



SPREADING THE NEW TACTICS MESSAGE.

INTRODUCTION

The Legal Resources Centre with support from the New Tactics Project held two New Tactics workshops in Bongo and Walewale in the Upper East and Northern Regions of Ghana Ghana on 12th March and 15th March 2005. The workshops were organized as an integral but separate components of a five-day workshop the LRC held at the two locations to continue work on the right to health through the operationalization of a national health insurance scheme. For the past three years the LRC through its Human Rights Cities project in Bongo and Walewale has been engaged in community development initiatives in the two areas. This has involved the use of innovation community mobilization techniques, network formation, advocacy and community action.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOPS

The New Tactics workshops sought to achieve the following:

1. Introduce participants to the New Tactics Project;
2. Introduce participants to some innovative tactics in human rights and community development work;
3. Distribute New Tactics material to participants followed by discussions;
4. Link participants to the New Tactics website as a veritable resource for new and tested techniques for human rights work; and
5. Learn from participants the way forward for the New Tactics project in the two locations

PARTICIPANTS AND NEW TACTICS MATERIAL

About forty people representing different organizations received New Tactics information. Participants came from NGOs, governmental bodies and traditional authorities. These included representatives from the following organizations or bodies:

- the District Assemblies;
- the Ghana Education Service;

- the National Commission on Civic Education;
- the Ghana National Fire Service;
- The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice;
- NGOs such as Community Development and Newfound.
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Two of the New Tactics notebooks, “Powerful Persuasion: Combating Traditional Practices that violate Human Rights” and using Government Budgets as Monitoring Tool: The Children’s Budget Unit of South Africa” were distributed to participants. The choice of the two notebooks was necessitated by the desire to make the material relevant to the situation of participants. Before the workshop the focal persons of the LRC in Bongo had reported the existence of widowhood rites in their locality and had asked the LRC to assist in addressing the problem. The notebook on “Combating Traditional Practices that Violate Human Rights” was to assist in the design of strategies to confront the practice of widowhood rites.

WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS

Workshop discussions had the following structure. There was a brief introduction of the New Tactic project. This part was essentially informational as participants were informed of the objectives of the Project. These include propagating and having replicated in other areas if applicable new tactics for human rights work. These are tactics that have either worked in other communities with positive outcomes or provide new learning on deploying innovative tactics in human rights work. Participants were also introduced to the New Tactics website and database of tactics.

This was followed with brief presentations on the two notebooks. The LRC explained the relevance of the notebooks to participants. In respect of fighting harmful traditional practices there was a walk through the various techniques Emile Short discusses in his piece on “Powerful Persuasion”: meeting all stakeholders, admitting there is a problem that needs to be tackled, doing research to know the extent of the problem, building alliances, community mobilizing and the action.

The notebook on Using Government Budgets as a Monitoring Tool generated a lot on interest. In Ghana there is decentralization programme which seeks to make communities determine their development agenda and design and implement strategies to achieve specific goals. One of the main difficulties has been getting people to take active interest in local decentralized structures. Participants were excited about the possibility of monitoring how District Assemblies budgets are used to meet specific targets.

Participants made a number of comments. First, there was the view that the New Tactics materials was useful and as they had hardcopies of the material it would be easier (for at least some of the them) to follow the tactics

discussed. Second, participants felt with some little assistance in community organizing they should be able to deploy some of the tactics in their work. However, some participants were of the view they needed further clarifications on some of the tactics. This was especially the case for participants not adequately proficient in English. Additionally, some participants felt the notebook on "Using Government Budgets (in their case the District Assembly budget) as a Monitoring tool" on District Assembly expenditure on specific issues could be technical in certain respects so they needed further discussions on how it could be effectively used. There may be the need for a further workshop solely devoted to this tactical approach. Lastly, some participant said it would be difficult for them to have access to the New Tactics database of tactics because of particularly limited internet connectivity in their area. The way out may be to make hardcopies of notebooks available to participants every time new tactics are being discussed.

OUTCOME and NEXT STEPS

Participants have become intimately aware of the New Tactics project and know where to access information. In addition, participants received eighty copies of two notebooks which they can use as reference points for the tactics discussed at the workshops. Participants through LRC focal persons in the areas have expressed the interest to do multiplier sessions of the tactics discussed in the notebooks in order to get many more people to become aware and attempt to use these tactics. Participants also expressed the desire to get additional feedback to the LRC on the workshop and the materials distributed to them at the workshop. The LRC is of assisting in the design of the multiplier learning and outreach sessions. This will be done in the context of trying to address specific issues. In the case of Bongo this may focus on addressing the harmful practice of widowhood rites.

CONCLUSION

There was great reception of the objectives of the New Tactics Project and Participants saw the workshops as greatly beneficial. However, there is the need to continue with discussions of new tactics. One way to facilitate this process lies in translating new tactics material from English to Mampruli (the main language spoken in Walewale) so that people not sufficiently proficient in English could benefit from the material.