

# Values for Building Solidarity Economy *or how to build a "value chain"*

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***Solidarity Economy very much relies on people's integration of its culture and values. The Solidarity Economy network conducted small group discussions among peers, which revealed 4 stages of value formation...***

Embedded in the Value Chain Development Program of [Eagle's Wings Foundation](#) is a normative approach to a reflection called the "culture of responsibility, social reciprocity, and solidarity." This approach seeks to provide answers to the question: What values do people adopt when they embark on a process of building solidarity economy (SE)?

Results from several small group discussions conducted among peers revealed 4 stages of values formation.

**At the first stage**, people participate in the new initiative called "solidarity economy" in search for new private gains. Their attitude towards this new economic paradigm is summed up by the self-serving question "What is in it for me?" They view themselves as "beneficiaries" who expect new, quick benefits that could be derived from a new economic initiative. They don't buy into SE on account of its high-flying advocacy of triple bottom line (people, planet, profit), social inclusion, or its being an alternative to the failed market-oriented economy. The biggest challenge at this stage is to transform people's mindset and bring them to the next higher level of operation. People must be motivated to form their social capital and to build a shared vision.

**The second stage** is where SE stakeholders begin to understand that they have the capacity to engage in transactions exchange. They overcome their "beneficiary" or dole-out mentality and see themselves as producers of goods or services which they can exchange for things they need. They now realize that forging alliances with other self-help groups/ organizations (SHGs/SOs) has the potential of generating new sources of income through social and economic exchanges with these groups.

To step over to the second stage, people's mindsets have to be transformed from one that is predominantly subsistent and consumerist in nature to one that is entrepreneurial. But even when they reach this stage, people don't give up their selfish motives easily. Rather, self-serving motives propel people to cheat in order to gain the upper hand. They need to see the bigger picture and realize that by adopting fair practices, the whole system minimizes the risk of bad practices and creates a more conducive business atmosphere of trust and confidence among stakeholders.

**The third stage** is where SE stakeholders are more empowered and have greater motivation to contribute part of their purchasing power to support a collective endeavor. They become altruistic givers without expecting reciprocal benefits in return. But their altruistic behavior remains confined to a restricted circle of people (e.g. family, local association/club, church, or peer group) with whom they have worked with to build an enduring social capital. The biggest challenge at this stage is to transform the people's mindset from being ethnocentric to one that is more global in perspective and which embraces compassion for other people outside their immediate social circle.

**The fourth and most ideal stage** is where SE stakeholders are transformed into 'serial givers.' They become voluntary advocates of SE and serve as models to other people groups who are still at the lower levels of social responsibility, reciprocity, and solidarity. The biggest challenge at this stage is to harness the energy of voluntary advocates in forging a network of alliances at the local, national, and international levels.

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