Change - How it happens, how to understand and promote it

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This paper is written from a Christian perspective, drawing on teachings from the social sciences while avoiding technical language, in particular to help development workers in West Africa. I present some frameworks for understanding the following:

1. *Who* decides *what* to change?

2. Appreciating the *complexity* of social systems and how change happens.

3. Three cultural levels of change.

4. How power relationships affect acceptance of change.

5. Different ways in which outsiders promote change.

6. Three recommended stages for promoting change.

1. *Who* decides *what* to change?

A. A "brief history of change" in Africa and Europe

Traditional African societies, like many stone-age and iron-age cultures on other continents, have sought to reach and maintain harmony between nature, animals, people, spirits, ancestors, and God. To achieve this harmony they lived in family and village relationships that were highly structured, they governed their activities according to the seasons, they made sacrifices for health and fertility, and they accompanied birth, marriage, and death with important rituals. To preserve harmony they resisted changes in their structures, sacrifices, and rituals, because the relationships between nature, people, spirits, and ancestors might be disrupted by change. It was logical for these communities to view *change as negative and preserving the past as positive*. Interestingly, in the 1900s there have been American and European anthropologists who strongly agree with this view, who work to preserve traditional cultures, and who oppose missionary work.

The general principle of *cultural relativism* also has its extreme expressions, in which anthropologists defend all customs, even infanticide or feuding, as having a necessary positive role in the society.

The leaders of the Roman Empire established a movement of *colonization* in the areas they conquered.

They viewed the peoples who lacked their civilization as "barbarians". They established Roman law, and built roads, aqueducts, baths, temples, arenas and theaters. Romans settled in many cities, and people from other ethnic groups were able to attain Roman citizenship. The theater at Orange, France is still in use and there you can hear how the Romans used theater to intentionally win the peoples they conquered over to Roman culture. It is certainly true that the Romans had economic benefits from their empire, and this is true of all colonizers. But the Romans also intentionally worked to *change* the peoples that they conquered, and they succeeded in expanding the influence of their civilization. Note that in this paper, I am not concerned with those who settled in new territory and then exterminated or drove out the previous inhabitants; although their settlements may have been called "colonies," they were not trying to be change agents of other people's cultures.

The leaders of the Reformation in Europe in the 1500s believed that people had fallen away from an eternal standard that God has revealed in Scripture. They critiqued their current situation according to what they read and interpreted in the Bible, and called people to *change according to a divine standard.* The Reformers of the 1500s differed from today's Islamic fundamentalists in the specifics of what they believe God wants, but they have in common that they believe they must promote change in order to restore the community of faith to its true nature. There are many other movements as well that promote change as reformation/restoration.

The leaders of the Enlightenment in Europe in the 1700s believed that reason and science should guide human society, and that superstition caused and/or supported much human suffering. (It's important to understand that abuses in European society, such as the Inquisition and oppressive kings claiming "divine right" to rule, provoked people in the late 1700s to embrace science and reject religion.) The French and American revolutions brought in new forms of government based on liberty and equality – derived not from Church authority, but from logical thought. What we today call "modernism" is the continuation of enlightenment philosophy – to accept only scientific explanations for events, and to expect technology to produce a better life. *Modernism* is strongly in favor of change – and expects life to improve as people invent new technology and share it.

In the 1800s two thinkers arose whose impact can be seen on our world today. They are Marx and Darwin. Both believed that *change happens as a result of natural forces*, *biological or economic*, and that the passage of time inevitably destroys organisms/systems that are inferior and generates something superior. Therefore change is positive, and the death of organisms that are less fit or the collapse of inferior political and economic systems will produce a better life in the future. This way of thinking is optimistic, but can also be used to justify brutality; it is compatible with modernism, although certainly not all modernists are Marxists or Social Darwinists.

Of course this is not a complete list of all the schools of thought in Europe and Africa, but these five can be readily discerned at work during the last century, and they affect the reasoning of agencies and missions and groups that are trying to promote or resist change today. Here's a quick summary in the form of "slogans" that we could imagine for these groups:

Traditionalist: "Prevent change – preserve peace and well-being."

Colonist: "Positive change is bringing the benefits of my civilization."

Reformer: "Promote the changes that God wants."

Modernist: "Positive change is promoting human rights and modern technology."

Revolutionary: "Positive change is tearing down the old and building new systems."

Some questions for reflection:

- Can you imagine yourself saying any of these slogans?

- Should people always choose for themselves how and when they will change?

- If not, when do you think a person is ethically justified in inducing change in another person?

- Or, what about suggesting change, or persuading to change?

- What could be the result when a colonist, reformer, or modernist assumes that they are superior to the people they want to change?

B. What motivates a person to change his/her own beliefs or behavior?

In the United States, billions of dollars have been spent to understand why people change their behavior.

Most of this investment has been by the advertising industry, since they want to understand what new products people will buy. Other research in the area of health care has focused on why people stop smoking, eat healthier diets, or do other things to prevent illness. As a result we have an immense amount of technical literature about human behavior change. Development agencies have applied this learning to HIV/AIDS prevention and other programs in Africa.

The following are my observations about West Africans making choices for behavior change, and this experience is consistent with many of the research models noted above. The whole area of *belief* change interacts with *behavior* change, but for sake of brevity I will focus here on behavior changes that development workers commonly deal with, such as buying new products, using latrines or birth control, becoming literate, using veterinary services, constructing anti-erosion measures, going for pre-natal check-ups, etc.

A strong motivation to change is when a person believes it will produce some kind of **positive result** that outweighs the **cost** including the **risk** of loss. The person must first expect a result with low cost/risk to induce them to **try** the change. Then they must experience ongoing positive results greater than the costs to induce them to **maintain** the change. Note: results include important intangibles such as peer acceptance and prestige, and costs likewise include intangibles such as shame and guilt feelings.

But it is very important to note that for both benefits and costs/risks, the **time frame** is critical. A benefit that is many years in the future is not as compelling as a benefit experienced today. A risk that you will die years from now from smoking is not as motivating as the good feeling you'll get from a cigarette this minute; **procrastination** is part of fallen human nature. ("I'll change tomorrow.")

Many aspects of human motivation are **subconscious**. People are not aware of many things that motivate them. They feel impulses and emotions, but they don't have control over those feelings, and they often act without realizing why they made certain choices.

Here is a wide variety of things that people consider to be positive results, providing a reason (sometimes subconsciously) for change:

1. It protects me or those I love.
2. It provides my basic needs, such as food or shelter.
3. It saves time and effort.
4. It makes me more powerful.
5. It makes me more comfortable.
6. It satisfies cravings (or it's addictive.)
7. It enhances my communication or relationships with others.
8. It will impress people and increase my prestige.
9. A celebrity is doing it/wearing it, so if I do it I'll be like them (my self-esteem will increase.)
10. It is pleasant or enjoyable.

Here are some things that people consider to be costs and risks, preventing them from adopting a change:

1. It costs time, labor, or extra effort. (It's a hassle.)
2. It costs money
3. It is physically uncomfortable, not enjoyable, or unpleasant.
4. It will cause neighbors to gossip about me.
5. It will hurt people I love or make them reject me.
6. It makes me feel embarrassed, guilty or ashamed.
7. It will make me feel stressed.
8. It is dangerous.

C. What about sin?

A Christian perspective is different from that of modernism, which accepts only a scientific, material, evolutionary explanation for human behavior. Looking at culture with a Christian world view, we recognize the dynamics of the Fall and its effects on human nature. And, as Christian workers, we can seek God's power through the Holy Spirit who changes lives.

Cultures have been changing since the beginning of human society, and each culture shows aspects of common grace and aspects of fallenness. The Fall, with its resulting consequences of greed and selfishness at work in human nature, gives impetus to change for the worse – ethnic conflict, environmental destruction, and pornography are a few examples. At the same time, God's grace allows obedient people to contribute to positive change – Christians worked for the end of apartheid in South Africa and of cannibalism in Papua New Guinea.

Within the boundaries of a Biblical viewpoint we find both optimists, believing that Christians can make the world better, and pessimists, believing that the world is getting worse and we must endure suffering until the return of Christ. Christianity seems to swing back and forth between these two views according to the historical situation. Christian workers likewise vacillate between optimism when they see progress, and discouragement when things are stuck or getting worse.

D. When the change agent's motivation is suspect

George W. Bush said that the US invaded Iraq to protect America and to give Iraq's people freedom. But many nations thought that the real reason was to control oil reserves. Their beliefs about Bush's motivation affected their willingness to cooperate with his program.

People in the developing world may suspect the motives of Western nations and of expats. In Nigeria, Islamic fundamentalists easily convinced the population that polio vaccines were anti-fertility drugs. In Mali, many people believed until a few years ago that AIDS was a myth invented by Western nations to help them manipulate Africans. These suspicions of Western motives have retarded acceptance of changes that would have benefited the people.

Application:
Reflect on your situation:
- *On what basis do I decide what changes to promote?*
- *How do the local people view these changes?*
- *How do the local people view my role?*
- *Do I use manipulation or assume superiority in my approach?*

2. Many complex forces influence change – it's not simple linear cause-and-effect

Many outside forces influence communities; these include economic, political, environmental (climate, drought), spread of diseases such as AIDS, migration, and war. For example: the price of staple foods is influenced by government policy, and this affects the level of malnutrition. Drought is another event that affects malnutrition and can increase migration to urban centers. Many of these forces are operating on any given community at the same time; furthermore, people are using various coping methods to react, and those coping methods in turn have their own side-effects. A community is a complex system. Changing one variable may not automatically achieve the planned results. This is an inherent limitation of logical framework planning which is currently used by most development donor agencies.

There are also multiple actors having an effect on any given community: government service providers, staff of NGO's, merchants, politicians etc. By operating in tandem or in collaboration, multiple agents can leverage the total effect of their work. On the other hand, there is risk that they will cancel each other out, or stimulate counter-productive effects, if their interventions are not compatible.

On the other hand, the complexity of human society also makes it possible that a small event or change might upset the equilibrium and trigger a cascading series of major changes. *"Just think how large a forest can be set on fire by a tiny flame!"* (James 3:5, Good News Translation)

3. There are three cultural levels of change that vary significantly in their difficulty

A. Worldview, values, and morality

Values, beliefs, taboos, and the sense of what's right and what's wrong are transmitted as parents correct the mistakes of their children; these are also encoded in legal systems and taught in religious and educational institutions. When people confront a proposed change at this level they not only *think* it is wrong, they usually experience feelings of outrage. As a result, this is the hardest level to change. Plus, change at a spiritual level involves the Holy Spirit who is neither control-able nor plan-able. But this level of change is key since it affects all of life in fundamental ways.

Examples of changes in beliefs from West Africa:

Knowledge is esoteric – the domain of *marabouts** who transfer it to the initiated or exercise it in return for payment	>>	Knowledge is public, obtained through reading books, and increases as it is shared
Female excision makes a girl a woman	>>	Female genital mutilation is harmful and wrong
God and spirits are influenced through magic and sacrifices	>>	We communicate with God through prayer; it's wrong to contact spirits because they are demons

* *marabouts* – holy men / religious leaders of the Fulani people

B. Informal activities that are customary but not "right" or "wrong"

Informal culture is essentially the habits of daily life that are not considered morally imperative but arise from the way groups of people have adapted to their physical environments. These habits are significant from a development perspective because a person's muscles, hand coordination, and body movements develop from a young age and become ingrained. For example, people who have grown up squatting as they work will not be comfortable sitting on a bench. Women who have grown up pounding grain with a pestle in an up-and-down motion will not have built the muscles to turn a circular crank on a mill.

Children learn the informal part of culture by observing adults and imitating them. How you prepare food, how you sit, how you cultivate fields, how you care for a baby, how you store water, what time you get up in the morning and when you go to sleep, how you drive a car in traffic...and a thousand other things, we learn as children from adult role models and then do these activities automatically without thinking about how we do them. Change in the arena of informal activities happens slowly as people observe and follow what they see others doing.

When a behavior change does not violate the awareness of right and wrong, it is in the "informal activity" category, and people will choose to adopt it or not based on convenience, tangible benefit, and prestige (who else is doing it.) One way to determine whether an activity is informal rather than a question of morality, is to look at the reaction when someone deviates. When someone violates a taboo, the people around them get upset and initiate sanctions or correction. But when someone deviates from an element of informal culture, people are surprised and laugh at them. The latter happened when a white missionary was seen in a West African village carrying her baby in a front-pack instead of strapped on her back. Everyone laughed and said "That's how monkeys carry babies!"

Examples of changes in informal activities from West Africa:

Communicate messages orally, in person	>>	write notes and send them to people
Throw refuse outside the yard	>>	use a compost pile to make fertilizer
Drink water directly from a pond	>>	strain water before drinking it

C. Technical change: materials and utensils

This category includes new materials or tools that can be incorporated into the existing culture without raising moral discomfort, and without needing to unlearn old behaviors. One obvious example of a technical change is the rapid transition West Africans made to replacing their arrows and spears with guns during the 1800s. Availability, affordability, and level of benefit determine whether people adopt the change. Examples of technical change include cell phones, flashlights, improved seed varieties, matches, and metal buckets.

Examples of changes in technology:

Build your roof out of sticks	>>	buy corrugated metal (doesn't leak)
Cook on three stones	>>	cook on a metal stove (faster)
Wear handmade leather sandals	>>	wear rubber flip-flops (cheaper)

Interaction between the three levels of culture

Note that many activities are a matter of morality in one culture, but in another culture they are an informal activity. For example, a Hindu Brahmin would be a vegetarian because of worldview and morality, but an American college student may be a vegetarian because it is popular with her peer group. Traditional cultures normally have many areas of lifestyle that fall into the category of taboos and moral obligations while Western cultures have more aspects of lifestyle that fall into the informal category. In a traditional culture you may have rules such as: always enter the latrine left foot first, never eat in the presence of your in-laws, never cut trees in the cemetery. In highly traditional cultures, the boundaries of behavior in the category of taboos and moral obligations are clearly marked –alternative ways of behavior are thought of as unnatural or impossible. That's why development workers are often surprised when they suggest a change which is informal or technical for their home culture and local people make an uproar because it is morally wrong for them. In one Native American group the people believed that in the spring Mother Earth is pregnant, and you

must protect the surface of the earth by wearing soft shoes and not driving your wagons. Their extension agent tried to introduce early-spring plowing, and they were appalled. He could not understand why they didn't like him anymore.

Sometimes a culture regards an item or utensil as morally wrong even though it is considered "technical" by most other cultures. The Roman Catholic Church's doctrine against birth control devices is an important example of this. There are Green advocates who feel that genetically modified foods and insecticides are inherently wrong, whereas others view these as neutral technologies that can be used for either good or bad.

Change at one level may have ripple effects on other levels of culture. Invention of the birth control pill was one factor that contributed to the loosening of sexual mores in the United States in the 1960's. Internet technology has greatly increased the use of pornography. Purchase of a TV (technology) changes the pattern of how a family spends their evenings (informal activity) and exposes them to the outside world, and influences their ideas towards consumerism (values). When animists use pills in addition to charms for treating illness, that is a technology change. But over time, if they perceive that pills are very effective, they may lose their faith in the charms and in the animistic world view.

Application
Analyze the situation to understand whether change needs to happen in the formal ideas of right and wrong (e.g. believe that a non-excised woman is marriageable), or if it needs to happen in informal activities (e.g. filtering water against Guinea worm), or if a change in materials or tools is sufficient (e.g. improved seeds).

Many development practitioners have been surprised and dismayed at the time and effort required for change at the informal activity level. And some changes in technology that people thought would be easy have been rejected because they would have required changes in informal activity as well – needing different motor skills, or a different daily or seasonal routine. Since informal cultural changes are learned in the context of community, by modeling and imitation, communicate with the group continuously and use their feedback. The design of the innovation should be modified according to local context to maximize acceptability and convenience, minimize labor, and reduce discomfort.

*Build **relationships** over the long term to influence change in values and beliefs. Expect no shortcuts, and remember to pray.*

3. Change affects power relationships
The communities with whom you are working may be composed of different age groups, castes, classes, ranks, and gender roles that differentiate how much influence and power different people hold. Various institutions and groups in their environment (like the military or the government) likely hold power as well.

A potential change usually has some affect on the relative balance of power and influence, or may be perceived to increase the status of some more than others. Generally, people who believe that their

power will be lessened tend to work against the change. The people who believe they will gain tend to adopt the change and promote it.

Example:

The French colonized West Africa and set up a French schooling system. The Fulani marabouts did an effective preaching campaign to convince people to resist the French, saying that if you took your child to school you and the child will spend eternity in hell. As a result the Fulani resisted French culture and education. They are marginalized today because other ethnic groups that accepted education now control the government. But the marabouts continue to exercise significant influence in Fulani areas.

Key approaches for dealing with power relationships:

A. Discuss the potential change with all the players.

A national translator in Mali was living in a village that wanted a school. Before starting the project the translator talked with the chief and elders separately. Then he talked with the different age and gender groups, in a way that was seen as proper etiquette in that culture. Over a period of several months each age and gender group bought into the idea of building a school. This consensus was developed before the translator began work writing the grant application and organizing the construction.

B. If you can't get support from those who have power, at least obtain tolerance

In some villages in Mali we have seen chiefs who are not happy with literacy programs because their children and family members are not the leaders. However, groups of young people are still able to do literacy because they do not directly defy or shame the chief. Of course the programs work best in the villages where the chief himself is literate and he makes an effort and contributes resources to make the program succeed. But a small program can survive and continue in a village among a less-powerful group as long as they do not arouse opposition to make the powerful sabotage their efforts. In many cases the younger people can operate a program with the tolerance or indifference of their elders.

C. Don't make anyone, especially influential people, lose face

In many cultures receiving honor and avoiding disgrace are paramount. Don't do anything to publicly shame leaders. Be aware of how the hierarchy functions in the community. Ask what is the proper protocol of who to talk to and when and where, and who should present new initiatives to whom and in what setting.

D. Be aware of people's motivations

A group within a society that has less power may embrace a change simply for the sake of defiance – asserting themselves against another group. The typical example of this is American teenagers who

wear hairstyles and clothes and body-piercings that shock their parents. The whole point of embracing the change is to assert independence from the older generation. Another situation is the person in a third-world community who is a "reject" and marginalized by their peers and eagerly becomes the tag-along to an expatriate missionary. If this person succeeds in getting employment or friendship and resources from the expat, his/her power relative to the rest of the community will greatly increase. (The missionary's will decrease!) The problem is that this person whom the community rejects will happily and rapidly adopt any change that the expat proposes, but this does not help promote the change in the wider community.

E. Be aware of group dynamics

People prefer to do things that their peers are doing. This tendency is especially strong in community-oriented cultures where conformity is valued, and even the individualistic American teenagers do the same body piercings as their peers. If there are age groups or gender groupings in a community, they will tend to adopt a change together. If a single person tries an innovation and gets teased by his/her peers, it will be very hard to sustain, although a few strong-willed progressive people do innovate alone and persist for years until the rest of the group sees the light. In any case, when several people begin an innovation together it is much easier. A media campaign can improve attitudes a great deal, by demonstrating that there are other people out there doing this new thing.

F. Allow things to develop slowly

Sometimes people decide for change on their own when they are given information in small doses with enough time to reflect. But forcing the issue and pushing them to move quickly may cause them to become even more entrenched in their original position.

Application:
Observe and understand the power relationships and structures in the community. Analyze how the potential change might impact relationships.
Dialogue with leaders and develop an appropriate strategy for introducing the change that incorporates the factors listed above.

Application:
Observe how your community works as a system to understand what are the forces and the agents affecting people's lives, and how the processes and actors relate to one another. Design interventions that build on and/or leverage the processes in the system that promote positive change. Work with others to address structural injustices.

5. Differing approaches to promoting change

A. Coercive *(force change)*

Throughout history states have used military and police force to induce change. When France colonized West Africa, they forced a large number of people from the Mossi ethnic group to resettle in central Mali and farm cotton. In this case the people **accommodated** temporarily to a change that

they found disadvantageous, and then threw off the change as soon as they had opportunity. These Mossi farmers found that growing cotton to send to France was not profitable, and they grow rice today. When the Fulani Sekou Amadou conquered the Niger Interior Delta area, he forced people to convert to Islam and build mosques. This change of religion was **indigenized** as the younger generation grew up with Islam being the norm (and the prestigious religion of the powerful and elite.) Their descendants are loyal Muslims today. Another coercive type of change is when a minority culture is **assimilated** and made to adopt the culture of the majority. For example, years ago the French government forced the exclusive use of the French language in schools in Brittany. The indigenous Breton language has almost completely disappeared as a result.

Revolutionary and independence movements also use coercive means to effect change. Sometimes attempts at coercive change do not accomplish their goals but cause death and suffering instead – for example, Pol Pot's revolution in Cambodia.

Coercive change happens today when governments make policies that they enforce by arresting those who do not comply. Anti-corruption campaigns that jail offenders, banning of female genital mutilation in government clinics, and halting cross-border transport of small arms are all examples of current attempts to coerce positive change.

B. Economic incentives *(buy change)*

Outsiders have often compensated people who adopt the change that the outsider desires. In the Muslim conquest of North Africa, the Christians who would not convert to Islam were charged special taxes; many chose Islam. When incentives are continued long enough, a change is easily internalized in the younger generation. An example from Mali is the UNDP giving cooking oil to families whose girls attend school. Despite diversion of some oil to corrupt officials, school attendance has risen dramatically. One reason why buying change works is that people avoid **cognitive dissonance.** This concept from psychology and communications basically says that people don't like to feel guilty or ashamed or fearful about their actions. It has been shown in experiments that if you induce a person to do a behavior they would not normally do, they tend to then change their beliefs so as to excuse or justify what they did. (On the other hand, if you introduce information that could make people feel fearful or guilty about what they are doing, such as "driving too fast can kill you" they tend to reject that information and not believe it.) But in the example above, the families who took the cooking oil and sent their girls to school would tend to start believing that it is right to educate girls, in order to feel that they are doing a good thing.

One negative aspect of economic incentives is that anyone with resources can promote their own agenda – the government of Canada can promote gender equity and Saudi Arabians can promote Shariya law in Nigeria. Another disadvantage is that when the incentives are short-term, and especially if there is some underlying hostility or suspicion towards the one giving the incentive, people tend to manipulate the giver through **accommodation** and then abandon the change when the donations are done. In general, Christian ministries avoid money incentives for conversion (they don't want "rice Christians"), but in practice many missions have wielded economic aid as an incentive to promote the changes they desire.

Sometimes an economic policy creates unintentional cultural change. In the early 1800s the British government put a tax on wig powder, and wigs for men quickly went out of style.

C. Social marketing *(sell change)*

Use of this approach has been made easier by the invention of the printing press, radio and TV. Outsiders can use media and communication methods, most effective when informed by market research, sociology, and anthropology, to promote adoption of a change. An outstanding example is a Dutch project in Mali that hired a drama troupe for outreach to villages to teach a better method of planting rice. The technique is far more labor intensive, therefore hard to adopt initially, but it gives 5 times the rice yield. The drama troupe succeeded in getting a critical mass of people to try the new method and now some years later it is the only method anyone uses.

It has been shown that advertising actually influences how much people enjoy experiences or products.

Research in the field called "behavioral economics" has shown that media messages significantly influence people's choices. Endorsement by an admired celebrity is one way to increase the market for a product. Fortunately, in the last decade many celebrities have directed their support to combatting global problems.

 The dark side of marketing is that it can be used by anybody, including the unethical: the intense promotion of cigarettes by tobacco companies in the Global South is just one example. Marketing can be used by agencies to promote political objectives chosen without local participation. Propaganda via media has been used by all governments to promote the agenda of the powerful; and media played a major role in the Rwanda genocide.

D. Educate for change *(teach change)*

Children are at a stage of life in which they are learning new skills and ideas, and they are more easily influenced than adults for behavior change. This has not been missed by chnage promoters— including the Nazis, the Soviet Union, and many development agencies, who have used the school system to teach change. For example, schoolchildren are taught hygiene, or appreciation of local species of animal or bird, or the need to plant trees. The French deliberately used the strategy of education when they colonized West Africa. They believed that a French education could develop youth into loyal French citizens. They were also worried about Islamic influence, and the colonial government prohibited Islamic madrassahs from teaching science and math, so that the French school system would have a monopoly on technical education.

The education approach can be used with adults as well. Often there is a training of trainers, in which local animators learn certain content and pass it on to others. But unless some of the other change methods are included, it is hard to influence adults by simply sharing information in a training session.

E. Raise consciousness and organize *(empower change)*

Paulo Freire was the champion of this idea. He worked in Latin America and realized that the educational system there was subconsciously oriented to maintaining the oppressive status quo. This approach of empowering local people to promote change in their own communities has grown into many forms and variations, generally termed "Communication for Social Change". There are training programs, books, manuals, and techniques; it is not in the scope of this paper to try to list them all. Some examples are: Training for Transformation, Delta Training, Barrier Analysis, Appreciative Inquiry. The key commonality for all these approaches is the idea that local people remain in control of the process; they analyze, reflect and then make their own informed choices of what change should be made; and they can be better equipped to do this by learning models for understanding human behavior, and methods for effective collective action.

Building connections between people is a powerful engine for change. Exchange visits between farmers allow them to share what they have learned about agriculture techniques. Bringing multiple local groups together into a coalition allows comparison of experiences. When CRWRC began holding semi-annual meetings of literacy teachers from different villages in one area of Mali, there was rapid growth in village literacy classes, and one of the teachers authored a booklet.

A major advantage of empowering local people, as opposed to using coercion or economic incentives or marketing, is that rather than targeting just one change, local people will be able to promote many kinds of changes in their community over time.

F. Change through relationships *(make disciples for change)*

In this method, the change agent models the new behavior and values in his/her own life, and spends personal time with others who are invited to join the change. Francis of Assisi worked in this way— first, making change in his own life, and then gathering a small group of followers. When the society is ripe for change because of pressures and stresses in the status quo, the number of followers may increase rapidly. The factor that distinguishes this method from the others is that the change agent must practice and model the change in his own life, and build personal relationships with those he wants to change. The change expands through multiplication of more personal relationships. The discipleship model of Jesus and Paul and the methodology of the Navigators are examples of change through relationships.

Application:
Beware of using economic incentives with a community if what you really want is long-term results. Local ownership may be undermined.
Wherever possible, combine efforts with other actors at different levels using multiple methods to promote the same change. For example, the government could prosecute small-arms traffickers, buy back arms from ex-combatants, and at the same time NGOs and civil society undertake a small-arms reduction media campaign.

6. Three stages of effective interventions to promote change at the informal or technical level.

All these steps assume that a change has first been correctly identified as needed and appropriate, and is at the level of informal activity or technology. Then what? The following are steps that were used in Mali to promote wood-conserving stoves and literacy.

A. Introduction phase

Listen! Talk with the people who will be involved in making the change about what to implement and how. Research to find out who if anyone is already doing it/using it, and what they see as advantages and difficulties. Find out what communications media is influential in the context. Use this media to disseminate information about the change. (In Mali we have benefited from celebrities endorsing a change over the national radio.) Find people willing to be promoters, testers, or operators of pilot projects. In the case of technology, share samples with opinion leaders and solicit their feedback. Be very careful about the level of outside inputs that you bring in, so that you do not interfere with sustainability over the long term. (This principle continues in stage B as well.)

B. Learn from pilot phase and make adjustments

Listen some more! Learn what benefits people are experiencing, and what barriers, and whether you should make adjustments. Be careful in cultures that have a code of hospitality which requires them to please guests and outsiders. They will feel obligated to say positive things no matter how they really feel. To compensate, you may need to leave people alone for a time to make their own decisions.

Here are some things to look for:

- Which people benefit most? To what extent are they taking ownership?

- Are you communicating with the right audience? Are they spreading the change by word of mouth?

- Or are they quitting? If so, is there a way to make adjustments so that the change is more beneficial, more convenient, or less costly? Should this intervention be discontinued? (Don't be afraid to stop after pilot phase and try something else.)

- How does this intervention synergize with other forces for change? Can you build on the efforts of others, or work in collaboration, or use leverage on existing processes?

C. Reduce level of intervention and let go

If you have been supporting the change with outside inputs, hopefully you limited these in stage A and B and planned how to transition to total local support. You should have planned the speed and manner of reduction of external supports, so now you implement your plan and observe what happens. Continue to listen! If you identify that external resources are needed for maintaining the change, that's disappointing, but learn from this and adjust. Observe other actors in the situation and

other factors in the system. Learn and reflect on what you might do differently. A different change? Target the same change but with a different approach? More time on the same approach?

This stage has usually been very problematic for mission agencies in Africa, and we should learn from our own mistakes and from others. Remember that interventions with low external inputs and high local ownership have a good chance at promoting lasting change.

Application:
*Work through the three stages above using **experimentation, listening** to feedback, and **learning** to make adjustments and corrections as you progress.*