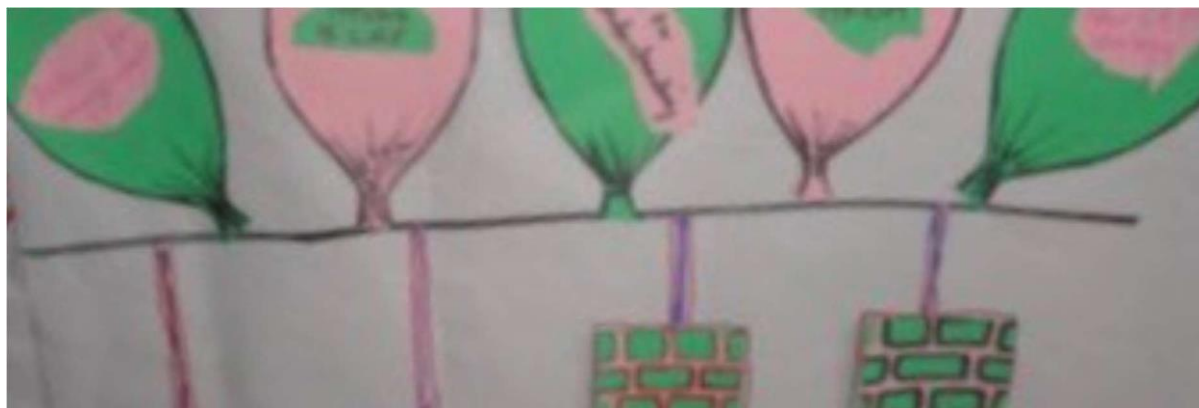


Balloons and Stones



To help identify factors that might help or hinder you in your work or in your progress towards a goal.

The stones represent things (people, organizations, events, etc.) that might pull you down and prevent you from achieving your goal. The balloons lift you up and help you on your way.

The tool is essentially a kind of force field analysis. However, the imagery of balloons and stones is easy for people to grasp and this makes it more accessible than the very technical-sounding 'force field analyses.

Steps in the Process

1. Start by collecting the materials you will need to construct the tool. If using pens and paper it would be good to have some coloured card from which you can cut out the balloons and stones. Using card rather than drawing directly on paper means they can easily be moved around and different sizes can be cut to indicate the importance of each force. If working on the ground you can draw the line in the earth and use objects such as leaves or flowers and pebbles to represent the balloons and stones.
2. Draw or mark a horizontal line to represent your progress towards the change you want to achieve. Mark your starting point at the beginning of the line and your goal at the end. You may also choose to mark some of the steps you need to take along the way (see timeline tool).
3. Above the line place balloons to represent the different forces that will help you achieve your objective. Think about what imagery is appropriate in the place where you are working. If the people aren't familiar with balloons you might choose a different image to represent the positive force.

4. The bigger the balloon, the bigger the help you can expect to get from that force. If you place the force close to the line, it means that it is a force near you, a local force. If it is further away, it is at the district, regional or even national level.
5. Below the line place the stones - all the forces (people, organizations or events) that may stop you from achieving your objective. The bigger the stone, the bigger the threat from that force. If you place the stone close to the line, it means that it is a force near you, a local force. If it is further away, it is at the district, regional or even national level.
6. When you have done this, consider which forces you can influence, either strengthening the positive forces or weakening the negative ones.
7. Based on your analysis, you might want to change your plan of action to take account of the positive and negative forces.

Suggestions for Use

- This tool is very useful to assess risks to a project or campaign.
- Before using this tool you may wish to develop a detailed timeline for your project or campaign, indicating each of the steps you need to take to achieve your goal. Once this is complete (and probably on a different day) you can then add the balloons and stones to identify the forces that will help and hinder you. This may lead you to revise your timeline. Once this is finalized you can draw up a detailed action plan for your project/campaign.
- If you record who has taken part in the tool (either their full names or roles or, if they wish to remain anonymous, then the gender and the number of participants), and you take photos of the output of the tool, you can use this as evidence. If you build an evidence base by taking an appropriate sample, and by revisiting the sample over time, or in different geographies, then you can respond to research questions such 'what are the barriers and opportunities to girls going to school?'. Along with other analysis, this could then form the basis of an advocacy or lobby strategy to shift power.

Related Tools

- Force field analysis - this tool is similar to force field analysis.

References

- Power – Elite capture and hidden influence, HRBA Governance Resources, ActionAid, 2012, p. 50-51.