

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

The individuals and organizations described in this book have chosen tactics based on their own unique situations, knowing their own strengths and risks, and have used these tactics as part of larger strategies to achieve well-defined goals. While some tactics — or some aspects of them — may be useful to you, it is crucial that you first assess your own situation: your context, goals, resources and allies.

This section of the workbook includes tools that we hope will help you in this task.

Developing Creative Strategies and Tactics

Use this section to identify your goals and targets and to brainstorm possible strategies and tactics. Use it to structure a conversation with people in your organization or to organize your own thoughts.

Sharing Your Tactic: A Sample Tactic Presentation

Use this sample presentation to train others to use tactics that have worked well for you. A vital part of the New Tactics in Human Rights Project is the creation of networks of practitioners who share their tactics with each other. We hope that this book will inspire you to do so.

Adapting Tactics

Use the questions in this section to decide whether a particular tactic, or aspect of a tactic, will advance your goals. Remember that not all tactics are right for every situation.

Self-Care: Caring for Your Most Valuable Resource

While you are examining your assets and liabilities, it is important to keep in mind your most valuable resources: yourself and your colleagues. Use this worksheet on your own or with your colleagues to think about ways you can take care of yourselves and each other.

DEVELOPING CREATIVE STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.

— Sun Tzu

Sun Tzu's statement, written more than 2,000 years ago, tells us that planning without action is futile and action without planning is fatal. Today, we can learn a great deal from the three areas of analysis Sun Tzu identified so long ago to lay the foundations for success.

Know yourself

Don't believe your own propaganda. You must have a realistic view of your own strengths, weaknesses, resources, capacities and supports. It is equally important to have a clear understanding of the capacities and limits of your allies.

Know your opponent

Don't believe your opponent's propaganda either. It is just as important to understand your opponent's strengths, weaknesses, resources and capacities. In order to seize the momentum and the initiatives that can be opportune or even pivotal for advancing your human rights issue, Sun Tzu counsels particular attention to understanding — and disrupting — your adversary's strategy.

Know the terrain

Terrain can be the literal ground upon which you will meet your opponent. Terrain also includes the time or space, the legal, social and cultural conditions, or the environment in which you operate.

When you have gathered the information you need to analyze these areas you are ready to develop your strategy. Strategy is the gathering, toward a goal, of many decisions, which may include:

key objectives and appropriate targets

constituencies and resources

which tactics to use and when

A tactic is a specific or concrete action taken to affect a given situation. It is important that your tactics are part of and serve a larger strategy.

GETTING STARTED

These are some important things to keep in mind as you begin:

Work with others

Whenever possible, try to bring together a group that includes people with different perspectives, backgrounds and life experiences. Not only will this enrich the pool of ideas generated in your group, it will also allow more people and groups to share their ideas and learn from others.

Agree to some basic ground rules for discussion before you begin. These might include:

Everyone is respected.

Only one person speaks at a time.

If two people want to speak, the person who has not yet spoken should be given the opportunity first.

All ideas are welcome.

Disrespectful comments are not acceptable and should be redirected in a respectful but firm manner.

When you evaluate ideas, do so in a positive and constructive way.

You should also agree to an acceptable way for the group to intervene if a member begins to dominate the discussion.

Brainstorm freely

Get as many ideas out in the open as possible. Encourage everyone to contribute their ideas and don't dismiss any as too hard to implement, too simple or too strange. Without exception, however, all ideas should be nonviolent. Nonviolence is the cornerstone of legitimacy and credibility.

List all ideas as they arise. Some will be chosen for further discussion, some will not, but don't discard any of them. An idea that seems strange or outrageous at first may on second look have just the needed element of surprise. You will later need to conduct more in-depth analysis, but at first the goal is to generate as many ideas as possible.

Document the process

Write ideas on large sheets of paper or a blackboard so that the whole group can follow the process as it unfolds. Documenting the process creates a collective memory of the experience and provides an opportunity to return to these ideas at another time or share them with others. Do, however, evaluate the risks of keeping written records of your process.

Step One: Identify the Problem

What is the problem that needs to be addressed?

To help you examine it in smaller pieces, list some of the key elements of the problem. You will probably want to take on these smaller pieces individually, working to solve the larger problem step by step.

Is the problem related to a particular behavior, institution, policy, law or individual?

State the problem in a single concise sentence.

Step Two: Identify your Target(s)

Your target is the person, place or thing you intend to affect.

Who or what has responsibility for the problem you have identified?

Who are the key actors involved in creating or prolonging the problem?

Are there policies, laws or practices that prolong the problem?

Are there institutions responsible for addressing the problem? If so, why are they unable to do so?

Identify one or two key actors or targets that your group would like to affect.

Step Three: Identify your Goal

What impact do you want to have on the problem?

Briefly describe the desired outcome of your effort. Consider this: If you had the power to make all things come true, what would that be? Don't worry about being too grandiose — that's the benefit of group process. There are usually optimists, pessimists and realists to balance each other out.

How could the key actors or targets help you work toward achieving your stated goal?

Note: This goal is likely to be different from your organization's mission, but it is helpful to keep that mission in mind to ensure that the strategies and tactics you choose are consistent with it.

Step Four: Identify your Allies and Opponents

Keep in mind your goal and targets.

Who are your allies and potential allies — individuals, organizations, institutions — in your own country or internationally? Why do they or would they have an interest in supporting your effort?

Who are your opponents and potential opponents? Why do they oppose your efforts or why might they perceive your efforts as contrary to their interests?

Who are your current passive allies and opponents? Most people will fall into these categories.

Finding ways to influence these groups of people will be an important consideration when choosing your tactics.

Step Five: Identify your Resources

A resource is anything that is available that helps you to reach your goal.

What concrete resources do you have already in place? Think about people, other organizations, networks, finances and social, political or legal conditions.

What connections do you or your allies have to the key actors responsible for addressing the problem, as you identified earlier? These are resources, too.

Consider how you do or intend to take care of yourselves (See: Caring for Your Most Valuable Resource, page 164.).

Step Six: Identify Your Strategy

Defining your strategy entails making a great number of decisions. In completing the steps above, you have provided valuable information for making your strategic decisions.

Considering the previous steps, in what areas does your group have the greatest potential for making an impact?

Make a brief list of these areas, keeping your goal in mind.

What steps are needed to maximize your impact on your target?

Is there a specific order in which these steps should be implemented? Do they need to take place simultaneously or in coordination with other efforts? Do you have the necessary resources?

Discuss your course of action and how this action will help you move closer to your goal. Keep in mind that your strategy will most likely bring you to another level of action rather than immediately to the goal itself. Be sure that this course of action is consistent with your overall goal rather than taking you in a different direction entirely.

Step Seven: Identify your Tactics

Now it's time to decide what tactics you will use to implement the strategy you have identified. When choosing tactics consider both what is within your capacity and what your priorities are. Take time to review the key actors, constituencies, allies and opponents, as well as your and your opponent's strengths, weaknesses and resources.

Inventory the tactics you know about or have access to.

What tactics might encourage passive allies to become active allies?

What tactics might help ensure that your passive opponents remain passive, or even encourage them to become allies?

What tactics might stop or soften opposition?

Can your group do this alone or do you need to collaborate with other groups?

Choose one tactic at a time for further discussion that fits your strategy and goal.

Each tactic will very likely require a more in-depth discussion and a number of steps or even additional tactics for implementation.

Step Eight: Evaluate One Tactic

Discuss why you chose this tactic. How does it have the greatest potential to move you toward your goal given your current situation?

How might this tactic be adapted to have the most impact for your situation?

Does this tactic make the best use of your resources?

How can you generate additional resources? Who else can you work with? What tactics would you need to use to convince others to work with you or contribute resources?

What other tactics would you need to use to help you implement the tactic you chose? Is there an initial target you must address before you can reach the ultimate target (e.g., gaining allies within an institution before the director can be approached on a policy change)?

Do you need to gain the support of other organizations before you begin to carry out the tactic?

Outline as many steps as you can toward implementing the tactic effectively. Continue to evaluate your available resources.

Step Nine: Adapting Tactics from the Workbook

Refer to Adapting Tactics for more tips on adapting tactics.

Choose some tactic examples that you would like to explore.

What are the similarities between the tactic example and your situation? What are the differences? What lessons can you learn from the other organization's experience?

What additional resources do you have that the example in the workbook did not have? How can you use these resources to make the tactic even more effective?

What additional obstacles do you face?

How might you need to adapt the tactic to fit your situation?

What additional information is needed and who will obtain it?

This process can serve as a means to generate new ideas for reaching your goals and as a good training ground for your organization, allowing you to develop sharper analytical skills that will help you realistically plan and assess your strategy and tactics.

ADAPTING TACTICS

The tactics described in this workbook are meant to inspire you to think about new ways of doing your work. We also hope

that you will find tactics that are transferable to your situation.

When we say that tactics are transferable, we mean that they can be adapted for use in contexts and countries other than the ones in which they originated. This does not usually mean that you could or should try to use a tactic — from this book or elsewhere — in exactly the same way it was originally used. You need to evaluate your own situation and resources and assess the risks involved. You may need to combine one tactic with another or you may find that some component or aspect of a tactic is applicable in your situation while the tactic as a whole is not.

The questions below will help you evaluate and adapt new tactics to your own situation.

Is this tactic right for my issue and situation?

Who else can I discuss this with?

What other groups should I tell about this?

Have I ever seen or used a tactic like this?

Was it successful?

Why or why not?

How would it help me achieve my goals?

Would it have the intended effect on my target?

Has this tactic already been used on my target?

What resources would I need?

What resources do I already have?

How can I get those resources that I don't have?

Who can I talk to in order to get more information about this tactic?

What alliances would I need to make to use this tactic?

How can I make those alliances?

How might those who oppose my issue react to this tactic?

How risky would this tactic be for me or my organization?

Am I prepared to accept the level of risk involved in this tactic?

How can I reduce the risks that may be involved in using this tactic?

Can I use some part of this tactic?

Can I combine this tactic with other tactics?

What is my back-up plan?

What would I do if this tactic doesn't work the way I expect it to?

SHARING YOUR TACTIC: A SAMPLE TACTIC PRESENTATION

The New Tactics project is about both learning and

teaching new tactics. We want you not only to think about your own work in terms of tactics and to learn from the tactics in this book, but also to share your tactics with others. Sharing tactical innovations benefits those who developed the tactics (by building their leadership and presentation skills) as well as those whom they teach.

A basic outline for a 40-minute presentation on your tactic follows. Use this outline to help you choose the information that will best help your audience understand and implement your tactic.

1 minute

State your tactic.

Begin your training with a brief description of your tactic. Remember to focus first on your tactic rather than on the problem or the context (there will be time to explain that). Review the definition of tactic on p. 21 and read “The Need for New Tactics” (p. 12) to be sure that you are clear on this.

Also, think about an interesting way to tell your audience why this tactic is unique, important or successful. Tell a quick story. Ask a question that will grab your audience’s attention.

5 minutes

Describe the context.

You want your audience to understand why this particular tactic was used in this situation. Help them do that in the following ways:

Describe current or past social issues that demanded response, particularly those that will help others understand your tactic.

Describe the process by which this response was organized.

Outline the desired outcome for using the tactic, i.e. your goals and objectives.

Briefly explain the strategy employed and how the tactic fit into it.

You don’t need to spend a great deal of time on each of these question areas, but be sure to touch on each area briefly.

20 minutes

Explain how the tactic works.

This is the core of your presentation. You are providing your audience with the key information they would need to implement your tactic in their own situations.

Provide a step-by-step description of how you carried out the tactic. We recommend you use a single, specific case as an example. Imagine a colleague in another country who is going to try to use your tactic. What do they need to know? Where do they start? How many people are involved? What support do they need? What resources do they need?

Remember to take it step by step!

7 minutes

Review the development of the tactic.

Talk about the targets: What behavior, institution, policy or individuals was the tactic intended to influence? Keep in mind that there may be initial targets as well as long-range or ultimate targets.

Explain the actual outcomes: How do the people involved describe the outcome and impact? Use quotes or comments from people involved.

7 minutes

Discuss what you learned and how this tactic could be used in another context.

Explain what you learned from implementing this tactic: What worked? What would you do differently? What recommendations do you have for others?

From your experience, what factors need to be considered before implementing this tactic? What are its limitations?

If you are aware of other applications of the tactic, briefly tell people about how it was implemented differently and why.

SELF-CARE: CARING FOR YOUR MOST VALUABLE RESOURCE

In doing the difficult work of advancing and protecting human rights you may work long hours in dangerous situations. You may be exposed to sights and sounds and stories that are very hard to bear. What you are doing could be traumatizing or stressful for you, whether you are experiencing it firsthand or through others.

People cope with stress in many ways. Some people try to work harder at the expense of their family and friends, or decide they've had enough and frequently change jobs or volunteer positions. Others may smoke more cigarettes or drink more often or more heavily. Still others may lose sight of positive experiences and think that people shouldn't be having fun when others are suffering.

To maintain your strength, your commitment and your joy in doing this work you need to manage unhealthy stress. (Not all stress is unhealthy! Some stress actually pushes us to do better work.)

The ABCs of Self-Care

The ABCs of self-care are Awareness, Balance and Connection (Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996).

Awareness

You must first be able to identify the signs and symptoms of unhealthy stress and the effects of trauma (whether experienced first- or second-hand). This requires awareness.

Be aware of your own body: Are you getting sick more often, feeling tense, becoming angry or frustrated more quickly?

Be aware of your relationships: Do you take time for the people you love and let those people take time for you?

Be aware of how you've changed: Do you no longer enjoy hobbies or activities that helped you to relax or were ways that you connected and spent time with family and friends? Have your beliefs changed, about your faith or about other people? Do you look at the world differently?

Balance

Seek balance among a number of different types of activities, including work, personal and family life, rest and leisure.

You will be more productive when you've had opportunities to rest and relax. What helps you and relax may be very different from your family members and colleagues do. It's important that the ways you relax aren't damaging to your health and well-being or to the relationships that are important to you. Becoming aware of when you are losing balance in your life gives you an opportunity to change.

Connection

Build connections and supportive relationships with your coworkers, friends, family and community.

All the work you do to create a better society will have little meaning if you don't experience positive and healthy connections along the way to this better place. Once again, becoming aware of when you are losing connection with people important to you provides you with an opportunity to think and take action that will bring more balance back into your life.

Discussing Self-Care

It can be very helpful for your organization to take time to discuss the ways in which you are all coping — individually and collectively — with the stress of doing human rights work.

Use any of the following questions to open discussion in pairs, in small groups or with your organization as a whole.

Share what you like about doing human rights work. Why do you continue to put your valuable time, energy and resources into the work?

Share something you enjoy that has nothing to do with your work. Do you take the time to do this?

Share an experience that made you change the way you view yourself, your family, your community, your country or something else.

Share what you notice about yourself when you get overwhelmed, tired, frustrated or angry. How do you try to cope with these feelings and situations? Does it involve others? Does what you do help the situation? Does it make the situation worse?

Share what you notice about the group when stress levels rise. What do you do as a group to cope?

Share a time when you felt supported or not supported by your family in doing the work you're doing. What did they do to help you or make it more difficult for you?

Share a time when you felt supported or not supported by one of your colleagues in doing the work you're doing. What did they do to help you or make it more difficult for you?

Share ways in which you as colleagues or as an organization can help each other bear the burdens of working with people who have experienced rights violations or of witnessing violations yourselves.

Finally, share one thing you'll do differently now that you've explored the ABCs of handling stress.

Now you're ready to take a step in maintaining your own awareness and activities in self-care. You are aware of what your colleagues are doing to help themselves. Take time to reinforce these positive steps and activities. Check in on a regular basis to continue discussing the importance of maintaining our most valuable resource — ourselves!