



A Project of the Center for Victims of Torture

Local human rights activists throughout the world struggle with a sense of isolation, are forced to “reinvent the wheel,” and choose tactics not because they are the best fit for the strategic situation, but because they are the only tactics they know. At the same time, innovative practitioners have devised a wide range of creative approaches for promoting human rights, but these are too-often known only by their closest allies.

Since 1999, **the New Tactics in Human Rights project** has created unique resources -- organized around analysis of potential solutions rather than that of specific issues, geographic regions or target groups -- that allow activists to clearly recognize the unique elements of their situation, and to seek promising approaches that have worked elsewhere and apply them to new regions or issues. It also improves activists' ability to combine diverse tactics into complex strategies.

The New Tactics Project's methods have included:

1. In-person trainings, such as:

- *Regional workshops* in which 10-50 innovative activists train each other in the diverse tactics they have used, and develop “tactical portfolios” of practical tools for applying new tactics. Seven workshops have been held, the most recent in Liberia in February 2007, focusing on post-conflict tactics for rebuilding civil society.
- *An International Symposium* held in 2004 in Ankara, Turkey, including 450 human rights activists from 89 countries to focus on a full range of tactical possibilities, from fields as diverse as domestic violence and sustainable development.

New Tactics project staff have also carried out presentations or consultations in more than a dozen countries.

2. Publications, including:

- The book *New Tactics in Human Rights: A Resource for Practitioners* offers a conceptual framework for thinking strategically and tactically to promote human rights, and gives dozens of examples of innovative tactics, categorized by the strategic situation in which they were used.
- More than 45 *Tactical Notebooks*, created by participants from the regional cross-training workshops, that provide first-person, detailed information on the use of a tactic and how it may be adapted to other situations. Examples of tactical notebooks produced to date include:
 - *Recipe for Dialogue: Corporate Training for Building Relationships with Indigenous Communities* By Jo Render, First Peoples Worldwide, USA
 - *Using Popular Theater to Break the Silence around Violence Against Women*, by Oulimata Gaye, Réseau Africain de Développement Intégré (RADI), Senegal
 - *Access to Justice: Creating Local Level, Citizen Action Mediation Bodies to Ensure Human Rights*, by Dinesh Narayan Suddhakar, Center for Victims of Torture (CVICT), Nepal

New Tactics materials have been translated into twenty languages by local human rights advocates and distributed to thousands of activists around the world.

3. Tactical Mapping, a methodology to help identify the relationships surrounding a human rights abuse, and the points in which the system can be interrupted or transformed, ranging from highly local, personal relationships (e.g., the perpetrator's professional associations) to international institutions (e.g., the UN

system). It allows a coalition of advocates to see where each is working on the system, and where there are gaps that need to be addressed, either by creating new tactics or finding new allies.

4. Electronic Resources and Curricula, including the project's website www.newtactics.org, online discussion courses, and an *e-newsletter* that highlights specific tactics and information for inspiring innovation. A revised version of the project website was launched in September 2007, featuring: new tools for sharing and networking; the blog *InterTactica*; and a monthly discussion of a featured type of tactic (for example: unarmed accompaniment; engaging the media; or using historical sites to spark discussion of current issues).

II. Evidence of Success

One sign of the success of the project is the growing demand for the project from activists around the world. Website traffic has more than doubled since 2005, and since the revision of the project website, activists from more than 90 non-western countries have become members. We have also seen significant increases in applications for the project's in-person trainings and other activities – e.g., a small partnership initiative in 2007 drew more than twice the applications than that of a similar initiative in 2005.

With these accomplishments have come greater indications of the New Tactics project's real-world impact. Dozens of project participants have told us how they used the project's ideas and materials to strengthen their work in a number of ways. In formal evaluations, informal follow-ups, and reports from subgrantees and partners, they have told us that the project has helped them:

- *Better understand their strategic situation*, such as the Sri Lankan organization that abandoned “energy sapping” activities and turned to collaboration with allies who were better positioned for these approaches; or the Cameroonian group that was making progress on a local level but saw how they could have broader impact if they added a complementary tactic to reach a national audience.
- *Reach out to potential partners*, such as the Turkish activists who used tactical mapping to engage hundreds of other activists in strategies to end torture, or a group promoting sites of conscience that used the project's network to build new relationships with organizations in Kenya and Northern Ireland.
- *Transfer a tactic first used elsewhere*, such as the Salvadoran group that adapted a Nigerian tactic for preventing violence against women; a Slovak organization that used a Korean approach for preventing corruption in local governments; a Macedonian group that increased the representation of women in Parliament by modifying a Dutch mobile phone tactic; or the activists in Zimbabwe that adapted a Serbian method for rapidly freeing political prisoners.

The New Tactics project emerged from The Center for Victims of Torture's own experience as a creator of new tactics, a leader of coalitions, and as a center that also advocates for the protection of human rights from a unique position – one of healing and of reclaiming civic leadership. In addition to the New Tactics project, CVT's international work includes projects to create community mental health and trauma healing capacity in Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, and a capacity-building project that has strengthened torture treatment organizations in 18 countries.



Participants using the “tactical map” and “spectrum of allies” tools at a New Tactics workshop on post-conflict tactics held in February 2007 in Monrovia, Liberia.