

Activity 4.5

Identifying the “problem policy”

Sometimes it’s easier to see a problem than to identify the policy that’s causing it.

For example, the problem of food insecurity and hunger is obvious when someone has to use a food bank or soup kitchen.

Unfortunately, we often don’t think of the policies that cause people to have to rely on food banks to feed themselves. Many policies impact food security such as economic policies, social policies, agricultural policies, fisheries policies, land use policies, and transportation policies, just to name a few.

Before you can change or influence the policies that affect food security, you need to know what policy (or policies) is causing the problem and to be able to make the links between the policy and the problem.

Making these links can take practice.

Sometimes the links are not clear or they get tangled up in other problems. By working through the tangles, you’ll be able to see the connections more clearly. And that’s the first step toward being able to make the connections clear to others and to begin to change the policies that are causing the problems.

Process:

- With your group, brainstorm some of the problems related to food security that group members have noticed in their community. For example, more kids going to school hungry, the local grocery store closing, small farmers going bankrupt, local fisheries closing.
- Pick one of the issues identified and work back to the policy that triggered it. Below is an example.

An example of this process is...

It’s becoming **more difficult to buy fresh vegetables** in your community.

The local grocery store closed after a big supermarket opened in the next town.

Now you need a car to buy fresh food.

The lack of fresh food for sale in the community is the result of municipal and provincial **policies that give tax breaks and cheap land to large retailers** to encourage them to open more stores. This often drives smaller retailers out of business.

The lack of access to fresh food is the result of transportation policies that neglect public transportation and focus on individual cars.

Adapted from: Nova Scotia Women’s FishNet, 2002.