



# ?? Identify the Problem

This step of the New Tactics **Strategic Effectiveness Method** begins the process of exploring Sun Tzu's three important sources of knowledge for making good strategic decisions. This step assists you to **"Know Yourself"** through the exploration of the issues and problems you believe are significant in the work you are trying to do.

## Objectives:

- ✓ To identify and focus on a key problem to address using the method.
- ✓ To form small "working groups" to apply the New Tactics method and tools.
- ✓ To build awareness among participants (and potentially their organizations) of their commonalities in order to identify potential areas for future collaborative efforts.

It is important to highlight that a **strategy** helps to:

- ✓ Keep the initiative in your hands.
- ✓ Enhance your ability to see opportunities.
- ✓ Use your strengths to the best advantage.
- ✓ Minimize your weaknesses.
- ✓ Maintain flexibility and recognize your successes.
- ✓ Identify your limitations to better manage your time & resources.
- ✓ Identify your support networks to enhance your capabilities.

## Why do we need to identify the problem?

You can usually anticipate that some of the problems your group is facing will also be experienced by others. However, the problem one person chooses may not be the priority of another. This step provides an opportunity to see the variety of concerns raised and various approaches your group may have to these problems.

It is very important to define as clearly as possible the issue or problem on which the group will focus. It is difficult to create a plan of action to address a broad issue. It is necessary to narrow the focus and choose a place to begin an effort. For example, a broad issue such as "Migrant Labor" entails many different problem areas, including: legal and illegal recruitment, wages, sending and receiving countries, just to name a few (see Example 1.A for a list).

### Broad Issue Examples

- AIDS
- Child Labor
- Child Soldiers
- Corruption
- Discrimination
- Environmental Degradation
- Globalization
- Global Warming
- Human Rights
- Education
- Housing Rights
- Land Rights
- Migrant Labor
- Militarization
- Poverty
- Racism
- Refugees
- Torture
- Human Trafficking
- Violence Against Women

#### Example 1.A




To make a plan of action requires a specific and concrete place from which to begin. One area of focus could be “**Abuse of migrant domestic workers.**” Or, the broad issue “Education” might be more specifically defined to one aspect of education, for example, “**High Female Drop-Out Rate.**” This does not mean that the broad issue is no longer important; we just strategically choose to begin with one part of the issue where we can see a possibility for change and action.

The exercises in this section are designed to help you, as the facilitator, guide the group in the definition of the problem on which they will focus their efforts. It is important that the group defines the problem itself to ensure that they are fully engaged. There may be many levels of a problem; or people may come at a problem from different directions. For example, someone might say “education” and another says “poverty” is the problem. But as they discuss further, what they really want to change is access to education for children who are poor. It is important that the group gets as specific as possible about the problem they want to address.

If you have a number of people from the SAME organization, use the facilitation guide to identify the problem they will work on together through the steps of the Strategic Effectiveness Method.

#### **Application: Why is it important to begin by defining the problem?**

 <b>SPOTLIGHT</b>	<p>Defining the problem as a group brings multiple perspectives together and can help to more clearly focus the attentions of an organization in order to create meaningful change. In some cases, the problem is so vast and commonplace in society that it goes unnoticed. Such is the case of the struggle against child labor and child servitude in the stone quarries of northern India. Founded by Kailash Satyarthi in 1980, Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) started its work against child labor, bondage, and slavery when child labor was still a non-issue. No political, legal or civil society initiative existed against it. The common perception was that children were working due to poverty and people saw nothing unusual about it; rather, they were considering it as a necessary evil for economic development. BBA was able to break down the large issues into smaller ones and is known for its use of innovative approaches and multifaceted interventions. Through its tactical approach, BBA was able to rescue over 76,600 child and bonded laborers between its formation in 1980 and the year 2007.</p> <p>Source: New Tactics – Tactic Case Studies, “Building Child Friendly Villages: Using Village Strengths to Combat Child Labour and Other Exploitative Practices”</p> <p><a href="https://www.newtactics.org/resource/building-child-friendly-villages-using-village-strengths-combat-child-labour-and-other">https://www.newtactics.org/resource/building-child-friendly-villages-using-village-strengths-combat-child-labour-and-other</a></p>
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