

The market mountain - multiple taxation



Participants explore tax problems at the market place, including the idea of 'multiple taxation', by collectively interviewing a vendor/market farmer.

Objectives

1. To explore tax problems at the market place.
2. To introduce the concept of multiple taxation.

Steps in the process

1. Invite a market seller as to come to speak to the group. If a participant in the group is a market seller, s/he can be the person interviewed.
2. Draw a line on the floor rising upwards, representing a mountain , as in the image above.
3. Ask the interviewee:
 - What taxes and fees do you pay to local or national government from the moment you leave home to sell a product to the moment you reach the market and back home? Is this a problem? If it is, go one step up the mountain.
 - How often do you pay them? Is this a problem? If it is, go one step up the mountain.
 - Have you seen sharp increases over time in the amount you have to pay? Is this a problem? If it is, go one step up the mountain.

- How much of your daily earning do you pay in tax (%)? Is this a problem? If it is, go one step up the mountain.
 - Do you get harassed when tax is collected from you? Why? If so, go one step up.
 - Is there tax corruption during tax collection, e.g. tax collectors, fake collectors, paying taxes through a union/association? If so, go one step up.
 - Have you seen improvements in your area as a result of paying tax? Do you know what these taxes are for? If not, go one step up in the mountain.
4. The facilitator now introduces the idea of ‘multiple taxation’, which happens when a person has to pay the same tax to the various levels of the government (local, national...). This happens more often if local governments have been giving a lot of powers. Local and national government must work together to make sure that small businesses and farmers are not making a tax contribution several times. The facilitator now asks the interviewee:
- Is there ‘multiple taxation’ in your market? If yes, go one step up in the mountain.
5. Now look back at the mountain image and check how high you are. The higher you are the more problems and efforts the vendor has had to make regarding tax. Ask participants what they see.

Action points

- What is the main the main tax problem faced by the interviewee?
- How would you like to change it?
- What can you (or your association/union) do to solve the problems?
- What would you like the government to use the taxes for?

Tip to the facilitator: If participants suggest no tax should be contributed at all, remind them that tax is a contribution to pay for common services like schools and health clinics, and that tax justice is when the richest pay a higher portion of their income than the poorest to help spread the wealth around the country.

Resources

- ActionAid's Tax Power Campaign Reflection-Action toolkit, ActionAid, December 2015.