

# SWOT Analysis

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Source: (1988) International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR), Participatory Methods in Community-based Coastal Resource Management, Volume 2, Silang, Cavite, Philippines, pp. 27 -32

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**SWOT** is an acronym of Strengths and Weaknesses, and Opportunities and Threats. The former tends to focus on the internal factors, while the latter reflects the external environment within which the analysed issue, situation or group of persons is situated. SWOT analysis is usually conducted as a brainstorming exercise.

## Purpose

The tool is used to identify strengths and opportunities and consider how to optimise these, and to identify weaknesses and threats and how these can be overcome.

## Relevance for the Project

This tool can be used by project participants such as interest groups, community-based organisations, etc. to analyse their capability to carry out a particular project, e.g. conservation or livelihood and to consider options for how they can be more effective. The analysis can be done at various stages:

- to appraise and select what idea/project is most suitable for implementation
- to plan strategies and action on how to implement a project
- to assess how an existing activity could be improved

The SWOT analysis should be integral part of a process wherein information generated through the performance of other participatory tools is further analysed.

## Resources Needed

### Materials

- Board or flat wall
- Craft paper (1m x 2m, 2 pcs)
- Blank cards (4" x 8")
- Masking tape
- Pins or thumbtacks

**Strengths** and **Weaknesses** refer to the actual situation.

**Opportunities** and **Threats** assess possible future scenarios. Both may include developments, which are within or beyond the control of the analysing group.

- **Strengths:** actual conditions, qualities and resources that enhance productive performances.
- **Weaknesses:** actual conditions, qualities and inadequacies that constraint growth or serve as impediments to productive performances.
- **Opportunities:** scenarios crediting favourable conditions in implementing actions to achieving given objectives
- **Threats:** negative scenarios within the social and physical environment which may stop or limit change from happening; or factors which may hamper the opportunities from being realised

## Proposed Steps

1. Review with the participants the reason for the exercise and come to a common understanding of objectives and the issues to be covered.
2. Brief the participants on the procedures. Explain the meaning of strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats. Display definitions in large writing.
3. Pin up one large sheet of paper labelled "strengths" and "weaknesses."
4. Ask the participants to think of all the strengths and weaknesses of the group in relation to the topic and write these on the blank cards (one point for one card). Ask them to work individually. Remind them to consider any information they have found out from using the other research.
5. Do steps 3 and 4 for development opportunities and threats. Make sure that issues are identified and clustered properly.
6. Ask one participant to read the cards aloud one at a time and encourage discussion on every issue written on the card. While the group is discussing, think of possibilities to cluster similar cards whether any cards have been posted in the wrong category. Make sure that everyone has common understanding of the points written on the card.
7. Ask if the participant have any more points to add, now that they have heard everyone else's points.
8. Facilitate the analysis of results. Use the following questions to lead the discussion.
  - How can strengths be employed to take advantage of development opportunities?
  - How can strengths be used to counteract threats?
  - How can weaknesses be overcome to take advantage of development opportunities?
  - How can weaknesses be overcome to counteract threats?
9. Give the participants enough time to think through their answers. Post their responses on a separate piece of a paper. These will be the basis for identifying various actions or strategies.
10. If there are two or more similar strategies/actions identified, ask participants to rank them according to their feasibility, potential for benefit and urgency. You can use the preference ranking method described earlier, to do this activity.
11. Discuss results with the participants and solicit agreement.
12. Let a community volunteer to write the name of all participants in the output.
13. Copy the output and leave original with the community.

Topics in SWOT analysis could include: organisational issues (e.g. capability, membership, policies, etc.) in relation to environmental conservation projects, livelihood activities, CRM issues and the like).

Example: *To do a SWOT analysis on the group's capability to carry out a tree planting/agroforestry project. An example of a possible output of this topic is given at the end of this section.*

## **Output**

The output provides an analysis of the selected topic(s) on possible strategies and actions to undertake by turning weaknesses and threats into strengths and opportunities. In doing so, it gives community members direction in pursuing the best possible way.

## **Strengths of SWOT**

- It is a highly analytical and participatory tool. Each participant is given the opportunity to contribute in the exercise.
- The analysis looks at internal and external factors of the community that contribute to the success or failure of an endeavour. This allows an extensive analysis of the options.
- It is good starting point for further participatory planning.

## **Limitations of SWOT**

- SWOT analysis can only be done well with small group. Running the same activity with the whole members of the barangay will require time.

### Example

The Problem Tree Analysis exercise identified “soil erosion” as the Root Cause of a Core Problem affecting the group. “Tree planting” has been identified as a possible solution to the Root Cause of the Core Problem. The Interest Group subjected the TREE PLANTING Initiative (potential Micro-Project) to SWOT analysis. The following is the output of the exercise:

<p style="text-align: right;"><b>EXTERNAL</b></p> <p style="text-align: left;"><b>INTERNAL</b></p>	<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• there are existing tree plantations and agroforestry farms in the province that could be visited by interested farmers</li> <li>• tree planting is promoted by DENR</li> <li>• Mr. X from another bgy knows how to do SALT</li> <li>• Haribon Foundation provides training on environmental education</li> <li>• NIPAP supports the initiative</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• landlord may evict us</li> <li>• water supply is irregular</li> <li>• wild pigs may damage the seedlings</li> </ul>
<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some farmers in the barangay are willing to plant trees on their farms</li> <li>• two leguminous species, javanica and madre de cacao are locally available</li> <li>• there is bare land available</li> </ul>	<p><b>STRATEGIES ( how to make use of strengths to maximise opportunities )</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ form interest group</li> <li>➤ contact NIPAP for assistance</li> </ul>	<p><b>STRATEGIES (how to maximise strengths to overcome threats)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ choose location near a creek or spring</li> <li>➤ adopt water conservation techniques</li> </ul>
<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• our knowledge of tree planting is inadequate</li> <li>• we do not have enough capital</li> <li>• unsecured tenure of farm holding</li> </ul>	<p><b>STRATEGIES (how to maximise opportunities to overcome weaknesses)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ RDO to organise cross-visits</li> <li>➤ Identify training needs, co-ordinate with DENR foresters, Haribon Foundation for conduct of training</li> </ul>	<p><b>STRATEGIES ( how to overcome Weaknesses to counteract Threats )</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ visit DAR with PASu</li> </ul>