for the “expert” to answer rather than as different perceptions that need to be understood by each of the participants. • The skill of being able to communicate effectively will be the most valuable tool the facilitator can leave with the participants. |

Ensuring participation of Poorer Producers in Stakeholder Workshops

| Guiding Principal | Practical Application |
|---|---|
| Invitation to producers should not come from the project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very poor producers will be more willing to attend if they feel that the other value chain actors want them there. |
| Discuss social and logistical aspects of the workshop with producers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seemingly simple things such as what to wear or what to do during a coffee break can be very overwhelming. Walk the participants through what they should expect at the event. |
| Run specific sessions to address producers’ constraints | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It will be easy for the producers’ voices to be unheard if they are not specifically addressed. |
| Conduct multiple workshops | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct multiple workshops on an ongoing basis. • Through repeated interactions and continually revisiting the issues, producers start to feel more comfortable and confident in sharing their needs. |
| Use small group work | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the workshop it is useful to break into small groups that allow poorer producers to participate more confidently amongst a smaller group of people, rather than having to speak out in front of the whole workshop. If done early, this is particularly useful to build the confidence of the poorer producers. |
| Use participatory workshop tools to give everyone equal voice | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When prioritizing information, it can be very useful to utilize methods such as getting participants to write their views anonymously on paper, which the facilitator will then read out loud or selecting from a list by voting by putting a dot next to the selection. |
| Provide translation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In some places, poorer producers are marginalized due to their ethnicity or language, and in such cases, it will be necessary to have an effective translation option to ensure they can communicate effectively in the workshops. |
| Address issues around women’s involvement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide for logistics or sensitization around women’s involvement if it involves women traveling long distances on their own, staying overnight at hotels, or interacting with men, particularly where it is less common for women to interact with men directly or travel on their own. (See the section on the Exclusion of Women later in this <i>Field Guide</i> for more practical examples to address issues around women’s involvement.) |



Field Example: Effective Stakeholder Workshop Strategies

Examples from several contexts include:

- In Ethiopia, CARE conducted multiple and regular workshops on an ongoing basis. Stakeholder workshops were held for each value chain in each region on a quarterly basis. Although the market facilitator helped to prepare the producers for the meetings, it was the repeated exposure that helped the very poor feel comfortable sharing their opinions.
- In India, ACDI/VOCA, a large U.S. NGO, rewarded champions and facilitated a system where local stakeholders kept a check on industry developments by providing frequent press releases to the media who then followed-up to see what stakeholders are actually doing.
- In a Sierra Leone cocoa summit facilitated by World Vision, the government made radio announcements to encourage producers to attend. In this way, World Vision ensured that the invitation for producers to attend was not coming from the development organisation but rather that very poor producers felt more willing to attend as they felt that the other value chain actors wanted them there. World Vision also devoted an entire breakout session to how to strengthen producer groups to ensure that producers' voices were specifically addressed.
- In many parts of the world, Action for Enterprise, a U.S. NGO that has been conducting stakeholder workshops using value chain approaches, helps stakeholders identify services that they can offer for a fee or as a way to expand their market as a way of prioritizing solutions that stakeholders will implement quickly.