Theatre Play or Market Chain Sketch  
Explaining and Fostering Collaborations within the Value Chain (PMCA)

The Market Chain Sketch is a small street theatre performance that explains some key concepts of a value chain. It is performed by 5-6 facilitators during a focus group meeting or larger event that focuses on value chain development. The Market Chain Sketch should be used, when the goal is to develop a common vision among different actors involved in a market chain. When performing this theatre play it will help the audience to:

- Understand what a value chain or market chain is;
- Fosters discussion about the problems and constraints within a market chain;
- Understand what demand orientation means (listening to the customer);
- Understand the need for better collaboration.

In a very visual and innovative way, the tool:

- Illustrates a real problem affecting the chain such as inefficiency, inequality or lack of trust; all of which distort the relationships that exist within the market chain.
- Introduces a potential solution after improving or building new relationships by allowing the actors to collaborate effectively to achieve a common objective.
- Relieves the tension that can occur when antagonistic actors (farmers and traders) in the chain are first brought together
- Promotes a closer relationship between the facilitators and participants, stimulates active involvement and fosters a sense of group identity among the participants

Overall, this motivational sketch or play is used to make the audience more aware of the need to enhance collaboration along the whole chain by improved coordination of activities at different points in the chain. The Market Chain Sketch is extremely useful during a greater event or workshop, when a variety of actors involved in the chain meet for the first time. The sketch must be planned and prepared by a group of facilitating staff who have good knowledge of the characteristics, limitations and opportunities of the market chain in question.

**Step 1 Planning: selecting the actors and preparing the script**

During the planning stage, the appointed actors should read the script as provided below and brainstorm the key message of the sketch and consider how it could be dramatized. This key message must be relevant to all the actors of the chain and reflect the need for collaboration along the chain. Key messages from this script are a) that products are passed-on by many different actors in a value chain b) the need to listen to the requests of consumers c) the need for collaboration to make improvements. However you can decide to change the script and include other key
messages. The actors should all be facilitators; none of the actors should be part of the chain, as a clear distinction must be drawn between the dramatization and reality. If you decide to include among the actors farmers or traders they should never play their own role! The performance of such a sketch or play requires at least one rehearsal, often half a day is sufficient, so that the actors become familiar with their characters, the script and use of microphones if required.

**Step 2 Perform: instructions for narrator and actors**

The actors must use simple, local language and wear costumes that help the audience identify the characters they portray. It is recommended to make use of symbolic elements, such as hats, costumes and other props to illustrate certain actors or situations. To guarantee optimal understanding on the part of the audience, it might also be useful to use simple signs (e.g. “farmer”, “processor”, “wholesaler”) to identify each character and his or her specific location in the market chain. In addition to actors, a narrator can be used to explain the context of the sketch, scene by scene. The sketch is structured in 4 acts or scenes (see script below). Such a script serves as a guide for the actors, allowing creative improvisation, as long as the main argument of the sketch and the script is followed! The sketch should not be more than 15 minutes long, as this will ensure that the audience does not become bored and force the actors to communicate their key message in a very concise and clear way.

**Step 3 Evaluate: discuss the performance with the audience**

It is very important to make time to discuss and evaluate the sketch afterwards with the audience. Ask them for reflections on what they have seen and what they have learned. Ask which situations actually do happen also in your own life? What do you think were the key messages of the play? When the sketch or performance is over, the narrator might want to reinforce the key message with some final thoughts. The key messages of the play are:

- A value chain is a long chain of many actors from farmer leading finally to consumer,
- To improve your product you need to listen to consumer demands & preferences
- Improvements are only achieved by collaboration between all value chain stakeholders (farmers, traders and shopkeepers)

The theatre play is a very good starting point to explain the concept of a market or value chain to women and farmer groups and can be followed directly by making a Participatory Value Chain Map. During workshops it can be a good way to start your workshop and can be followed by a visioning exercise (develop a joint market vision with a group of value chain stakeholders).

The concept of a value chain seems difficult to grasp for women or farmer groups. It helps to explain after the performance what a market channel is on a large paper sheet by drawing all actors and showing the product flow of the theatre play from farmer to consumer using the names of the actors (see figure below). Ask first how many different actors are involved. Then, ask and write down the price levels per actors. Calculate the margins in each step to explain the concept of ‘added value’.
SCRIPT FOR THE SKETCH
The below script is adapted for our tropical fruit tree diversity project. The script should visualize the local mango/rambutan/mangosteen/citrus market chain. The sketch was used initially to confront the different market chain actors with the key message: all the actors involved in the chain must collaborate in order to take advantage of new market opportunities! The four-act dramatization clarified the fact that it is the consumer who decides what will sell and that the chain will only be successful if everyone collaborates with the spirit to respond to this demand.

Act 1 – In the field
Two mango farmers meet and start a small talk conversation, the mango farmer just harvested mangoes and complains and talks about the technical difficulties of producing good quality mangos and always receiving low prices to the neighbor farmer. The neighbor has to go to the field and leaves. The mango trader comes in and bargains with the mango farmer, making him accept a low price – again. Then he goes to the wholesaler/processor and offers him the bag of mangos he just purchased. The wholesaler/processor, in a corner of the stage, also negotiating a low price, complains to the trader about the poor quality of the product (different sizes, squeezed/damaged mangos and inadequate packaging), warning him to do better next time. The wholesaler/processor then delivers the mangoes to a supermarket manager/shopkeeper, who is not pleased either and offers to pay the seller in only 30 days, if the fruits are sold with a low price, too!

Act 2 – At the shop
A little later, a customer arrives at the supermarket/shop. The customer goes to the supermarket manager/shopkeeper, complains about the bad quality and refuses to buy the fruits. Instead the customer demands a special type of mango, for which she is willing to pay a very good price: a square mango! The manager/shopkeeper is very surprised as he never heard about a square mango but takes the request to the wholesaler/processor, which passes it along to the trader, who asks the farmer for a sack of square mangos. The farmer is puzzled, he doesn’t know about square mangoes.

Act 3 – First attempt
The farmer alone tries to respond to the request, but the product (a very large mango) which is passed on to the trader, and then to the wholesaler and the supermarket owner/shopkeeper does not completely meet the requirements of a “square mango,” and the customer rejects it.

Act 4 – The solution
Because of this unsatisfactory situation, one of the characters suggests that all the members of the chain get together to work jointly on the development of a “square mango”. They sit down and discuss for a long time and apparently find the solution; they managed to make or find a ‘square mango’. Consequently, all actors line up, giving the impression of a more organized and orderly chain. Happy with the result, one by one, they pass the “square mango” along the chain members, from the farmer to the customer, who is very happy with the product. Having seen that the market chain has responded well, the customer makes a new request, offering an even higher price if they can find a “blue square mango” – a real challenge…!
Example of the original script used in Peru, Latin America

A2. “The Square Potato”

In 2002, when PMCA was first applied in Peru, a sketch was used to visualize Peru’s potato market chain. The sketch was used initially to confront the different market chain actors with the key message of PMCA: all the actors involved in the chain must collaborate in order to take advantage of new market opportunities! The four-act dramatization clarified the fact that it is the consumer who decides what will sell and that the chain will only be successful if everyone collaborates with the spirit to respond to this demand.

Act 1
In a monologue, the potato producer laments about the technical difficulties of producing good-quality potatoes and always receiving low prices. The wholesaler-intermediary comes in and bargains with the farmer, making him accept a low price — again. Then he goes to the seller and offers him the sack of potatoes he just purchased. The seller, in a corner of the stage, also negotiating a low price, complains to the wholesaler about the poor quality of the product (lack of uniformity, dirt and inadequate packaging), warning him to do better next time. The seller then delivers the potatoes to a supermarket supervisor, who is not pleased either and offers to pay the seller in only 30 days, with a low price, too!

Act 2
A little later, a shopper arrives at the supermarket. The shopper goes to the supermarket supervisor, complains and demands a special type of potato, for which she is willing to pay a very good price: a square potato! The supervisor takes the request to the seller, who, disconcerted, passes it along to the wholesaler-intermediary, who asks the farmer for a sack of square potatoes.

Act 3
The farmer tries to respond to the request, but the product (a rectangular potato which is passed on to the wholesaler, and then to the seller and the supermarket) does not completely meet the requirements of a “square potato,” and the shopper rejects it.

Act 4
Because of this unsatisfactory situation, one of the characters suggests that all the members of the chain get together to work jointly on the development of a “square potato”. Consequently, all actors line up, giving the impression of a more organized, orderly chain. They discuss the problem and apparently find the solution: one by one, they pass the “square potato” along the chain, from the farmer to the shopper, who is very happy with the product.

Having seen that the market chain has responded well, the shopper makes a new request, offering an even higher price for a “blue square potato” — a real challenge…

Performing the theatre play ‘the square potato’ PMCA guide from CIP