

Awareness of own change model

SPECIFIC ISSUE/S: Any kind of issue

PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES: To demonstrate some problems with assumptions about how social change occurs and help people to clarify their own understandings and assumptions of how this happens.

LENGTH: 30 minutes

GROUP SIZE: Any

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS: Any kind of group

FACILITATOR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS NEEDED: No knowledge needed; low level facilitation skills sufficient

RESOURCES NEEDED: Awareness of Models example

INSTRUCTIONS: Many people speak of being committed to social change as though it were one thing, controlled by humans and always positive. This exercise demonstrates some problems with these assumptions and helps people to clarify their own understandings and assumptions of how social change happens.

Step 1)

Many factors contribute to social change. The first step is to have participants list 5-10 examples in each of the categories (a) to (e). They may do this individually or in small groups. Encourage them to think of other categories of factors as well.

a) **so-called 'acts of God'** which are not caused by humans but affect humans, such as

- volcanic eruptions – affect where people live, their spiritual attitudes

b) **actions by humans which have unintended consequences**, such as

- research about infertility which inadvertently contributed to research with the opposite effect: the contraceptive pill – affects women's control of lifestyle choices

c) **actions by humans which have intended consequences which would not be considered positive**, such as

- Hitler's eugenics programme – which led to the death of millions

d) **actions by humans which have intended consequences which would be considered positive but in practice have unintended negative consequences (as well or instead)**, such as

- increasing the penalties for crimes, which in some cases had the effect of reducing the rate of 'guilty' verdicts when juries felt the punishment was too severe in relation to the crime

e) **actions by humans which have intended consequences which would be considered positive and in practice do seem to achieve their intended effect**, such as

- anti-smoking campaigns – affects how people socialise

Step 2)

Have participants think about what percentage of social change is attributable to each of the categories above and draw a pie chart reflecting their conclusions. This may be done individually or in small groups. A pessimistic example follows (with no additional categories):

a) acts of God	40
b) human - unintended	30
c) human intended – not positive	15
d) human positive intention not achieved	10
e) human positive intention achieved	5

Step 3)

Ask participants to add to their list of social changes in category (e) i.e. positive social change mainly achieved by human efforts—and share with the whole group in a way that everyone can refer to them through this next step.

Step 4)

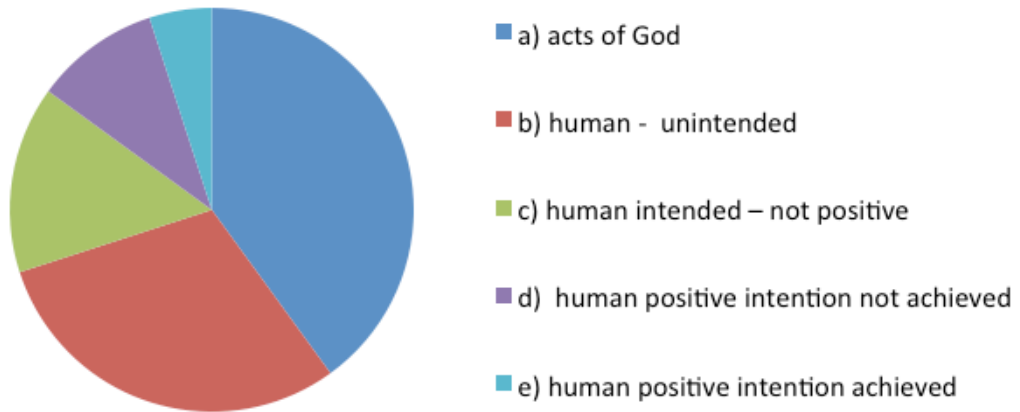
Ask participants to share in small groups their understanding about what were the major factors contributing to the desired changes, with particular emphasis on distinguishing between political, ideological, and economic factors (see 3-ring circus for development of these concepts). For example, some would argue that racist attitudes shift when racist behaviour is made illegal (political); others would say that such a shift depends on intensive education programmes (ideological); some would say that the shift occurs when people realise that discrimination in employment, for example, reduces profits (economic).

Remind participants that they may want to include an ‘other’ category as well for factors which don’t fall into the PIE categories; for example, Nelson Mandela’s resilience through experiences which literally destroyed thousands of other people.

NOTE: The emphasis in this part of the exercise is NOT on people reaching agreement on explanations of any specific changes or on agreeing with each other about the balance amongst factors contributing to social change.

After a short discussion of several changes, allow each participant time to reflect on their own sense of the balance amongst factors contributing to the types of changes they consider positive. Ask participants to draw a second pie chart to reflect this. One example is below:

Social Change Factors Generally



FACILITATION TIPS: The Awareness of Models example spreadsheet is required to show data that created this pie chart.

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