

An Overview of Tactical Mapping¹

Mapping the problem.

How can we best understand the mechanics of an issue, and how can we map the problem in order to make the most useful levers transparent?

In the fourth century BC, the Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu said that good strategy is based on three sources of knowledge: Know your adversary. Know yourself. Know the terrain. It is relatively easy to understand what he means by knowledge about the adversary. We perhaps do less than we should, as we analyze ourselves and our allies, to understand our respective capabilities to act. But how does one understand the terrain, when the battle is not fought on a particular geographic field, but rather in complex social structures?

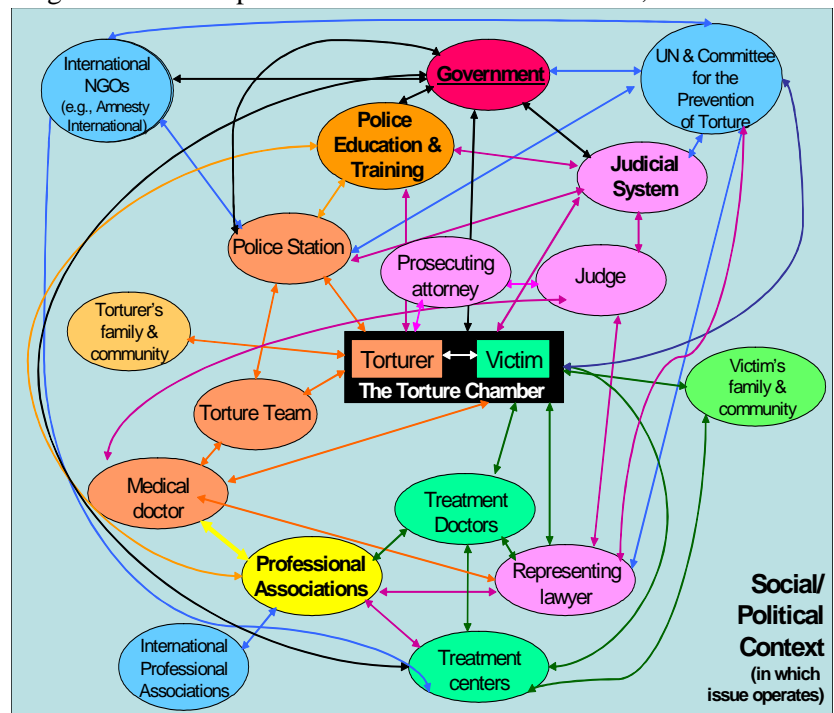
“Tactical mapping” is a method for visualizing “the terrain” —or where the struggle is to take place— and, once this is understood, serves as a planning tool for building more comprehensive strategies, and a vehicle to coordinate with allies.

What is Human Rights Tactical Mapping?

Tactical Mapping is a method of first visualizing the relationships and institutions which surround, receive benefit, and sustain human rights abuses. The emphasis is on relationships between people and/or institutions (rather than concepts or “causes” of human rights violations) as it is through these relationships that decisions are made, incentives are given or taken away, and actions are taken. The relationships are carefully diagrammed to create a picture that represents a social space.

When this diagram is sketched out, it then becomes possible to use it to select appropriate targets for intervention for actors who can initiate forms of pressure or change, and to map the tactics that actors could choose to influence selected targets. In this way, a process flow can be created to plan and monitor more precisely how the tactic might function

and which relationships it should alter or affect in order to create an effective intervention. As multiple groups can use the same diagram to map their respective targets and interventions, the tactical map converts into a coordinating tool to create a more comprehensive and useful strategy than obtained from groups acting



Above: A simplified sample map of the variety of relationships identified in the CVT-New Tactics tactical map to illustrate the different levels and types of relationships involved—from the level of “torturer-victim” and their immediate relationships—to internal country relationships and structures, such as the judicial system and police education and training institutions as well as international connections, including associations, international NGOs, and intergovernmental systems such as the United Nations.

¹ This overview was adapted from a paper written by Nancy L. Pearson, New Tactics project manager, and Douglas A. Johnson, Executive Director of the Center for Victims of Torture, for a Carr Center for Human Rights Policy workshop, “Measuring Impact in Human Rights: Models for a Path Forward” at the Kennedy School of Government, in May 2006.

independently and without coordination. See the brief overview (below the figure above) to help illustrate and conceptualize the various relationships contained in a tactical map.

The Development of Tactical Mapping

The Tactical Mapping technique is part of the New Tactics in Human Rights Project initiated by the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT). CVT's New Tactics Project developed an on-line, searchable database which grows as new examples of tactics used successfully to create change emerge. This database, currently with stories of about 160 different tactics, can be very helpful for those seeking ideas and insights from other human rights practitioners. A workbook, *New Tactics in Human Rights: A Resource for Practitioners*, is available in print or online. A collection *tactical notebooks*, which are in-depth case studies written by practitioners who carried out the tactic. The tactical mapping information is available on the New Tactics website (www.newtactics.org) and is available in Spanish and French with translations in Russian and other languages currently underway.

In 1998, the Center for Victims of Torture, with support from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), gathered a working group of experts on torture, brought together to consider the persistent nature of torture despite the many resources that have been devoted to its prevention. The group began by focusing on the relationship between a torturer and a victim, trying to understand the relationships in which this dyad is imbedded, sustained, and protected. They considered both the relationships of the victim (as a possible source of prevention or intervention) and the perpetrator, both formal and informal in nature. This group identified and diagrammed over 400 relationships—from the local to the international level. (The diagram shown above illustrates a few of these relationships.)

When these relationships were diagrammed, the working group made a list of tactics then in use against torture and used the diagram to situate and understand how each of these tactics was presumed to affect or prevent the primary relationship of torture. For example, Amnesty International's method of sending letters to heads of state presumes a set of relationships and an ability of the head of state to affect those relationships all the way down the line to the police station. By following down this chain of relationships, the group was able to speculate on where its force would be undermined, raising the possibility of using other tactics targeting those points of breakdown to reinforce the strength of the original tactic. The tactic of on-site police inspections (used by organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Committee for the Prevention of Torture) operates within a different set of institutional relationships in the target country. These and other tactics were followed from their points of intervention, the relationships they affect as they are implanted, and the chain of other relationships they must ultimately affect in order to disrupt the torture dyad. This process of following the tactic's impact within the system was termed "mapping the tactic." Thus the process earned the name of "Tactical Mapping."

The process of diagramming the large number of relationships yielded certain insights to the group. It was clearer that human rights abuses are sustained by complex systems of relationships that mutually reinforce one another and support the role of the abuser. Some of these relationships are hierarchical or otherwise structural; others are informal. Each of these relationships is a potential site for intervention that would require a different tactic to have greatest effect.

As the group examined the tactics then in use, it also became clear that most organizations seeking to advance human rights can accommodate only one or two primary tactics, using them in multiple situations. There is often a steep learning curve and significant investment in staffing to implement a new tactic; there is a lack of experience on how to measure performance and effectiveness; and funds are often tied to the tactics for which the organization is known. Thus, our institutional investments are usually directed at doing what we do, better or more effectively, rather than at tolerating the inefficiencies of learning new tactics. This problem is compounded by developing interventions with little coordination between organizations. Limited tactics can affect only narrow targets in any complex system. With no other coordinated effort also affecting other parts of the system, those other parts are free to use their resources to reinforce and protect the target then under pressure. The system heals itself. The group came to believe that this insight helped explain the persistent nature of torture.

If human rights abuses will not yield to a single tactic, and if most organizations can only employ one or two tactics, then it is imperative to develop the capacity to collaborate on a larger, overall strategy aimed at disrupting the system of relationships in which human rights abuses are embedded. The tactical mapping process also provided insight about how more coordinated strategy can emerge when we understand how tactics relate to one another: independently; synergistically; or in conflict with one another.

The process of mapping the tactics in play exposed large areas of the map unengaged in the struggle to prevent torture (such as within the families, friends and social networks of potential perpetrators) and where new methods (tactics) could be developed to stimulate more extensive pressure on the identified systems and individuals. The group hypothesized that every relationship within the Tactical Map was a potential spot to launch an initiative, but that not all tactics were appropriate or feasible for each actor. This called for a wider selection of tactics available to actors, and was a major impetus for the development of the New Tactics in Human Rights Project (see www.newtactics.org).

The initial map created by the working group was generic, but focused on a situation where torture occurred in police stations. An actual Tactical Map would be drawn for an individual country to help campaign organizers shed light on its distinctive relationships. The emerging map diagrammed the formal, organizational relationships that might sustain the use of torture or might have been used to target a victim. It is equally important to look at the informal network of friends, family, social clubs, religious institutions, and other relationships that might influence behavior or be used to leverage change. Although these aspects might well change if, for example, torture took place in military institutions, as it does in a number of countries. Nevertheless, large parts of the map are relevant for understanding many other torture scenarios. The government's international obligations and international relationships, the structure of government authority, the existence of many forms of formal and informal social relationships in that particular culture are all equally relevant whether the torture occurs in a police station or an army barracks. The specific lines of authority vary depending on which control structures in that country are the primary culprits in the use of torture. This insight makes large parts of the map significant in understanding those differing scenarios.

The work that has been done demonstrates opportunities that can come from the mapping process and the tool's potential in planning campaigns. The mapping exercise demonstrates that many tactics currently at play require a lengthy chain of impact in order to be effective; this raises questions about how robust they are. The map also provides an interesting analysis of what effect tactics are presumed to have. The mapping process suggests that, by understanding causal links, more could be done to improve the effectiveness of tactics. Finally, the map itself permits very creative brainstorming about new tactics, which may help stimulate local action.²

A series of training workshops with a broad array of human rights actors, the tactical map tool demonstrated its usefulness to identify relationships and to develop tactics to address a wide spectrum of human rights violations.³

We have found the Tactical Mapping resource an impressive instrument for charting a fresh terrain which will be used to update our strategy. Using it, we have been able to improve the listing of our project allies more than 300%. The bird's eye view of the clusters permits a visual appraisal that promotes quick judgment, as it offers a vantage point for planners to easily see how to build essential relationships.

- Dan Nweze, Africa
New Tactics On-line Workshop Participant

² "A Case in Point" provides a variety of examples illustrating the points of tactical intervention, available on the new Tactics website: <http://www.newtactics.org/file.php?ID=1178>

³ Two examples can be seen on the New Tactics website: A tactical map on domestic violence developed at the Asian New Tactics cross-training workshop in August 2005 see <http://www.newtactics.org/file.php?ID=942>; and its application in Nigeria to address campaign plans on the treatment of widows at <http://www.newtactics.org/main.php/TraininginPractice/UsingNewTacticsAroundtheWorld/Highlight-TacticalMapping>; for the full Nigeria report see <http://www.newtactics.org/file.php?ID=554>).

How Tactical Mapping Works

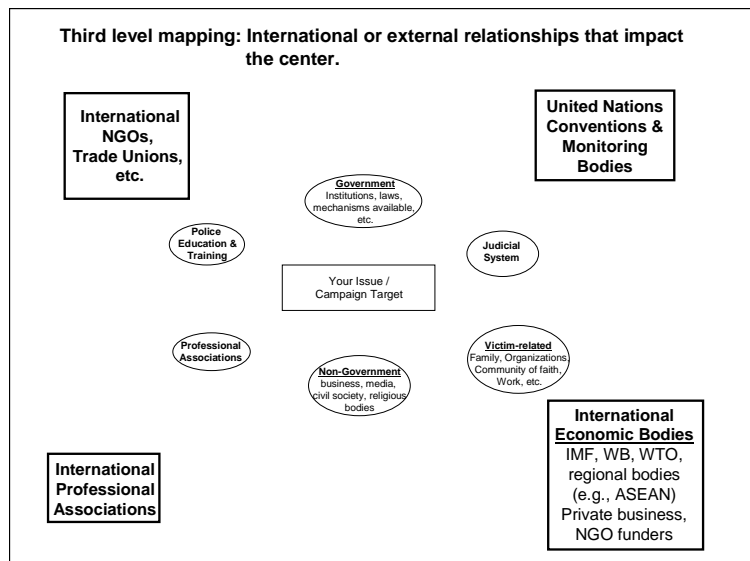
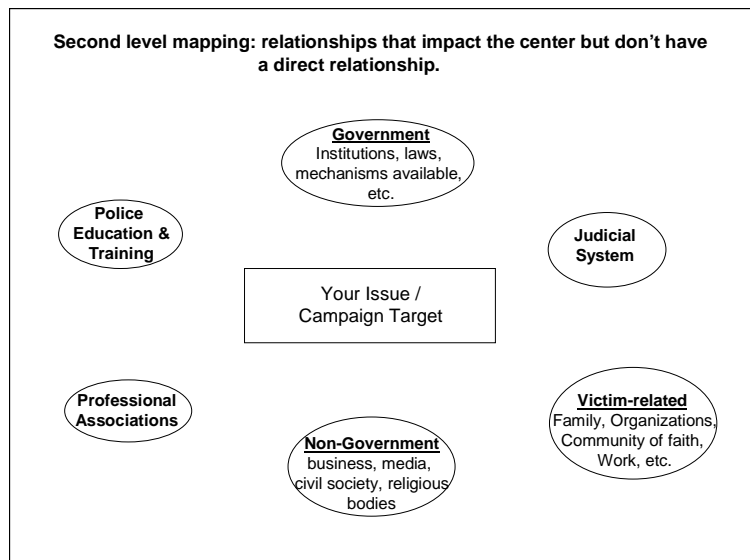
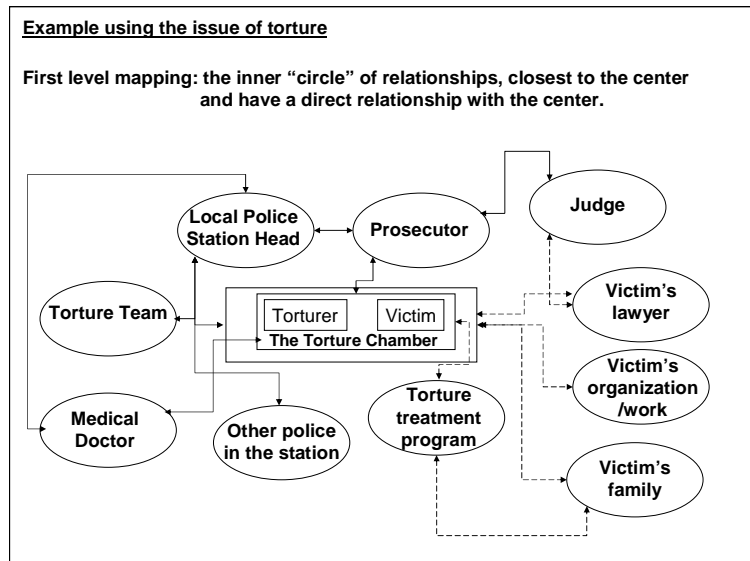
The tactical map can help explore and gain a deeper understanding of an issue including the:

- complexity of relationships involved in the issue
- potential target points for intervention
- potential allies and opponents
- examination and improved planning of tactics (current and potential)
- ability to track implementation and evaluation of the effectiveness of tactics to move strategy forward
- ability to enhance strategic and tactical adjustments
- coordination of allies and their tactical contributions.

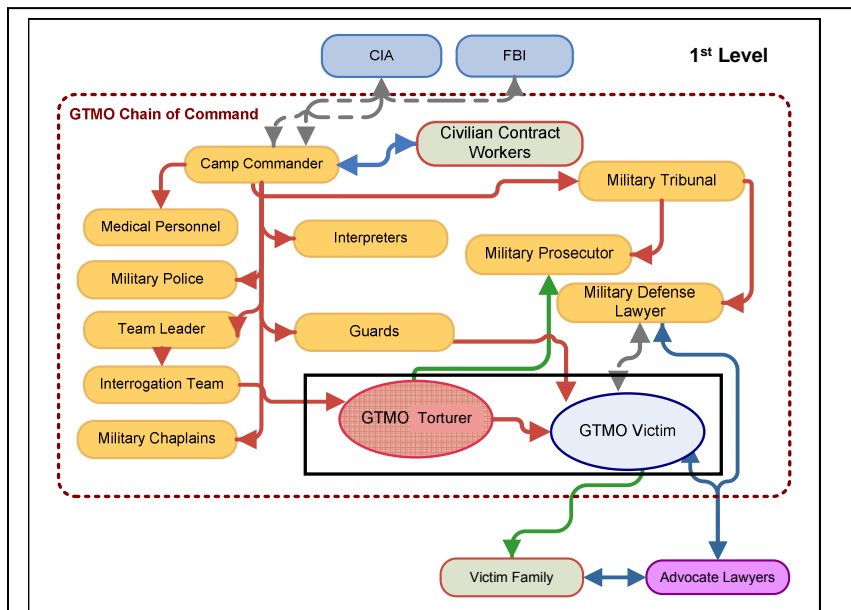
Note: The diagrams provide a sample of the mapping process by illustrating some of the relationships at various levels. For example, this could be viewed as first, second and third levels beginning with those relationships closest to or having a direct relationship with the identified center to those further away.

The process begins by understanding the relationship(s) that a campaign seeks to change or disrupt (such as the relationship between a torturer and a victim), then diagramming the relationships in which this strategic target is embedded, using a series of symbols comparable to a flow chart or organizational diagram. Participants have sketched maps with a small group in an afternoon, or more extensively as a team working over weeks to plan a national campaign, applying themselves to a variety of issues.

Although the generic map is useful to gain some insights, the real value of Tactical Mapping is its application to particular problems and particular countries or locales. The more knowledge individuals bring to the process of diagramming the relationships, the more profound can be their insights into the problem and strategic opportunities. As the information is gathered, especially for a national campaign, campaign leaders should create a database to monitor the whole set of



relationships at each node in the map that might be useful to plan an intervention. The nature of the relationship should also be noted: is it one of influence or command and control? Is it one of regard or animosity and competition? As the tactical map has grown and developed with use, adding “color coded lines” to illustrate the nature of these relationships has been helpful and useful. For example, if a Minister of the Interior has the authority to make policy, punish, or otherwise assert control over torture, campaign planners should try to understand what relationships influence him or her to make those decisions (for example, using a red arrowed directional line is used to show this relationship). Some influence will come from below, some from above in the government structure. But there may be other social relationships that shape his/her worldview, such as an old military comrade, a spouse, or a religious leader (e.g., a bi-directional blue arrow showing mutual benefit or different type of relationship).



In November 2006, the Center for Victims of Torture gathered a group of people representing 13 organizations to use the tactical map tool regarding the situation of US torture at Guatánamo Bay. This “first level” aspect of the tactical map provides an illustration of the use of the colored lines to identify relationship dynamics.

Knowing this set of relationships might well influence ideas within a campaign about new approaches to gaining the Minister’s commitment to stop torture. Having team members from multiple organizations and backgrounds can provide further depth to both the knowledge and analysis of this web of relationships. Being able to draw and redraw the visual map, based on changes discovered in constant data-gathering, will help to monitor areas of progress and new opportunities or threats to the campaign. When the map can be drawn focusing on different levels of detail, the coordinating group can monitor the major intervention systems; organizations that have taken responsibility for a particular area of the map, for example the Interior Ministry, can receive a much more detailed map of the Ministry and the web of relationships around it that are relevant for detailed process planning of the tactical intervention.

How can tactical mapping be used as a dynamic model illustrating how a problem is developing in a particular context?

As we act in the world, we begin to change it. Sometimes an action will harden the opposition, sometimes it will help convert an individual to act to protect human rights. There are times when only the people at an institution change, and other times when institutions are given new mandates and policies. The tactical map focuses on individuals and institutions, not concepts. These will change during a campaign and simply from the passage of time. Understanding the individuals and the nature of their relationships to others requires investigation, research and tactical flexibility.⁴

"I think that the tool is very important... It creates a process in which the organization goes into a situation of trying to figure out how it can best accomplish its work... It is a facilitative process and a guiding process as well as a process of critical self reflection...."

- Louis Frankenthaler
The Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCATI)

To be most useful, a planning and coordinating tool like a Tactical Map must be dynamic and constantly updated in order to derive from it the insights needed to plan and monitor strategies and tactics. From a data and research

⁴ See, “The Need for New Tactics”, by Douglas A. Johnson: <http://www.newtactics.org/file.php?ID=947>

standpoint, the Tactical Mapping process provides concrete, useful, re-usable information both in existing and future contexts.

- It serves as a documenting and rendering tool to monitor the implementation of a specific tactic, enabling the actors to identify points of strength (and weakness) and leverage resources and activities dynamically.
- It serves the larger context of strategic thinking by the human rights community at large, by providing a repository of such relational networks and associated tactics to be used interactively by other actors in similar or analogous situations.

Such data and research systems can greatly assist organizations in identifying the complex relationships involved in a human rights issue. By coupling this information with the tactical mapping tool, civil society organizations, international organizations, and governments can better utilize the data to develop more comprehensive strategies for combating human rights abuses.

Once the tactical map diagram is “complete,” it can then be used to actually “map tactics,” to understand which relationship(s) each tactic is expected to affect and how.

The process of mapping the relationships and identifying current and potential tactics creates a diagnosis of the situation in the given context, including the key relationships surrounding human rights abuses, the impact of already existing tactics, and the other points in need of intervention. Consider that a torturer is connected organizationally, professionally, socially, and through family to a number of individuals and organizations. The mapping process seeks to understand these relationships so they can be changed or disrupted. In order to create this change or disruption, it is important to understand which individuals or organizations can do so already or could be put in place to do so. For example, a tactic may target the torturers’ membership in a police union/association, which may, in turn, provide a leverage opportunity to work through professional associations that reach across national boundaries, thus exerting pressure from both within and outside.

The process of mapping the relationships can take place with simple tools at the grassroots level – a stick to outline relationships in the dirt (used in India to map the households with children who should be enrolled in schools), or “post-its” on paper with colored pens. An example of this method from the Asia Regional Training Workshop in 2005 can be seen on the New Tactics website showing the issue of domestic violence: http://www.newtactics.org/sites/newtactics.org/files/resources/Sample_Map.JPG.

Exploration into more technological tools such as database systems that could easily contain the research and data collected in order to “feed” this wealth of information into a tactical mapping program would be highly desirable and greatly increase the adaptability and response time to significant changes occurring around the human rights issue.

On-going research is needed in each context to help understand the systems involved in the human rights abuse and the people within them, both those who are making bad decisions and those who could be motivated to serve as an ally to protect human rights. Certainly, activists on the ground are already collecting this information. Building collaborative partnerships with sociologists, political scientists, and other academics can help develop and enhance this research. New Tactics is especially interested in documenting tactical interventions and evaluating their results so that others can gain insights into new interventions that might be tried in their setting.

In our experience, the tactical mapping approach has proven to be highly effective in helping human rights practitioners gain an entirely new perspective that has contributed to new ideas and thinking for developing strategic efforts to end human rights abuses. The process offers greater clarity about the situation being mapped, anticipates potential responses, identifies areas for additional attention and collaboration, improves coordination, and provides an effective tool for assessment and evaluation.

livelihoods for the herder community. The following tactics were proposed for serious discussion after the workshop: (a) engagement of specialists from the state professional inspection agency and other relevant authorities to develop guidelines for environmental assessment of exploration damages; and (b) organization of a roundtable meeting to sensitize the judiciary on human rights of herder groups.”

This application of the tool explored possibilities on future collaboration of civil society actors to promote and protect human rights of herder groups at extractive mining sites and resulted in the development of tactics that had not before been considered to improve the human rights of herder groups.

The Center for Victims of Torture, United States

The Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) has used the tactical map tool to improve both prevention and treatment of torture.

Prevention: In November 2006, *CVT-Public Policy and New Tactics* gathered a group of people representing 13 US-based organizations working on the issue of US torture at Guantánamo Bay. We provided a draft tactical map rendering based on our knowledge of the situation. This saved group time and made it possible to more deeply examine different areas of the map where other organizations had far greater expertise and knowledge. Additional benefits gained by the participating organizations included:

- **Gathering collective information** - revealed new information and relationships that enriched the map and general knowledge of the group.
- **Discovering common targets and tactics**
 - Two groups had a grant by the same foundation to write about the impact on Guantánamo prisoners (legal perspective and medical/psychological perspective). They decided to collaborate together to write one comprehensive report that has since been one of the few resources cited and used on Capitol Hill.
 - Two groups were planning an action in Washington, DC on the same day and in the same place. They were able to work together to expand the scope and reach of the action.
- **Building new collaborations** – a number of the organizations forged stronger alliances that lead to new campaign actions.



Participant adding her additional input to the tactical map on US torture at Guantánamo Bay

Treatment: In July 2007, *CVT-New Neighbors Hidden Scars project* used the tactical map tool to examine and evaluate the progress toward building an effective health provider network for refugees in an identified community in Minnesota. As the project was nearing its end, the visual tactical map tool gave the project team greater focus on the remaining steps required for bringing together health care providers and refugee groups to deliver better health care services to the refugee community.

The New Tactics project incorporates the tactical map tool in all our face-to-face training efforts. In addition, New Tactics continues to respond to a growing number of requests from institutions and non-governmental organizations to provide training and consultancies that highlight and utilize the tactical map tool along with the many other project resources.

