Empowerment Guide

Acknowledgements

Foreword

Empowerment is a central element of MSActionAid's governance work which operates within a rights-based and participatory framework. For anyone working in this field, key elements are understanding processes that can lead marginalised groups in local communities to empower themselves, understand their position and engage more equitably with other citizens and authorities in local (and national) democratic processes.

The Empowerment Guide brings together a range of tools, methods and experience that can inspire and give new ideas to people who engage with political empowerment processes in the Global South. The guide does not provide a blue-print or ready-made answers for how to best promote political empowerment everywhere. It encourages the reader to be reflective not only about the specific methods and tools that you use or could use. The guide does this by posing questions related to understanding the local power relations, social barriers, and the political culture that prevails in a particular context, but also more specific questions about how to concretely engage with the people who are in the process of empowering themselves or who could be included in such a process.

In this guide we suggest approaching the process of political empowerment as involving a combination of different elements or types of activities, including: mobilisation of people to form groups; awareness raising about rights and how people can analyse and influence the situation they are in; ways to actively participate in decision-making; strengthen the internal organisation of citizen groups and tools and methods for action.

The Empowerment Guide is one of two books produced by MSActionAid-Denmark within the field of just and democratic governance at the local level. The other book is the Accountability Sourcebook which provides the reader with an analytical framework for understanding accountability relationships between the state and its citizens, and an action focus on how NGOs and CSOs can hold state institutions, service providers and duty bearers to account using an evidence-based approach which incorporates a range of tools and methods.

The two handbooks can be read independently, but a more holistic picture will emerge if the books are read in combination. The handbooks can with benefit be supplemented by the ActionAid's 'ELBAG' Handbook (Economic Literacy and Budget Accountability in Governance) that is closely linked to approaches outlined in the Accountability Sourcebook and the 'REFLECT' Handbook, which is closely linked to the Civic Empowerment Guide.

The first edition of the Empowerment Guide will be used, along with other materials, on a large number of training courses that will be delivered by MS TCDC (the MS Training Centre for Development Cooperation, Arusha, Tanzania) during 2010. These training courses are part of the capacity building programme being implemented under the auspices of ActionAid's International Governance Team (IGT). The training courses will be managed and implemented by 'Training4Change' (the global training organisation of MSAA-DK). During 2010 the Empowerment Guide will undergo a substantive re-editing. This process will be managed by the IGT and be based on feed back, inputs and case-studies from AA from course participants and from other practitioners in ActionAid. the revisions will be in terms of lay-out and in terms of further development of the theoretical foundation for the guide. The Rights Based Approach and the REFLECT methodology will be incorporated as well as theory concerning power. Inputs, comments and staff and partners will be compiled and incorporated during 2010.

MSActionAid-Denmark

List of Content

Introduction

The theme of this guide is Political Empowerment (PE). It brings together a range of tools, methods and concrete experiences that can inspire and give new ideas to people who engage with political empowerment processes in the Global South. The guide does not provide a blue-print or ready-made answers for how to best promote political empowerment everywhere. Instead it seeks to encourage reflection on what political empowerment is and to suggest ways to analyse and approach the numerous dilemmas, challenges and complexities that face the political empowerment of poor and marginalised people in different contexts.

Political empowerment can be understood in many different ways. From the outset it is therefore important to know that this guide approaches political empowerment in a way that places specific emphasis on the 'political'. In MS AA we understand Empowerment as *The capacity of people to reflect on their situation and to make decisions about the issues that affect their lives; to be aware of their rights, responsibilities and the potential they have for influencing the enactment and enforcement of policies and laws to guarantee their rights and responsibilities. This should enable people to hold duty bearers to account. Therefore, it focuses on power relations and how citizens deal with the different facets in which power presents itself.*

We envisage that the outcome of political empowerment will be:
- Equity leading to equality
- Inclusiveness
- Critical awareness on politics, economic and social issues
- The poor and marginalized men and women, boys and girls are informed and capable of engaging with duty bearers at all levels of decision making and at all levels of governance

We are aware that the empowerment process should have the following characteristics:
- People centred and gender responsive
- Inclusive (all segments of society)
- Accountable

The term 'political' adds to these aspects an emphasis on power relations and political cultures in society at large. Political empowerment is about relations and cultures that underwrite why certain groups are marginalised from decision-making or discriminated against in for example access to political rights, public services and resources.

In MS AA we apply a rights-based approach to poverty eradication, and it starts with the connection between poverty and human rights. It is our belief that poverty is an injustice imposed on people. At the heart of a rights-based approach is a focus on holding governments and other duty bearers accountable for the fulfilment of human rights. We believe that this is done most effectively when rights-holders themselves organise and mobilise with others to claim, secure and enjoy their human rights. In a rights-based approach, this requires rights-holders to understand that their needs are related to specific rights and to identify and target the specific duty-bearer, or bearers, accountable for ensuring the realisation of those rights in practice.

This guide's understanding of political empowerment is framed by a wider vision to support the development of democratic societies. In democratic societies citizens actively participate in decision-making processes and have equal access to social, economic and political rights. Such a vision also views the state and public institutions as responsive to the demands of citizens and as having the duty to deliver rights. Thus framed political empowerment also means that people are aware of their rights and obligations within the nation-state, and importantly, that they have the capacity to enact them. In short, political empowerment can be seen as a process whereby marginalised people are transformed from passive to active citizens.

Since political empowerment processes will always be context-specific, this guide builds on a substantial number of concrete experiences, rather than alone on abstract theory and methodology. In its present version the guide brings out case-studies from four countries in Eastern and Southern Africa (Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda and Mozambique). These cases focus on PE change processes based on individual stories, group experiences, and program initiatives. The full version of these case studies can be found on the attached CD. However, the guide has also been informed by existing theory and manuals on PE that are not alone based on African experiences. In the literature list you will be able to find links to these sources.

Who is it for?

The intended users of this guide are primarily the members of Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), the staff of MS AA at District level and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), who work with political empowerment processes in partnership with MS AA. However, the guide will hopefully also be relevant for anyone, anywhere, who is active in, or concerned about, political empowerment processes.

What is its purpose?

The purpose of this guide is to give inspiration, new ideas and examples of how to initiate political empowerment of poor and marginalised people. It for example asks questions such as: Who are the local actors?; Who are marginalised and what skills and socio-political background do they have?; How can marginalised people, who may be reluctant to influence decision-making or demand rights, be stimulated to mobilise themselves and what are the available local channels and means to do so?; Who among the local population have the skills, personality and courage to be drivers of change in the political empowerment process such as in mobilisation and organisation of groups? Etc.

These questions and many other challenges and dilemmas are brought to the fore in this guide, and it is the hope that it can inspire reflection on the different elements that are inherent in a political empowerment process. Above all the guide underlines the need to *ground* the support to PE in the local context. This means to make choices of methods and tools that support existing local dynamics and initiatives and that build on continuous reflection on the change processes that are underway.

This guide should therefore *not* be read as a manual or a step-by-step formula that prescribes how to do political empowerment work everywhere. Local facilitators –together with the right holders

should be driving the process. The process should ultimately be *owned* by the groups who are in the process of politically empowering *themselves*. It is important for facilitators to ensure that the empowerment process is owned by people themselves, which means that they decide what is important and relevant for their own empowerment.

When you read this guide it is important to be aware that the focus is particularly on political empowerment at the local level – whether this refers to a district or a specific locality or village and the associated public institutions or local governments that prevail in that area.

To summarise, we can say that the purpose of this guide is to:
• Raise conscious reflection and improve the ability to raise critical questions;
• Improve the analytical skills, specifically related to political power issues;
• Make linkages between local, national, regional and international levels
• Encourage a context-specific approach and methodological flexibility;
• Give examples of different tools and methods

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What is Power, Empowerment and our approach to Political Empowerment?

The concept of power needs an explication; you cannot talk about empowerment without making clear what power is – It can be helpful to categorize power into four different types of power relations[1]:

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[1] Luttrell and Quiroz, July 2007

Power over: the ability to influence and coerce. This implies that somebody (or something) is having the power over somebody else, and that the powerful can decide over the life of the other person. We think of this power relation as a situation where the powerful person will loose influence or power if the powerless person takes or gains power.

Power to: organize and change existing hierarchies. This is where you get access to decision making and by organizing yourselves and manage to change existing hierarchies.

Power with: power from collecting action. This is talking about the power you can have when you enter into a collective action and together demand rights and succeed in gaining improvements.

Power within: power from individual consciousness. This requires a change in own perceptions of your rights, capacities and potential. For example marginalized people are in a position, where they do not have the confidence and strength to demand their rights; they do not have the courage to challenge the authorities.

Likewise, before talking about political empowerment, let's just be clear about other types of empowerment:

Social and Human Empowerment: Social empowerment is a multidimensional social process that includes the person, couple, family, group, community, social organization, public and private institutions, the system of networks and alliances underpinning the social fabric, and the institutional and cultural context in relation to their social role and value. It is a process that helps people to gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important.[2]

Economic Empowerment: Economic empowerment seeks to ensure that people have the appropriate skills, capabilities, resources and access to a secure and sustainable income and livelihood. Related to this, some organizations focus heavily on the importance of access to assets and resources.

Cultural empowerment: The redefining of rules and norms and the recreating of cultural and symbolic practices. This may involve focusing on minority rights by using culture as an entry point.

Women Empowerment

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[2] Luttrell and Quiroz, July 2007

The Beijing Declaration (section 13), presents women's empowerment as a key strategy for development: "Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace".

In this guide we focus on **Political Empowerment**, because we believe that the political awareness is a prerequisite for people to change their own situation and to hold governments to account. Then, how to achieve political empowerment? First of all you must deal with and change the causes that dis-empower you. We have therefore in this guide described the underlying or structural barriers to empowerment and active citizenship[3]. Such barriers are context dependent, and in-depth analysis of existing barriers and power relations is therefore vital, and should involve local stakeholders themselves. It can here be significant to appreciate that barriers are seldom just about the unwillingness of power-holders to listen and respond to the views of citizens, although this is very important. Barriers are often deeply rooted in society and, they also shape people's perceptions of themselves. Political empowerment involves helping to change attitudes and self-perceptions of *both* the marginalised citizens and the power-holders.

When working on empowering people it is therefore important to find a good balance between *a)* empowering people by offering the necessary skills and knowledge to overcome the barriers that are the root cause of their disempowerment and *b)* allow the political empowerment process to be owned and driven by the people themselves.

This guide builds on the conviction that political empowerment is best achieved when poor and marginalized people organize themselves into groups that can act collectively. This is important, because individuals seldom have the capacity to alone claim their rights and change those unequal power relations that are the cause of their marginalization. Even if citizenship is based on respect for the rights of the individual, it is through collective demands and actions that such rights are best realised. This can take the form of the formation of civil society organisations at the local level that eventually can develop into wider networks, coalitions or social movements that can give strength and voice to civil society at national, sub-national and local levels.

When you read this guide, whether you are living among the people you are working with – or if you come from outside for a period, then it is important to be aware of your own power when you assume a role as a facilitator. The power balance may change and it is important that you are open about and reflect upon the power that others may perceive that you hold.

This guide acknowledges that you cannot generalize about people. They play a variety of roles, occupy different positions and have varying capacities and views. Because of the heterogeneity within local populations, this guide does not use the concept of *'community'*. Community easily gives the impression that people living within a given locality are equal and share the same views. The concept also overlooks important power relations within local populations and often gives the wrong presumption of a shared sense of collective identity. Instead we therefore use the terms *local population* and *citizens or groups of citizens*[4].

When applying the rights based approach and addressing the inequality between rich and poor, an essential component of a rights-based approach is confronting the domination of men over women and the inequality between them in terms of access to education, services, resources and power. For this reason, women's rights are central to our analysis and practice of human rights.

To summarise, this guide builds on an approach to political empowerment that includes:

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[3] Active citizens are those who exercise both their rights and responsibilities in a balanced way. This implies both access to e.g. school, health etc. and voting for elections.

[4] We are aware that the term "citizen" refer to those people with a national citizenship and thus exclude those refugees or people from other countries with no national rights, in some cases the term "people" may apply better

- A strong emphasis on 'the political' aspects of empowerment, associated with challenging the power relations and political cultures that underwrite exclusion, injustices and poverty.
- An RBA to empowerment which links the local to the national and global
- An emphasis on overcoming the underlying political, structural, cultural and social barriers that inhibit some citizens from involving themselves in the political empowerment process.
- A group-based collective approach to the achievement of active citizenship, which is takes into consideration individual differences and voices also *within* groups or local populations.
- A focus not only on political empowerment as a goal, but also on the *process* of political empowerment as continuously supporting the goal.
- A focus on women's rights in the analysis and implementation of empowerment

In this guide we suggest approaching the process of political empowerment as being something that involves a combination of different elements or types of activities, including: *mobilisation* of people to form groups; *awareness raising* about rights and how people can analyse and influence the situation they are in; ways to *actively participate* in decision-making; strengthen the internal *organisation* of citizen groups and tools and methods for *action*. These five elements are introduced below, and dealt with in more detail throughout this guide.

Five elements of the Political Empowerment approach
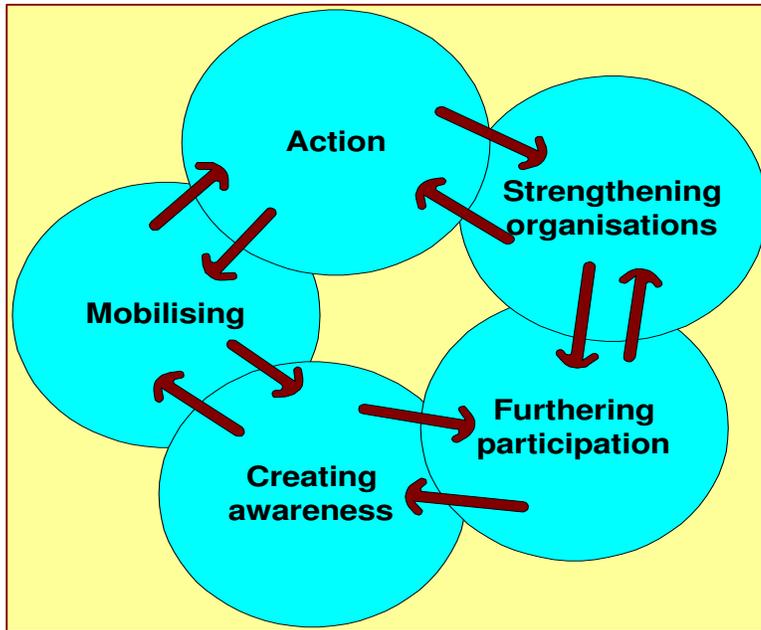
In this guide each of the chapters after this introduction addresses separately what we consider five important elements or sets of activities in a political empowerment process. We should point out at this stage that the five elements need not be happening in a linear fashion or be read as part of a step-by-step chronological approach. Rather they can be seen as a cycle where the five elements are following one another unpredictably according to the social actors.

That is to say that action could encourage more citizens to mobilise; awareness raising could lead to more action and so on. So the elements reinforce and strengthen each other, for example awareness making is usually an ongoing activity, and mobilisation and organising may come before active participation is improved. Moreover formalised group organisation may have resulted from concrete actions: for example people may decide to get better organised because they have already fought for an issue or a right.

It is important to note that each of the elements calls for **reflection and learning** as part of the process in order to improve future actions. In practice it is difficult to separate the different elements as they are often entangled with each other. The elements can thus be seen as analytical distinctions, not as rigidly separate categories of activities. The five elements can roughly be defined as following:

- *1) Mobilisation*: the process where a number of persons are mobilised to form a group around an issue, rights and/or an income-generating project. This element can also involve efforts to mobilise new persons to join already existing groups or to bring already existing groups into larger civil society networks or alliances. A core aspect of this element is the collective idea or agreement behind the mobilisation of people into groups, how this is managed and, and how the common issues are identified by the people themselves. Moreover mobilisation raises important questions about the social, historical, political and structural barriers to group formation among poor and marginalised people, who may sometimes be reluctant to or unaware of the potential gains of acting collectively such as demanding that their voices are heard and their rights fulfilled by local authorities

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- *2) Awareness making*: the process through which the group members come to understand and be able to analyse the situation they are in as well as gain knowledge of the rights and obligations they have as citizens. It is therefore about information and communication skills. Awareness can help activate a group of citizens to become involved in finding a solution to the challenges facing them. This element can involve approaches such as REFLECT, Forum Theatre, rights awareness and so on. Awareness raising can take place in a variety of ways, but to be empowering it must be based on a methodology that enables dialogue, debate and active participation. This element therefore raises important questions about the pedagogical skills and methods of the facilitator. It also raises issues about appropriate communication channels for the given local context.

- *3) Participation*: the process of motivating and encouraging group members to actively engage in discussions, listen to each other, give inputs and arrive at a constructive agreement on how to handle common issues and eventually engage in actions. Ultimately this element should contribute to nurturing active citizens who have the courage, capacity and motivation to actively participate in decision-making processes, raise demands and engage in solving development challenges. This element raises important questions of how poor and marginalised people can continue to actively participate in collective activities, including how to address the barriers to such participation that may exist for various groups in society (such as women's tendency to refrain from raising their opinions in public due to male dominance). In this guide we suggest different ways to do so, such as referring to positive experiences of other individuals or groups in the area, who through active participation have been able to change their living condition or bring a development improvement to the society at large. This element also raises questions about group representation, as not everyone can be expected to participate as actively all the time. It also engages with how to enable spaces for active participation by working with local leaders and public authorities.

- *4) Organising*: the process of moving from a number of persons to becoming a more organised group, such as a CBO, a movement, a group of young unemployed people, a cooperative of herders or farmers, a union of craftsmen, a forum, a committee, etc. This element involves strengthening the internal organisation of the group in question for example in terms of leadership structure, membership conditions, representation, membership fees or contributions, internal democratic procedures, fund raising skills, activity planning etc. It can also involve efforts to align different groups to each other, such as forming networks of civil society organisations or platforms for collective action. Ultimately this element is about strengthening groups' capacity to make their work more efficient in solving issues. It should also give them a stronger position from where to address local leaders and the state. There are many ways to structure the internal organisation of a group, and this guide deals with the pros and cons of some of them. It raises important questions about the role of leaders or group representatives, including how to be aware of the risks of reproducing certain power positions in the local setting and thereby inhibiting others from playing an active role.

- *5) Action*: the process of translating collective group interests, issues, and needs into action. Taking action is therefore a process by which citizens decide to take steps to rectify existing problems in their area and demanding their rights. This could be around issues, such as lack of access to public services, violation of rights and/or exclusion from decision-making, which either marginalize the people, or leave them in a situation where they feel oppressed, deprived of their rights and voiceless. This element gives ideas to develop agendas and action plans to address the issue(s) formulated by the group. It also involves tools to carry out actual actions and to identify the appropriate spaces or channels for doing so (i.e. how to make service providers react to demands around an issue). By taking action and demanding rights the citizens are likely to encounter resistance or suspicion from the established power-holders, and the guide therefore also raises important questions about how to address the risks of open confrontation or conflict

How is the guide put together?

The guide is structured in three distinct parts. The first part describes the first five elements of the political empowerment processes. In the next edition of this guide the sixth element will be added on "alliance-building and networks" and how this can lead to larger social movements or broader civil society coalitions to be formed.

The second part is a collection of tools and methods that can be used in facilitating political empowerment processes: conducting rights-aware situation analyses, issue raising exercises, frameworks for facilitating discussion, decision-making approaches, and so on. These are taken from a variety of sources, manuals, handbooks and guides from the fields of adult education, community development, participatory rural appraisal (PRA), and *Reflect* . If you would like to go deeper into some of the approaches and theories from which this Tool-kit is derived, then we have provided a list of references. The CD-Rom contains the third part of this guide which is a collection of four case studies that come from political empowerment activities in Kenya, Mozambique, Uganda and Zimbabwe – all of them supported by MS AA.

Part I: Five elements of Political Empowerment

1. Mobilising

In the following five chapters, we have taken inspiration from the four case studies that you will find on the attached CD Rom. To mobilise means to gather or bring together a number of citizens living in designated geographical area such as a village or an administrative area. A Political Empowerment (PE) process that shows results and improved circumstances for individuals and groups of citizens encourages continued citizen mobilisation.

Definition of Terms

Citizen – As used in this context, it is an inhabitant of a certain area (as opposed to the legal status of an individual). People can be active citizens or passive ones.

Community – This term generally refers to a social group living in a given location, sharing social and moral codes and usually connotes unity, consensus, solidarity and harmony. We will adopt a different understanding of this term as far as in Africa as elsewhere communities are divided, they may share common values, beliefs and traditions as they may not. Some people are powerful others are powerless (refer also to our discussion in the introduction).

Economic structures – this is the sum of all the different economic activities in the geo-political boundaries of a given area.

Rights holders – are citizens in a given area that have the right to expect the state to keep its promises in regards to social services

Duty bearers - are the state and its various organs, such as parliaments, local authorities, and the justice system. They are appointed civil servants or elected politicians who are officially in charge of the local administration or the management of local government. Duty bearers have the obligation to turn the rights into reality.

Power over: the ability to influence and coerce. This implies that somebody (or something) is having the power over somebody else, and that the powerful can decide over the life of the other person.
Power to: organize and change existing hierarchies this is where you get access to decision making and by organizing yourselves and manage to change existing hierarchies.
Power with: power from collecting action this is talking about the power you can have when you enter into a collective action and together demand rights and succeed in gaining improvements.
Power within: power from individual consciousness. This requires a change in own perceptions of their rights, capacities and potential. For example dalits in India are in apposition, where they do not have the confidence and strength to demand their rights, they do not have the courage to challenge the authorities.

An Overview

Mobilisation processes are carried out in order to address shared issues of concern, and to be able to act upon these issues. This is important because individual citizens seldom have the capacity to, alone, claim their rights and challenge the unequal power relations and wider economic structures that are the cause of their poverty and marginalization. Even if citizenship is claimed to be based on individual rights, it is often only through collective claims that such rights can be realised. This collective understanding of individuals is central in the whole PE process, more so when it comes to taking action.

Below, there is an example from Uganda, from a Women's group in a pastoralist region. Here, the Women in the group were already prepared to work together to achieve their goals. They had made up their own minds that they should do something about the way their men's cattle rustling was badly affecting their lives – and the lives of their families. They knew exactly what the problem was but, in trying to tackle it, the main issue was their low status, as women, within the community. Their way out was to raise the issue in drama and in songs. It was a strategy quite in keeping with the local culture

> *'We had to do something. So we organised one day to meet in one of the villages to discuss our problems. You see, the women had been meeting at the market, at the borehole and talking about this issue, but we were not organised and we didn't have a place we could meet. So we said, women of Nabilatuk, what can we do so that our men can listen to us? And after discussing for many days, that is how we decided to form a drama group. You see, in drama, we can say things to educate people, our men, without getting a severe beating after. So we started to teach ourselves and when we were ready, we started to do our plays at the auction'.*

In such a case, a group stands a better chance of success – being strengthened by solidarity of purpose. And, quite often, poor or marginalized citizens will not have groups already formed – like the Women's Group above.

The facilitator or a mobiliser etc. can – together with the local people - analyse the space for manoeuvring. A facilitator's role might well be to bring people together, so that they recognise the advantages of forming a group and making liaisons with similar groups or supporting organisations to tackle the issues they have identified. A Field-level staff is not someone who empowers other people, political empowerment processes are endogenous processes – you cannot empower

people, they have to do it themselves. As a field worker living in the area you can identify and involve local leaders, people from a church organisation, from a trade union, members of a women's group or a youth group to take the lead in addressing issues and demanding rights. Those people could well help in rallying friends, neighbours and fellow citizens, neighbours.

When people see the need for mobilisation, it is often because of a worsening of a certain condition that begins to adversely affect them or a heightened awareness – and recognition that they should take action. At other times, it is because there has been an outside influence from, say a non-governmental organisation, a community-based organisation, a government agency, and so on. This might open up a space for accessing funds or for influencing a particular rights issue. The trigger could also be the issuing of a new policy or the passing of a new law.

At times the motivation could be that a group sees the possibility of joining, or forming, a network that will lead to receiving more support and to enhancing their socio-political standing, as well as improving their economic situation. There is the example of the youth group in an urban slum. Membership of the group enabled the youngsters to make an income and, at the same time, it provided them with an opportunity to 'network' with other organisations and so to increase their opportunities for a wide range of productive activities.

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> *The youth group members were grateful to the many people who volunteered their knowledge and expertise in helping them to form the group. They said that as a result, they have managed to avoid being sucked into a life of crime. The group keeps them active most of the time and, for many members, its activities have created opportunities to move out of the slum.*
>
> Youth Group from an urban slum (Kenya)

In political empowerment work the main changes you as a field worker want to bring about – like more equitable power relationships, for example, or a raised status for women – such changes usually take a long time to realise. You will be aware that people might be put off by having such long term objectives. So, it is good, right at the beginning of the mobilisation process to highlight some possible short-term tangible results. They might not change the power structures that sustain poverty, but they could well make smaller, more immediate, improvements in people's lives (for example, improved water facility or a new classroom). Therefore, allowing for the possibility of changing a certain approach and reserving room to try out new things is important. This will help in creating a dynamic project – and one that stays fresh and keeps the interest of the group that is working on it.

The advantages of such a flexible approach can be illustrated in the case studies from Uganda. NGO Link Forum Apac (NLFA), decided to change its approach in PE sessions – from a 'supply-driven' to a 'demand-driven' approach. The new strategy saved them time and resources – and it was still effective for the citizens. In Kenya, Kibera Community Development (KCODA) went through a process of changing track. And in Mozambique, the local NGO – Associação

Moçambicana para a Promoção da Cidadania (AMOPROC) – also revised its strategy slightly when they realised that they could be in-advertently reinforcing political party groupings

> *Changes of strategy*
> *AMOPROC has, as part of its support of civil society initiatives, now moved from simply creating awareness among local communities about LOLE (Lei dos Orgãos Locais do Estado – law on the local organs of the state) towards organising CSOs into networks. Moreover, it is now realising that its earlier method of asking locality administrators to choose the community activists might actually work to reproduce particular party political constellations (the locality administrators mainly chose activists who were active members of Frelimo). It is now thinking of going directly to the youth, for example, through schools.*
>
> Namaacha, Mozambique.

A good mobilisation plan is guided by a number of factors:

1. Dialogue between all relevant individuals and institutions (stakeholders).
2. Capacity building that aims to make known to the people their rights, capabilities and capacities and assist them to handle projects with less assistance in the future.
3. Social responsibility through an approach that recognises the vulnerable in a specific area and seeks to integrate and involve them in all aspects of the empowerment process.
4. Transparency and accountability where every individual in the community has access to, and is made aware of, the technical and financial aspects of the work the CBO/NGO is carrying out, as well as about the wider governance context and the possibilities there are for people to influence decisions and service delivery.
5. Sustainability: Where the PE project requires the local people to show commitment and responsibility from among those who will benefit from it; which ensures that groups of local citizens will take care of the project and continue with activities when your organisation leaves – and/or when external funding comes to an end.
6. Gender sensitivity: Men and women, young and old, all experience different conditions and have different needs and capabilities – and these should be taken into account. Make sure that all know their rights
7. Representation: A plan should seek to involve as many different interests as possible – local government leaders, business people, other NGOs and CBOs working in the area, and so on.
8. Understanding of power hierarchies: how they might react and might affect the political empowerment activities;
9. Information sharing: Effective mobilisation relies a good deal on the efficient exchange of information with relevant stakeholders and, more so, with the direct involved people.

Finally, a good mobilisation plan is flexible. There is no key to the universe. Each context has specificities that have to be taken into account.

Mapping and Analysis

It is important to have an understanding of the target area's social and political profile – how collective identity is established and what kinds of power structures are in place.

Recognising unequal power relationships is often a key task in making a context analysis. And mapping how the inequalities in many different spheres – social, political, economic and cultural – reinforce each other is an important factor. The overlays of inequalities can be rigid, persistent and hard to unravel. So they should be identified and tackled right from the beginning working with empowerment processes.[5] Power relations can present themselves in many forms and in many contexts: families, ethnic groups, gender relationships, traditional authorities, social status (like castle-like groups, descendants of slaves, foreigners or new comers) and age groups.[6] Reflect has elaborated a set of tools used for revealing power relations in communities.[7]

In conducting a power analysis, there are some basic aspects that should be explored:

> Understanding of power hierarchies: And how they might react and might affect the political empowerment activities: who has power? What kind of power do they have? From what/where do they get their power? How is their power linked to national politics, ethnicity, economy, etc? How do they use or misuse it? And who are the least powerful (most vulnerable)? Being a facilitator or member of a CBO/NGO: what is your power, and how do others perceive your power? What are your influence and your relations?

When looking at power structures, it is important to consider the different actors that exist within an area; but it is also important to consider the relations that powerful actors have outside of the area (such as relationship with the ruling party). The actors might be religious leaders, chiefs, local wealthy families, local government officials, leaders of ethnic groups, external organizations (such as NGOs and donors). The power analysis could also extend to a study of the power held by men as opposed to women. It could focus on the influence of one group of the local community on another – and on the elder over the younger.

While mapping these relations, it is also important that the focus does not miss any of the marginalized groups – the youth, the women, the girl child, the disabled, and people living with HIV&AIDS, etc. How can their isolation and stigmatization be addressed? Marginalized and the vulnerable people are very aware of power structures – because they are the victims of them. It is

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[5] Friis-Hansen and Kyed, 2009: 5;
 Newman, 2004: Introductory chapter
[6] Oxfam, 2008:4
[7] Communication and Power, 2003

particularly essential to determine how gender roles are perceived in the area. It might assist in subsequent measures to address the underlying causes of negative gender practices.

It is possible that local leaders do not want their followers to be mobilised, or local politicians might not want their constituents to have their awareness raised because any attempt to build capacity could be interpreted as a threat to their power positions.

Managing conflict: A political empowerment initiative, more often than not, creates disagreements and disputes between different interest groups. A good plan will incorporate a strategy to manage such conflicts. It could lay the groundwork for setting up occasions for dialogue and for achieving positive outcomes, such as effective collaboration between service providers, local leaders and citizens. It will also include a reflection on what will happen when the facilitator (or the funding organisation) leaves and outline a strategy on how to tackle old power relations that might threaten to re-establish themselves.

Try to involve the local leadership right from the beginning, in order to get 'buy-in' from them and an understanding that, instead of posing a threat, an activity might actually end-up helping them to perform their duties better. It might improve their relationships and boost their reputation with local citizens. This is illustrated in the Uganda Case Study where there was a tension on the part of local leaders, who were initially opposed to a project but then came to realise that it could be in their advantage to support it.

Change of attitude and response to demands

The Association for World Education-Uganda National Chapter (AWE-UNC) Programme Officer in Nakapiripirit – Mary Amodoi – narrated how she had seen changes beginning to happen in the community. She talked about how some local leaders were not sure whether to support the initiative or not because, on the one hand, the citizens were questioning them more than before but, on the other hand, because of the demands they were making, the leaders had the backing of the people when it came to discharging some of their duties. According to her, although some of the leaders do not like it, they are gradually making themselves more and more available to the people, to listen to their problems because they realise that the people are beginning to understand the kind of power they have. As a result, representatives from the Ministry of Health were now convening meetings to talk to the local community. So were representatives from the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS). Considering the fact that the PE initiative was still relatively new to Nakapiripirit, Mary had high hopes of the achievements sustained PE interventions can achieve. In just a few months, there were already changes being felt in the area.

Community Mapping

A community mapping can help to understand the internal differences between people living within the chosen geographical area. It could be, for example, that two rival groups live in a given area where the CBO intends to work. Gaining an understanding of the nature of their rivalry, as well as common aspects that could bring them together, could save you a lot of time.

A mapping will help to establish whether there are other people or organisations already undertaking empowerment activities, the level of empowerment of the different members of the

area, what opportunities exist that can be utilised to enhance the political empowerment activities, and what barriers the project might encounter. A SWOT analysis (See Tool-kit) could be a useful tool for getting this information.

Making a community map will help identify barriers to mobilisation – by showing where people live, the resources they have at their disposal, their livelihood activities, gender roles and the local infrastructure and how it affects the peoples' lives. The map will help in taking account of as many aspects of the local context as possible during the initial stage of mobilisation.

Select a strong leader, but avoid elite capture

It is important, from the beginning, to work with local individuals with the capacity to mobilise people, who are characterised by having a good reputation in a given area, who show enthusiasm for change processes and who are not afraid to speak up and address other people. At times, such key people might be local leaders, such as village elders, church leaders or local government officers. At other times they could be local business men, leaders of market associations, youth activists, CSO leaders, or others who have experience of group work.

We should note here that the identification of the right people is not easy. The right person today can also turn out to be a bad leader later on. Who is responsible of this choice? It is here crucial to remember that local people bear their own responsibilities by selecting leaders among themselves

Strong leadership is essential to the success of any mobilisation activity. Take Suzana, a woman from a rural agrarian village in Mozambique:

It all began after the end of the civil war in 1992. During the war ,Suzana and her family, like many other people in the area, had to leave their home, and when they came back everything was destroyed. Suzana took the initiative to organise the neighbours in her area, women as well as men, to help each other out with rebuilding the houses and cleaning the fields. The group, hereafter, continued to work together twice a week in the fields. Later, an NGO introduced a savings scheme, which allowed the members to buy different agricultural inputs and domestic necessities. The group also managed to collect money from other inhabitants for a water pump that now serves the whole community.
Today the association is supported by Plan International and has 10 members, seven women and three men. In early 2008, it became a member of the District Platform. Suzana today also represents her locality in the District Consultative Council where she is able to influence decisions on development inputs for her area.

A strong leader will energise and keep a group active, even in times of hardship. However, it is important that a reliance on strong leaders does not undermine the participation of other group members, or that such leaders are so embedded in local power structures that they fail to do anything about – or even strengthen – the unequal power relations. This is highlighted in the Mozambique study as well, where a local leader who was involved in a mobilisation activity, used his position to acquire government funds meant for local development to buy a motorised water-pump to irrigate his fields.

Gender analysis and women's rights

Discussing gender issues and for women to demand their rights can be quite explosive. But in order for an organisation to have a really inclusive programme, it is essential that you carry out a gender analysis right at the beginning of your work in your community. This includes an

assessment of the particular barriers against women becoming mobilised into groups and participating actively – and this could be due to culture. As illustrated below:

There are also many people in the locality who are not part of any organised groups. It is not easy to mobilise the people, especially not the farmers and the women. People are highly sceptical and do not see the longer-term gains they can make for themselves by coming together in a group. The President Suzana explains: *Some even think that the people who try to mobilise or invite them to public meetings or to become members of the Platform are trying to cheat people into giving money.*

…for women it is also a cultural matter. While many of the women in Bambela are interested in coming together as a group, their husbands will not allow them to be away from domestic work or from the fields.

Suzana Cumbane from a rural village, Mozambique.

Addressing such barriers can help ensure that women and girls are not excluded or left out of empowerment work. It is not enough to have women attending meetings; they need to feel confident enough to engage fully in decision making and dialogue. And, that they engage is not an end in itself, but one of the processes that will lead to gender equity. However, the barriers for girls' and women's participation are deeply rooted in culture and politics, and they do not disappear overnight, so they need constantly to be addressed by everyone in the community. Making women aware of their rights is important for MS AA, and men will need to be actively involved and know what rights women actually hold in society.

Therefore, in conducting a gender analysis, you can consider how gender relations[8]:
• Shape norms, values and ideologies;
• Influence the political agenda;
• Determine whose voice is heard in decision-making processes;
• Affect formal decision-making and implementation of public policies.

Leaders' workshops

When demanding your rights, as illustrated in the four case studies, you often encounter resistance from the village leaders, chiefs and local government administration personnel, because their power base will be questioned and threatened. It is therefore important to bear this in mind, and tell them that empowered citizens, instead of being a threat to their authority, can actually help them perform their duties better and in a more equitable manner. However, engagement with local leaders in this way should also stimulate them to change problematic practices such as corruption, power abuses and exclusion of the views of ordinary citizens.

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[8] See the gender awareness tools in the Tool-kit section

In the Zimbabwe case study, workshops for leaders have clearly been mounted successfully. The African Community Publishing Development Trust (ACPDT), the NGO implementing political empowerment activities, ran workshops for many of the local government officials, village elders and chiefs – who became enthusiastic mobilisers at the local level. In Mozambique, Associação Cultural de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ACUDES) has also been successful in mobilising local leaders and state officials to participate in civil society network meetings. And this has enhanced their willingness to listen to local citizens' views, assess their needs, and they engage in raising awareness activities.

Community conversations

Another space that can be used for mobilising is the community conversations. These meetings are more like having a 'community conversation', because one gets the chance to talk informally with all kinds of people (potential stakeholders), hear their views, constraints and ideas about development and level of empowerment in their area. This exercise gives a good overview of the kinds of issues that are affecting the citizens in the area. Because these meetings are held in public places, it is easier for women and other disadvantaged groups of people to participate.

Baselines

A baseline study will assist in ascertaining the prevailing social, political and economic situation of the area. One could design it so that it will reveal information such as: the number of people living in the target area; factors affecting income; access to local resources; gender issues; existing institutions and the role they play in local governance; local causes of poverty and inequality – and so on. In the process of conducting the study, the NGO worker will be able to assess the possible impact – positive or negative – of the PE activities, but it will also give the possibility to assess, at a later date, the change that has occurred as a result of your activities.

Possible Barriers to Mobilisation

There are times when people will not be willing to join groups or be involved in political empowerment activities. One of the major factors contributing to this is the fear of the possible risks that go hand in hand with political empowerment. If the citizens think that they may be victimised or otherwise harmed by the local elites or those holding power in the area, they could be reluctant to be part of a group.

Another important factor is that citizens haven't got the time to engage in PE work because they are preoccupied with trying to earn a living. Subsistence farmers have to work hard on their farms just to grow enough food for themselves.

The barriers encountered depend upon each specific context; the history, culture, power and governance structures. Therefore, carrying out the initial baseline studies and assessments are essential for a greater understanding of how these different issues affect the citizens; their participation in governing processes and access to services.

Other general barriers may be related to:
- Group dynamics. These may alienate some people and prevent them from feeling comfortable enough to become members. For example, if a group consists of many elites or powerful people in the area, the poor may feel inadequate in their presence and therefore not join (negative self-perception). Or they may view the group as an outfit for the elite only. To combat this, the groups should be as inclusive as possible of all stakeholders in the area so that, right from the start, the image they present is one where people are welcome no matter their background, education or economic status.

- Gender perspectives. The different gender roles that exist in an area could present a barrier to who can join a group. For example if the socio-cultural norms specify that women cannot relate with men, or that they may not be seen in public without a chaperone, this might present a challenge in these women's ability to join and participate in groups. This would call for a different approach to group formation. For example, a women's group where the women will be able to be freely active in its activities, or segregating group sessions so that men and women do not mix. But the citizens would have a number of workable solutions to get around these obstacles.

- Lack of capacity among the citizens. Because of poverty and marginalisation, citizens might lack the capacity to organise themselves into groups without intensive facilitation from the outside. It might also be that because of certain situations – say recent conflict – the people are more concerned with just surviving and could look at joining groups as a waste of valuable time. In such situations, just as in the others above, the citizens would need to see the benefits of groups, not just to individuals, but to the general area as a whole.

There are a myriad of other factors that could pose barriers to mobilisation, and each area presents different challenges. By having discussion sessions about possible challenges they might encounter during mobilisation, citizens would be better prepared to deal with them. Failure to do this could lead to disillusion and failure of the mobilisation process.

Check list

Questions to guide the mobilisation process:
- Who are the most vulnerable citizens and how can we make sure that they are included?
- What are the existing family, tribal, religious and political relationships and alliances?

- Is the issue we want to address a problem that is felt by the majority of the people, and is there a significant number of people that will benefit from this action?
- Which, if any, local initiatives around the issue already exist, and can they be strengthened?
- Which local citizens can we collaborate with?
- Who are the local leaders (traditional, religious, business, government), and how can they be engaged without risking elite capture of the PE initiative?
- How can we involve local leaders in the proposed initiative? And do the ordinary citizens agree that they should be involved? And what are their own proposals for the engagement of these leaders?
- What are the risks or possible adverse reactions to the mobilisation initiatives?
- What local resources are at our disposal, including skills, informal networks and relations?
- What socio-cultural aspects should we keep in mind while mobilising; for example, can women and men congregate together, and are the women allowed to speak in the presence of men?
- What are the short-term goals that will motivate the people to stay engaged with the initiative?
- What close-to-home examples are there of successes with similar initiatives?
- What are the long-term and short-term goals of the initiative? (As mentioned earlier, it is good to be able to show some short-term results to increase motivate.)
- Are there other organisations working in the area that we could collaborate with?
- What modalities should we put in place in relation to working together with the selected population?

Summary

To summarise, the role of the facilitator in political empowerment is to
- Facilitate, *not* impose or direct, the PE process as it unfolds and is driven by local citizens
- Be sensitive towards differences in values and diversities in opinions in the local context
- Be self-reflective about his/her position as a political figure
- Be aware and seek ways to assist in handling conflicts and tackling risks
- Allow for open debate and active participation during awareness raising
- Contribute with analytical skills to better understand the local political environment.

The mobilising element of Political Empowerment allows citizens to:
- Act collectively, and thereby heighten the prospects for better solving problems and to put pressure on relevant authorities to deliver services and enforce rights;
- Become aware of their own potential;
- Identify and appreciate local resources that they can utilise in tackling their issues;
- Have access to local leadership opportunities which will build individual confidence and skills;
- Gain confidence to deal with local leaders, and those perceived to have power and therefore make local governance more attentive to local needs and demands;
- Foster gainful liaisons with other neighbouring communities and organisations, which strengthen trust and form a solid base for future decision-making and action.

We have discussed briefly a number of possible techniques that could be used for mobilisation activities: Leader's workshops, community conversations, public hearings/people's parliament, public theatre and the media. To give you an insight into an area where you hope to implement a PE initiative and to gain an understanding of the people, you might want to carry out a few preparatory exercises. These could include:

- A power and context analysis: To get a better understanding of the political and social make-up, how collective identity is formulated, and what kind of power structures are in place.

- Community mapping: That will give insights into the livelihood activities of the citizens, barriers to political empowerment, local resources, and so on.

- Stakeholder analysis: That identifies the people likely to be affected by the PE initiative, to maximise the use of already existing knowledge and skills among the citizens, and to enhance ownership of the project.

- Gender analysis: To understand the existing gender structures and to strengthen the women's rights perspective

- Risk analysis: To help in coming up with a strategy of managing the conflicts that are bound to arise.

For people to become actively mobilised in the initial stages, it is essential that the political empowerment initiative can illustrate what they stand to achieve in the short term. A few gains made quickly will motivate them to aspire for bigger gains which, evidently, will come from sustained engagement with the project.

There are times when people will not be willing to join groups or be involved in political empowerment activities. One of the major factors contributing to this is the fear of the possible risks that go hand in hand with political empowerment. If the citizens think that they may be victimised or otherwise harmed by the local elites or those holding power in the area, they could be reluctant to be part of a group.

The tools and techniques which could be useful for mobilisation processes are: "Who talks", Semi-structured interviews; Community and livelihood analysis; Mapping of Institutional relationships; Stakeholder analysis; Problem trees; Gender awareness tool and Community action plan (Refer to the Tool-kit section)

2. Raising Awareness

Awareness raising is a process which includes both access information and ability to interpret and react on this new knowledge. But it is also a process focusing around self awareness and awareness around one's own role and self esteem. Therefore, awareness raising activities are based on a methodology that enables dialogue, debate and active participation of the citizens, and where the role of the facilitator is critical.

Definition of Terms

Local leaders - influential people who have popular support. They are local leaders, charismatic people who are closely linked to grassroots movements or CBOs and have some legitimacy to represent a group of (marginalised or poor or any kind of) people.

Local authorities - appointed civil servants or elected politicians who are officially in charge of the local administration or the management of local government.

Representation: In a representative democracy the principle is that elected individuals represent the people, as opposed to either autocracy (one person possesses unlimited power) or direct democracy (form of democracy where a citizens participate in all decisions). The representatives form an independent ruling body (for an election period) charged with the responsibility of acting in the people's interest,

An Overview

Awareness raising to enable political empowerment is a process where a specific locality or group of people is facilitated to acquire information and to make use of various communication tools that will enable them to better analyse and engage with issues affecting them. Hopefully, this awareness can activate the citizens to become fully involved in finding a solution to the challenges facing them. This can be done in a variety of ways. However, to be empowering, awareness raising activities are more successful when they are based on a methodology that enables dialogue, debate and active participation of the people involved, and where you act as a 'discussion-oriented' facilitator rather than as a 'lecture-oriented' teacher.

For people to change the situation they are in, it is often essential that they have access to information. Examples of the kind of information they need to be able to access could be Local Government Acts, legislation about access to info building on international and national conventions. Not all countries have signed national conventions granting the citizens access to information, so in some cases the fight starts by demanding Right to Information. People need to be aware that this is an important right, which is the key to accessing information based on which they can hold their governments to account for social services. Having access to information diminishes a poor and marginalized people's sense of isolation, especially if they live in remote areas. It will increase their knowledge of policies and legal matters affecting their lives. It can be the basis for their empowerment in defending and claiming their rights.

The responsibility of the facilitator is to work in collaboration with the citizens in raising or promoting their awareness, but that does not necessarily mean that, once they have the necessary information, they will – or be able to – act on it. Factors such as individual personalities, available resources, power relations, social barriers will all possibly affect people's capacity to act.

In planning awareness raising activities, it is essential to identify some possible messages and themes that will be compelling to the target audience, for example drawing on concrete cases, issues or events that have taken place in the local context that are relevant to political empowerment issues (a land grab, corruption by government officials, a fight for water resources or the like).

The purpose of awareness raising activities is to ensure that citizens are able to access relevant information about political empowerment activities; that they are able to reflect on this information; that, as a result, they are inspired and moved to become *active* participants in these activities for the purpose of improving their current situation. But, also, these awareness raising activities should encourage dialogue between different stakeholders in an area: local government officials, other NGOs, private businesses, regular citizens, religious leaders, and so on. And, especially, awareness raising should create opportunities for the poor and marginalized to be involved in this dialogue.

Effective awareness raising activities possess the following characteristics:

- They involve consultation with key local stakeholders while being developed;
- Have solidarity with the citizens, that is to say their norms, values and traditions;
- Are suited to a wide range of groups because different people will take different things from it;
- Appreciate and understand what the people participating already know;
- Encourage participation in the planned political empowerment activities.

Meaningful dialogue in political empowerment activities eventually enables citizens to become part of the decision-making process on issues that affect them. It would be ideal that the facilitator of the activities, be it a local group or an 'outsider', also encourages dialogue with the citizens. This means: listening to the citizen's points of view and letting them tell their stories and experiences; showing courtesy, respect and consideration when talking to the citizens.

Many times when we see a facilitator engaging with people, it seems effortless and easy to accomplish. But these skills come only after careful preparation. A skilled facilitator will have an understanding of the issues at hand – knowledge that comes from doing some research. A good facilitator is flexible and can adapt easily according to the needs expressed by the citizens, because they realise that, for any process/activity to be owned/adopted by the citizens, it needs to be driven by them.

Therefore, the good facilitator:

- Starts from the knowledge of the citizens;
- Addresses issues identified by the citizens and adapts new ideas to their needs and culture;
- Uses practical, participatory methods, e.g. group discussion and activities in which all citizens are welcome to participate;
- Encourages flow of information in many different directions between the facilitator and individual citizens – a genuine exchange of ideas/ active dialogue;
- Draws out and builds on the knowledge of the citizens, and knows where to find further information on the subject;
- Encourages and values different views;
- Is considered an equal by the citizens, and have relationships based on trust and respect.

Action Aid is applying the methodology REFLECT world wide to raise awareness in the development areas. This tool has been used for over 10 years and is targeting marginalized communities as an entry point for adult literacy but also as a point where people discuss issues pertaining to their lives, analyze their situations and find solutions to address them. As an example can be mentioned: poor health services, food insecurity due to drought, domestic violence, limited

control and ownership of property. These issues were prioritized and action points developed to address them. The approach is very successful, because literacy is combined with awareness raising, where people understand their position in society and what they can do to change it. So they follow the up by action.

The circles can run for several years and address a range of different issues, in Uganda AA has worked with Reflect for many years and a DA field worker tells*:" Literacy opens up the woman to the world she realizes she can now do what she could not do before; hence she can now explore her potentials. She becomes aware of her civil and political rights, her social status has changed, and she gains recognition. This empowerment process builds self esteem and confidence – and she can now contest against men for political leadership. We now have women in the Reflect circles who have been elected onto the local council and village committees"*

Action Aid has developed a series of tools building on the REFLECT approach targeting different groups or themes, such as: HIV/AIDS; children and Power. REFLECT is building on the theories of Paulo Freire supplemented by the tools developed for PRA.[9]
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Possible Steps in Planning Awareness Activities

Finding out what local awareness needs are and how to address them

In the initial stages of interacting with people, you might have had discussions with a variety of local citizens, and undertaken a number of exercises to ascertain what their information needs are, to enable them to analyse and tackle the key challenges they were facing.

In the above discussions and interviews, one will be able to find out what information the citizens already have, for example, about policy and legal issues, or about how to get better access to public services or development inputs. This will help assessing what information is lacking and therefore preventing the citizens from taking action to improve their situation, and what channels of information are open to them. However, the channels of information will probably need to be explored more at this stage, to ensure that the actions are well prepared. Try to think along the lines of:

> **What to say** (message), **to whom** (receiver) **– how?** (channel)

To collect the information needed may require one to carry out informal interviews with local citizens. When information is quantitative in nature, a simple questionnaire could come in handy in collecting information from a wide cross-section of the targeted area. This could for example be information about the content of radio emissions people listen to, the frequency of newspapers readings or how many times they stop to watch a theatre performance in the market place. For

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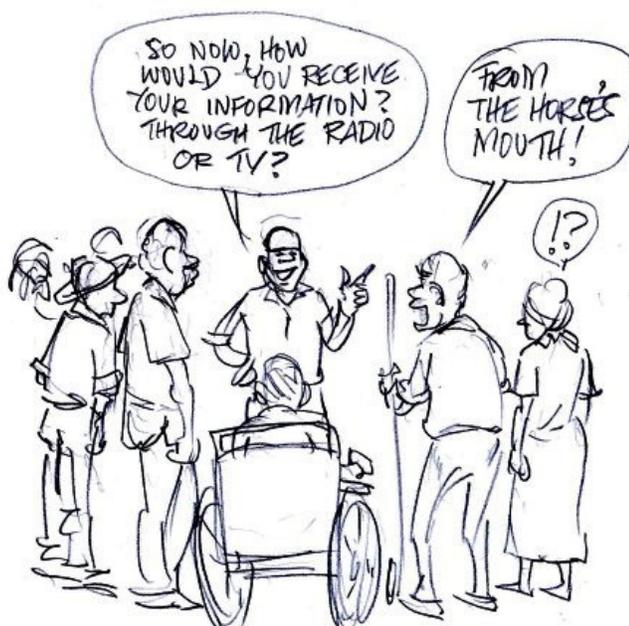
[9] Paulo Freire: pedagogy for the oppressed; Robert Chan
Projects

the more qualitative information on attitudes, levels of awareness and knowledge about laws, and so on, different methods, like focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews are more suitable. All data collected should be gender disaggregated.

Formulating the messages

When communicating it is important to keep messages as simple as possible, and to adjust the messages to local communication methods. Many people are tempted to weave long sentences and create long elaborate messages, where people lose interest half-way through.

The use of folklore or traditional sayings can be a very effective way of making sure that people identify with, and remember, what the awareness raising activities are about. Find some test-persons to try out the messages before launching them on a large scale. If needed, you can get support from professional public relations individuals to come up with catchy slogans.

Also, should people require further information; this is the time to plan for how they can receive it. This is in case the need arises to set up a special information centre for an event, or series of events. For example, if a caravan is planned (a travelling information campaign) for a certain period of the month, the citizens of the area may want to get more information about it prior to the event. An information centre could be set up, or local facilitators could be used as sources of information about the event.

Deciding on awareness raising channels

The channels to use in raising awareness are mainly dependent on:
- Resources available. This includes locally available resources that citizens can provide;
- The most popular media used by the people, but also the media through which they prefer to receive their information;
- Time available to put together an awareness comprehensive awareness raising activities;

Each channel will have its 'pros' and 'cons' and these should be weighed before a final strategy is adopted. But, ultimately, the right mix of communication media will be the one that best meets the needs of your key target audience.

Allocating responsibilities

Depending on the scope of the awareness raising activities, there should be a team with a team leader dedicated to overseeing the many aspects of putting it together. For example, if it is decided to put together a 'democracy caravan', a route for the caravan would need to be identified; dancers and drama groups might be needed to animate it. So suitable local groups would need to be identified, music would need to be hired as well as public address systems, posters and banners would need to be printed, and so on. Certain prominent personalities might also be needed to address the people and drive the intended message(s) home – they would need to be approached and briefed. Allocating specific responsibilities to each team member ensures that the team leader is left with enough time to coordinate the whole strategy.

It is advisable to – as much as possible – use local talent and service providers. Citizens from a given area understand better what is needed and could save a lot of time that would otherwise be used to hire 'outsiders'. However, occasionally, engaging professional actors to come and supplement the activities of the local actors and to give a different 'flavour' to the theatre performances is a good idea.

Awareness Raising Channels

Printed publications

Some organisations use printed publications as their primary mode of education and communication. Take African Community Publishing & Development Trust (ACPDT) in rural Zimbabwe, for example.

Community publishing

ACPDT's main outreach method is through books. Before a book is published, ready for distribution, comprehensive research, involving community members, is done. The research process tries to be as inclusive as possible, and women, youth and children are especially encouraged to take part.

The [writing] process is very inclusive and many of the stories, drawings, poems and other contributions, are made by the local people themselves, and these contributions are acknowledged in the books. In this way, ACPDT has been able to build the confidence of people, and to create a sense of ownership. Seeing their contributions published has motivated them to remain involved whenever they are asked to participate in the research and writing process.

All the books are printed in English and many are translated into the vernacular for wider consumption at the local level. The books are free, and when the people are given them to read, they are encouraged to share with their neighbours and friends as soon as they have finished with them. The aim is to have one book read by at least five people.

One important aspect of publications is the language and style of writing. To be relevant to the target audience, it should be in a style that they will identify with. ACPDT uses a number of poems, sayings and proverbs to illustrate certain points in their publications. Another important dimension of print materials is the mode of distribution. If they are for sale, they should be within the price range of the citizens. If they are for free distribution, as with ACPDT, the readership increases. There is a danger, though, that people do not always properly value things that they get for free.

Interactive radio programmes and radio jingles (infomercials)

In rural Africa, radio enjoys wide listenership. It can be used to carry news items, tailored documentaries, talk shows and infomercials. Mainstream (national) radio channels can reach mass audiences. There usually exists community radio as well, and these run programmes in vernacular languages to reach specific groups.

If used well, radio can be utilised to develop radio programmes that can lead to the formation of listener groups. These groups can eventually organise to form proper citizens' groups that are active in local empowerment activities. For example, in Kenya, the NGO KCODA was working in partnership with another local NGO – Association of Media Women in Kenya (AMWIK). AMWIK produces radio programmes that deal with the problems that people in the marginalized area of Kenya experience – poor infrastructure, access to healthcare, poor education facilities, and so on – to create listening groups. The NGO lays special emphasis on the involvement of women. These

groups are a means for citizens (especially women) to come together and discuss the issues that affect them, and the goal is to create strong groups that will eventually have knowledge about their rights and responsibilities, the capacity to demand for these rights from their local leaders, and the drive to become more active in the development of their areas.

To form the listener groups, one could utilise a local facilitator in the same way as with the study circles. Ideally, the groups should be open to all members of the area who would like to join. But the number per group should be small enough, around 12 to 15 people, to ensure that when they hold discussions everyone gets an opportunity to contribute.

So, when developing radio programmes, and to make them interesting, one could:

- Make them interactive with phone-in opportunities for the citizens;
- Involve the target group in the production of the programmes – this could be in the form of guests on the show to talk on certain issues that they are knowledgeable about, or collectively coming up with ideas about topics and the format the programmes should take, and so on;
- Be creative with the programmes; instead of only discussion-based programmes, they could be alternated with radio-theatre (performed by local talent) an old favourite of many people that will be entertaining as well as address issues and dramatise dilemmas;
- Make them appealing to a wide cross-section of the target group – men, women, youth, the elderly, minority groups, and so on.

The effectiveness of radio in getting a simple message across is well illustrated by the extent to which so many people in rural Uganda, knew about and listened to the programmes promoted by NGO Link Forum-Apac (NLFA).

Radio jingles (infomercials) are used (by NLFA in Apac) to create awareness about government planning cycles and let the local people know when and where they can participate in the process in their sub-county. The radio programmes developed by NLFA are also especially popular. When asked, a number of the people had a good understanding and awareness of the programmes aired and had even called in live during shows to make contributions.

Radio could be used to place infomercials – short messages giving very specific information, for example, about constitutional rights. It could be between 30-45 seconds and telling people something like, 'Do you know that it is your right under the constitution to receive information about how district funds are spent?' In Uganda, NLFA said that the infomercials were very effective in getting specific information across and not as expensive as full advertisements, which sometimes can run for too long and make people lose interest. They said that, in combination with their face-to-face sessions with the citizens, they had seen an increase in the number of people who attended the local planning meetings held in the villages.

Films and documentaries

Films and documentaries could be produced to illustrate the results of empowerment activities in a given area – ones that the citizens can relate to. They could also be used to initiate debate among the people and to provoke deeper reflection on the current situation and, hopefully, eventually result in action.

MS-Mozambique has produced two documentary films: one of school councils and one on the district of Chibuto. A third film is in the process of being finalized and it focuses on raising the awareness within civil society and among state officials about District Platforms, (Orçamento de Investimento para Iniciativas Locais – Budgets for Investment in Local Initiatives), OIIL funds and local governance in general. It uses concrete cases from Platforms that MS already supports, and also includes interviews with CC members, state officials and associations. The films do not provide answers to problems, but serve to invigorate debate and make people reflect on the situation they are in and on the way that local governments are operating. Thus the films are intended as an important aspect of raising awareness.

Television can be used to carry news items, tailored documentaries, talk shows and infomercials. Usually, using TV ensures that if your target is mixed, policy makers as well as citizens, your programmes will reach this diverse cross-section of people.

Because access to TV for rural people might prove to be an issue, this medium works better if it is targeted at urban populations. But this is not to say that you should rule it out completely when dealing with rural communities. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, some rural people do have access to TV through public places, such as, food kiosks, bars and the like. Incidentally, impromptu discussion sessions do crop up on issues that the viewers feel passionate about. This is unlike when one watches television in the house where it can, at times, be a solitary activity. So, these public viewing sessions could provide a good opportunity for you to engage with the citizens and hear their views about a myriad of things affecting their locality.

TV programmes can be made interactive by having panel discussions, studio audiences and streaming of SMS responses.

For both radio and TV programmes, recordings can be used as 'trigger material' in discussion groups.

Newspapers

Newspapers could be used to carry specific articles, news items and advertisements. However, it is good to note that newspaper circulation is sometimes very restricted but, no matter, they still do reach a fairly wide cross-section of the population, and especially if the people to be engaged include policy makers and leaders.

They provide a good medium for advertising events but, more importantly, for relating success stories. They could be used to create debate about certain issues. Newspaper articles, as has been noted in many localities, tend to have more staying power, especially in rural areas where people keep newspapers for long periods and keep referring to them from time to time. In addition, newspaper articles could be used in group meetings to provoke debate about local issues. Because the newspaper is cheap, many of the people interviewed from the slum regularly read the paper and appreciate it.

In Mozambique, this is one of the tools used during group sessions:
To invigorate debate about local governance and politics in general ACUDES has made use of newspaper articles at Platform training meetings; for example, using an article where the President of the Republic declared that he sees the districts as the centre of development in the country.

In Kenya, KCODA, working in a urban slum publishes a monthly local newspaper. They use it as a medium of communicating progress on the empowerment issues that they work with and to educate the slum dwellers on their rights and avenues through which they can demand for these rights.

Other channels of communication are:

Caravans- A caravan is usually made up of a big truck, with an open platform at the back. On this platform, a mix of musicians, actors, dancers, disk jockeys, and so on, are ferried around, all the time dancing or performing acrobatics to liven up the caravan. A well organised caravan attracts attention, gives the desired message, and entertains. It may seem that entertainment gets a lot of emphasis in raising awareness but, from observing communication and education programmes across a number of countries, the techniques that make the biggest impression are those that incorporate some form of entertainment in their strategy.

Posters and flyers- Graphic posters with a few clear lines work very well. The language and design should appeal while remaining simple and clear. Flyers are cheaper to produce than posters and are better for publicising planned event.

Puppet shows - In this medium, the artist uses a variety of puppets to play out a story. While operating the puppets, the puppeteer narrates the story through which the message is communicated.

Electronic media

Today there is a myriad of electronic media, which are useful for campaigning and raising people's awareness. Here we just mention a few, and in the later edition we will make a more thorough introduction.

- Internet: websites with links to other organizations and campaigns on empowerment;
- Blogs: Open spaces on the internet, where you can write and debate with other people
- Twitter: A social networking and micro-blogging service that enables its users to send and read messages known as *tweets*. Tweets are short text-based posts displayed on the author's profile.
- Facebook: A social networking website. Anyone over the age of 13 with a valid e-mail address can become a Facebook user. Users can add friends and send them messages, and update their personal profiles to notify friends about themselves. Additionally, users can join networks and groups organized by workplace, movements, NGOs and more
- Text message (SMS) and mobile telephones: Mobile phones are increasingly prevailing, and in many countries SMS are used for reporting cases of corruption.

Youth Agenda in Kenya is implementing an Anticorruption programme whose overall objective is to promote a culture of Zero tolerance to corruption in social service provision (health, water and education services) among citizens in 4 districts by 2012. In order to capture corruption as it happens and also to give young people a platform to blow the whistle on corruption, YAA installed an SMS interface in these areas. This move is first of its kind and will ensure as many people as possible report corruption cases for prompt redress. (www.youthagenda.org)

Possible Barriers to Awareness Raising

Empowerment and making people aware of their rights will most probably encounter a number of challenges. It is important to understand and anticipate them in order to be more effective. The barriers that are likely to get in the way of accessing and analysing information could include: discrimination (for example, women's disadvantaged position), low levels of literacy, restrictive cultural practices, domination (of one group over another), poor infrastructure that hinders communication, and the use of inappropriate communication methods (for example, using only TV adverts for a public meeting when only a few people have TVs). A different kind of barrier is the manipulation of information for political purposes, when someone wants to influence opinions in his favour.

These barriers have to do with different histories of governance and cultures of power that are strongly rooted in the societies in which we work, and which inform marginalization and exclusion. Such barriers are context dependent, and prior power analysis to inform PE programming is therefore vital. In common is that barriers are seldom alone about the unwillingness of the governing elite to listen to and act in accordance with the interests and different views of the ordinary citizens, although this is VERY important. They also have to do with people's perceptions of themselves (the poor and marginalised often lack the courage and confidence to demand rights or confront the government in other ways – they do not see themselves as active citizens in the nation-state). These issues should be taken into consideration when organising awareness raising activities.

Moreover, PE can NOT simply be about 'teaching' people about their rights (and obligations) or of giving them 'tools' to demand rights or of setting up new forums/platforms that give poor/marginalised a 'space' – it goes deeper than this – in changing attitudes and self-perceptions of both ordinary citizens and power-holders.

Sometimes local authorities, local leaders or bigmen hold their power from the intermediary position they occupy between higher level of authority, public services providers and citizens. Part of their power is based on the control of information and their ability to distribute this information or use it strategically at their own advantage by maintaining people in their ignorance. Therefore they might be reluctant to all kind of awareness activities as far as they perceive them as a challenge to their power position.

Checklist

Questions to guide the awareness raising activities could include:
- What are the objectives of the awareness raising activities?
- What is the message you wish to convey?
- Who is the target audience for the messages?
- Which citizens can we collaborate with to drive the activities? To develop programmes, posters, to identify possible resource persons from the area, and so on?
- Who are the other stake holders that could be involved in the activities? How could we build in their participation?
- What kind of communication infrastructure is already in place, and what mix of strategies will work best in the area?
- What financial resources are available?
- What are the gender roles in the area and how will this affect the messages and channels of communication to be used?
- Who are the excluded in the area and what strategy will be most suitable for them?

- What language(s) will be most effective to use?
- Literacy levels of the target group?
- Who has access to different information channels: radio, television, newspaper, etc? This information could be disaggregated to give information about access levels of different groups: women, elderly, youth etc?
- Availability of resources and skills within the local area that will enrich the awareness raising activities? (This, for example, could be in the form of citizens that could prove useful as resource persons for radio programmes; maybe to tell their stories of how PE activities have impacted their lives, or for word of mouth awareness raising activities through using local facilitators)
- The time of day, week, month when activities do not prevent people from participating in the activities?

Possible results from awareness raising activities could be, that citizens;
- Know and claim their rights.
- Gain an understanding of how political empowerment fits within the general development of their area and subsequently the nation;
- Get inspired to take action to deal with issues affecting them;
- Begin questioning existing power structures and come up with strategies of confronting/engaging/dealing with them to correct these inequalities.

Summary

Awareness arising activities enable the people to engage in meaningful dialogue and reflection about the situation that they are in – with each other and with their local leaders.

The initial tasks in preparation for awareness raising activities could include:
- Ascertaining the people's needs: To inform about what information is actually lacking and what avenues of dissemination are the most appropriate.
- Formulating the messages: Ensuring that they are appropriate for the key target group.
- Picking appropriate media channels: The target group will probably have preferences of how they would like to receive information. This will provide a guide in picking the most suitable channels to use.
- Allocating responsibilities: To ensure that enough attention is given to the various aspects of putting together awareness raising activities and that the tasks are well coordinated.

Improving people's awareness about laws, rights and ways to find solutions to the problems and challenges that poor and marginalized groups face is a key aspect of political empowerment and, thus, to influence behavioural change. The design of awareness raising activities requires in-depth understanding of local issues of concern that will enable the messages to give meaning, and be of use, to the citizens. It can therefore not be a hurried process. It must be highly participatory as well as accountable to the participants.

Awareness raising activities should enable people to understand and reflect upon the situation they are in and equip them to address key issues of concern. This is itself an essential aspect of political empowerment activities, which should seek to support people to strive to change their behaviour and become more involved in overcoming key development challenges.

Apart from the various communication channels that we have mentioned, some of the participatory tools that you could utilise in raising awareness are the already mentioned: Focus group discussions and community meetings. In the Tool-kit, we have mentioned a number of others that you might like to look at, especially for awareness raising within groups. You might also find that the tools: Theatre, Timelines or Historical Profiles, Seasonal Calendars, Access and control files and Role plays could be useful for you in this exercise.

3. Furthering Participation

Furthering participation is about strengthening the collective voice of citizens.   Participation is not only about who and how, but also about where we meet? Who feels most comfortable at the meeting, what are the given power positions and what can we do to challenge and change unequal power relations. Good examples of these are the platforms/spaces/forums where citizens can effectively challenge the dominance of particular power positions in distributing services, rights and resources as well as in changing the underlying structures and cultures of power that inform such positions.

Definition of Terms

Underlying structures – these include family structures, historical relations between the citizens and the state, religion and other such factors that influence people's behaviour and attitudes.

Rights and obligations – rights referring to those claims that individuals can make on social services. In this case it could be the claim to proper health care, infrastructure, education, and so on. Obligations refer to the duties (responsibilities) of the citizens towards their community and nation at large.

An Overview

In talking about participation, we prefer to encourage and facilitate participation as 'sharing control', which means that all aspects of a project: in contributing ideas, in making decisions and, ultimately, in taking the responsibility for project activities is done together with the target citizens. This is especially vital in an empowerment project, where the ultimate goal is for citizens to take action to resolve local development issues, contribute to local government decision-making, and to demand their rights from service providers.

Moreover, it is important to distinguish between *active* and *passive* citizen participation. Citizens may be part of activities and attend meetings where decisions are made or inputs to plans are given, but this does not necessarily mean that they contribute actively. In practice they may simply be passive observers. In political empowerment initiatives it is therefore important to look at the quality of different people's participation, and to help facilitate their active contribution. 'Drivers of change' are the active and motivated citizens. They are usually at the forefront in initiating activities or are known to be good organisers or mobilisers of people.

There are a range of meanings of participation – some strong, some weak – and, depending on how much power those being asked to participate really have:

- By **contribution**: citizens provide their human resources to support the implementation of a PE project or in local development or service delivery activities;
- Through **consultation**: citizens are invited to engage in discussions about their needs and priorities for political empowerment or to give inputs that can feed into local decisions regarding development projects and plans or in service delivery;
- In sharing **control**: citizens are actually in charge of managing PE related activities and thereby obtain ownership of such activities.[1]

There are a number of reasons why active citizen participation is essential to political empowerment:

- Active participation by a broad section of a population improves specific project results and helps to ensure the sustainability of such results. In the longer-term, it can improve the performance of local governments and contribute to the wider development of a given society. If people are actively involved in achieving tangible development results and in influencing local government decisions that affect the area where they live, they are also more likely to have a heightened sense of responsibility and commitment to the changing of the *status quo.*

- Active participation stimulates self-reliance and responsibility. If people participate in PE activities, they are also more likely to participate in other local activities and will become more confident about solving their own problems

- Active citizen participation in PE activities, where citizens organise into groups, also gives people more courage to positively confront and hold accountable state or

It would be interesting to find out from the citizens what the local word is for participation. In many African countries and languages, the word 'participation', when translated into the vernacular actually means consultation and being involved, and rarely being in control – often it simply means 'being there'! Therefore, when talking about participation, it is important to clarify what and how it is actually meant. Also, the leadership structures in many rural areas are those that consult or share information with the citizens but do not actually give them control of activities. For example, in an area that has a village elder or a village chief, these leaders will, more often than not, be part of the government leadership mechanisms. Therefore, when they call for meetings with the citizens, it is more likely that they will want to impart or gather certain information for the government or consult with the citizens on issues. Rarely is it the case that the citizens are involved in deciding on and managing local initiatives themselves. The task for PE initiatives is to try to address this lack of broad-based *active* citizen participation in decision-making and actions. This can be done, for example, by encouraging local leaders to see the benefits of active citizens and by equipping citizens with the tools to demand that they also have a right to actively participate.

Approaching Participation

Spaces for participation

In many countries today, active citizen participation in decision-making regarding development and service delivery is a constitutional right. It is therefore useful to know the legal framework constituting such rights and to take point of departure in the 'spaces' or forums that already exist for interaction between citizens and local leaders or government officials and help to support the development of, or strengthening, of such spaces. They could be committees for water supply, health services, school management, local councils – all forums where citizens can give inputs to local government development plans, and/or public meetings where local government officials can interact with citizens.

Engaging local leaders in PE initiatives not only creates good will with them, but it can also help open or strengthen those forums within which they can engage in dialogue and collaborate with the ordinary citizens. It is also important to meet with them outside their territory, meaning at a space belonging to civil society, where it is the citizens setting the agenda and feeling that they are "the host". Ultimately, such collaboration and dialogue can support the empowerment of citizens to hold local leaders to account and to make them genuinely incorporate the views and needs of citizens in their decision-making. In conducting the case studies, this came across as a good strategy that worked well in all the four countries studied. Below is an illustration of how this was done in Kenya. The people of the slum were getting frustrated that they were seeing so little in terms of response to demands from their leaders and they would sometimes resort to violence. The NGO working in the area (Kibera Community Development Agenda (KCODA)), facilitated a platform from which the citizens and the leaders could hold dialogue, and the leaders began to listen to the citizen's views and respond whenever they could.

Some people, on occasions, have resorted to violence directed at their councillors. For example, the councillor of Sarang'ombe village had been attacked and injured three times by the area residents. The reason for this, it was said, was the perception by the people that he did not listen to them and was not doing anything to change the state of affairs in their village. To assist in this, they gave the councillors an opportunity to talk directly to the people through their workshops.

'Through KCODA, I get an opportunity to talk to my people. I have also learnt a lot especially when it comes to devolved funds. Sometimes, it is easier for me to get information on the processes that I should follow on these funds from KCODA than even going through the council.'
Chief and Councillor of Sarang'ombe village.

At the workshops, the councillors who attend, now come prepared with information, and when the people question them on specific issues, they give prompt responses. Some people said, *'These councillors now talk like bosses. Not like before when they would run away when we asked questions, because they didn't know anything. If they all behave like this, they will get respect from the people.'…' So you see at least they are responding to the people now.'* People of Sarang'ombe village.

Political empowerment means that citizens are aware of their rights and obligations and that they eventually have the capacity to act upon such rights and obligations. This ranges from the rights to specific public services, to the right and obligation to actively participate in deciding and solving development issues. However, if this process does not go hand in hand with increasing the

capacity of the local leaders to cope with citizens' demands, and in creating spaces, forums or platforms through which the leaders and the citizens can interact positively, it can lead to dissatisfaction on the part of the citizens, and can even lead to violence – as reported above in Kenya's Kibera slum. In Mozambique too, Associação Cultural de Desenvolvimento Sustentável (ACUDES) has also done a good job of building the capacity of local leaders in terms of engaging them in discussing and understanding their mandate as leaders and the role that citizens can play to facilitate their fulfilment of this mandate.

District Platform Jangamo – from civil society to government

According to the District Platform (DP) members interviewed in Jangamo, ACUDES has done a huge job in raising their awareness of local governance processes, and is the first organisation to really engage in civic education around issues such as local government law, constitutional rights, and citizen's participation in governance. In fact, they highlighted that it is now the civil society organisations that are teaching the local government what the LOLE] *(Lei dos Orgãos Locais do Estado – law on the local organs of the state)* is really about; many administrative officials and members of the consultative councils did not know their mandate and how to pursue consultative planning. After ACUDES had provided civic education to the Platform, civil society was in front with such knowledge. Now they are inviting local community leaders, local administrators, and others who take up positions in the government structures, to take part in platform meetings in order to share the knowledge the platform members have. Thus, an important part of raising the awareness of civil society has also been about opening the minds of local leaders and state officials.

As related by the President of the Platform: *We had this law* [LOLE] *but no one really understood it…it is not easy to interpret the law. Then ACUDES came, focused on society and they clarified what the law is about, and we began to understand, to open our heads…but the leaders there, the government people they still did not know…they had the law in their hands, but they did not know how to implement it. Then we* [the District Platform] *invited them to come here so we together could be informed about the law. And then in the end they* [government people] *began to see that there is some reason in this involvement of civil society.*
…..
The members of the DP explained that they are no longer afraid to personally address local state officials with complaints about development results or specific service delivery. This was not the case before…
Jangamo District, Mozambique

Facilitating participation

One other vital issue to discuss is the quality of facilitation and how to interact with the citizens. Being familiar with, showing solidarity to local issues and being willing to listen and learn from the citizens is very important to successful interactions and ultimately to nurture the active participation of citizens. It is not always possible to immediately start working with the citizens, but familiarising with the norms, traditions and culture of a place already puts one in a good position to start initial engagements that will support PE initiatives.

It can also be very feasible to use local citizens as facilitators who can, for example, help encourage other people to participate and function as role models for others. However, care must be taken in who is supported as a local facilitator; for example, ensure that they do not only use it for personal gain to boost their own power position or get access to resources.

Flexibility is a key quality of good facilitation – being able to adjust and adapt strategies according to the needs expressed by the citizens.

To facilitate and support active involvement, one could consider the following:

- *Influence*: People's participation should be seen, not only to have an effect on a specific initiative, but also on the general development of the people involved and the surrounding society.
- *Solidarity:* work together with the locally available expertise and knowledge.
- *Transparency*: The implementation of PE activities should be transparent so that citizens can know what is going on and how decisions are being made, especially if they have selected other people to act as their representatives.
- *Task definition*: It is important that there is as little confusion as possible on the division of tasks and how the citizen's participation in the project will be effected: that is, how they are able to influence decisions and what channels they have for this. The terms for participation need to be agreed upon by the participants collectively early on in the process, in order to get a shared understanding before things go too far.[1] Provides feedback to the citizens on how their inputs have helped to produce concrete results of a particular project or have effected change in how services are delivered.
- *Inclusion:* Deliberately seek out and involve those who are usually excluded. These could be women, youth, the disabled, people living with AIDS, opposition party members, certain ethic groups and castes etc.

Sometimes, however, the benefits of participation are not clear or straightforward to people. This may be because the gains of being aware of and demanding ones rights do not directly imply concrete benefits or better living conditions in the short term.

Representation

Full participation of all citizens living in an area is not feasible and realistic all the time. Oftentimes it will be necessary to explore ways for some citizens or groups of citizens to represent others, whether this is in a concrete project or in the spaces created for interaction between citizens/civil society and local government. For example, in a case where an immediate action is required, seeking full participation may take too long to agree on an action, and this would therefore require that one person takes responsibility for the decision. It is important that the decision is made by a person or a smaller group of persons, who actually represent the wider interests of other citizen groups – and that such a decision is based on prior consultation with these other citizens. It is also important that the representation selected has the capacity for strategic thinking and action. This could be something highlighted in the constitution of a committee or council of citizen representatives.

However, such representation can also be misused to serve personal interests. To avoid this risk it can be stressed to the representatives the increased influence that comes from having decisions that are based on broad-based consultation. At the same time it is desirable to support downwards accountability mechanisms, through which ordinary citizens have the capacity to hold their representatives to account and to regularly consult them prior to decision-making.

So the selection of the person or committee should be as inclusive as possible to ensure that those selected as representatives are acceptable to the majority of the people; they shouldn't be selected only because they hold some form of power in the locality or are connected to powerful interests outside of the locality (such as the ruling party). To enable broad-based active participation of citizens, in particular the poorest and marginalized groups, it can also sometimes be a good idea to decentralise PE initiatives to as low a level as possible. For example, in the Mozambican case study the civil society platforms supported by ACUDES was initially only established at the district level. Because it is difficult for the poor and marginalized to travel to the district capital to attend meetings, ACUDES and the Platform members decided together to set up similar platforms in the form of focal points at the locality level. This enabled more citizens to participate, not only in awareness creation activities, but also in taking decisions on local development priorities which could then be forwarded to the district level.

Barriers to Participation

Structurally marginalized citizens may be reluctant to take part in PE initiatives due to questions of poverty, ethnicity, gender, generation and so forth. Their barriers to participate should be understood and their specific needs should be taken into account. Often this will imply the development of special participation mechanisms that allow for such marginalized groups to make inputs in one way or another and to become aware of that they too have the right to participate – and the capacity to participate. This could be through separate meetings, say, with the women or with the youth to get their opinions. They could be motivated by referring to examples where women or young people, or excluded minority groups, have actually been able to participate and have realised some benefits from it. Aside from these barriers, there are a number of other reasons that might get in the way of people participating in PE initiatives:

- Undue reliance of the citizens on government or funding agencies to provide services and solutions to problems. This is more the case in areas where aid and hand-outs have become the norm rather than the exception.
- A long history of top-down governance and lack of ordinary citizen participation in decision-making processes regarding development issues and wider societal aspects. In many developing countries, ordinary citizens have simply not been used to being consulted about the kinds of services or development inputs that are relevant to their lives – or about wider societal questions that relate to how local and national governments make decisions. As a result, people do not feel that they have the right to, nor necessarily know how to, participate actively. Many are even afraid to speak directly to a local leader or a government official, let alone make complaints about, say, a lack of appropriate education or health services. Some are also afraid to take collective initiatives in relation to the improvement of services or the construction of services because there has been a long culture where such initiatives had to be taken only by those in powerful positions – so people fear for the possible conflicts that might ensue.
- Perceived unfairness in the distribution of duties and responsibilities among the citizens.
- Fear of repercussions from the leaders should they perceive the citizens' empowerment as a threat to their power base.
- Underlying cultural beliefs and traditions; for example, in the many Africa societies, women are not regarded as significant members of the society and more value is placed on men and boys. Gender attitudes and how gender roles are regarded in an area can affect the ability of women to participate in PE activities. For example, in some communities, women are not allowed to talk in the presence of men, and so without special dispensations being made, women's opinions here would go unheard.

- Lack of time and resources to participate in meetings; especially for the marginalized. Lack of time particularly affects women, whose time is usually so much taken up with household chores that there is non left to participate in other activities.

- In many countries of the developing world, education of the girl child is not given priority and as a result, women may lack the confidence to air their views in the presence of those they consider 'educated'. Further, women may not be aware of their rights, so specific focus on women's rights is crucial.

- Lack of information about rights and lack of policies that enforce these rights.

- Poor access to general information; therefore citizens are unaware of what is happening in their area and in the wider society.

- Disinterest/apathy on the part of citizens who have already achieved a certain quality of life and see no interest in being involved in political empowerment activities.

- Need for immediate results. If the political empowerment activities concentrate solely on long term benefits, it might act as a disincentive for continued participation by some people. That is why the project should have a fair mix of short-term and long-term goals to keep the citizens engaged.

Ways of motivating people to participate:

- *Influence of traditional and religious leaders.* Their influence is usually great within rural communities, and if PE activities already engage them as key stakeholders then their involvement could translate into more citizens being open to, and eager to, participate.

- *Exchange of experiences with other civil society group.* Community meetings, or other forums where citizens are gathered, can include sessions where citizens from different areas discuss the concrete benefits of active participation. Hearing success stories is often a very strong motivation for other citizens to get involved in development projects or in forums/councils/platforms that seek to influence local government decision-making with regard to service delivery and development initiatives.

- *Linking of short-term tangible benefits to longer-term political empowerment results.* Citizens' participation in forums on local government development plans and priorities can in the longer-term empower citizens to have a stronger voice in local government decision-making. But in the shorter term there is the motivation to access specific project funds from the local government, or from NGOs, for income generation activities or for projects bringing benefits such as a road or a water pump.

Checklist

Considerations to guide the planning for participation cold include:

- Who is presently participating and who is not?
- Reflection on the power of the facilitator or the local community group.
- How is it possible to avoid reproducing local power relations and gendered-barriers?
- Do the citizens have the required information to be to enable them participate as fully as possible?
- Have the PE activities been planned in a participatory manner in such a way it is easy for citizens to give inputs?
- Did the locally available expertise and knowledge contribute in the planning process of the activities?
- Are the techniques flexible and appropriate enough to allow for a wide range of citizens to be involved?
- Are the relevant stakeholders and institutions of the area – private, government, religious and traditional involved?
- Is there a strategy planned for? For example: What are the existing power structures in the area that impact on the extent to which men and women will participate actively and how will they affect the group dynamics of the PE activities?
- What different language groups, ethnicities, exist within the locality where the activities will be implemented?
- What are the livelihood activities of the key target group?
- What are the barriers that will inhibit active participation?
- What partnerships and alliances can be cultivated with existing organisations and agencies to enrich the PE activities?

To ensure active and sustained participation in planned PE activities, below are a few suggestions that might act as a guide:

- Communicate planned activities early enough to ensure that people have enough time to plan their attendance.
- Consider the livelihood activities of the majority of the citizens. For example, in the morning, farmers might well be in the farms; in the evening, the women might be taken up with household chores.
- For meetings, consider the different language groups that could be in attendance, and plan for a facilitator or translator to ensure that no one feels left out of the proceedings.
- Find out beforehand if to conduct PE activities, special permission is required and acquire it in advance. Try to ensure that the forums or venues for participation are as close to people as possible or are accessible with the means that people have at their disposal (for example money for transport).
- Work out a mechanism for giving feedback on what results have come about due to people's participation. This will be a motivation for them to stay involved when they see that their inputs are actually yielding results, in terms of influencing local government decisions.

Summary

Short-term results and tangible benefits are important factors to prove the relevance of political empowerment to citizens; for example, by showing how a PE initiative in a neighbouring area has yielded results related to, say, improved service provision or improved the living standards of individuals.

An effective participation strategy:
- Incorporates a good communication mechanism for the exchange of information between you and the citizens;
- Provides for easy and active participation for all stakeholders;
- Recognises and utilises locally available expertise and knowledge;
- Nurtures new networks and alliances;
- Deliberately seeks out and involves the poor and marginalized;
- Lets participants know how their contributions have impacted on the results and planning of PE initiatives.

Power and equality are important aspects to consider in relationship to participation: Therefore it is important where meetings and workshops are held. Citizens can effectively challenge the dominance of particular power positions in distributing services, rights and resources through avenues, such as, platforms/spaces/forums. This can result in changing the underlying structures and cultures of power that inform such positions.

Factors to consider:
- Plan for a participation strategy that encourages active participation from a wide range of stakeholders.
- Establish who are the excluded and marginalized;
- Find out the livelihood activities of the involved citizens
- Influence of the relevant stakeholders and local leaders;
- Through the use of various tools, establish the kinds of barriers that exist and that may have an effect on the PE activities.
- Establish which citizens will be involved in implementing the PE activities/or can act as the 'drivers of change' – local mobilisers of the people.

There is a variety of tools that could be utilised when working for citizens' participation. We will reiterate that these are only a guide, and there are many more tools available that could be or may have already been used before. They could include:
- Stakeholder analysis; A stakeholder analysis will help to identify who will be affected by, or will influence, the PE initiative.
- Sketch maps; Sketch maps will assist in pin-pointing the actual boundaries of an area, its lay-out, its facilities, and people's movements.
- Seasonal calendars; A Seasonal Calendar explores seasonal constraints and opportunities by recording changes in people's activities and practices, month by month, throughout a typical year. It indicates whether there are common problems that recur at certain times of the year.
- Gender analysis; A gender analysis will assist in determining how the prevailing social and cultural context will affect the participation of women and men in the PE initiative.
- Community contracts; A community contract is an undertaking, signed by the citizens and setting out their role and activities that they will implement.

4. Strengthening Organisations

This chapter is taking its starting point at local level, how citizens form groups and how those groups decide on internal democratic procedures. A next step in an organising process could be to link local initiatives to networks and coalitions at national level, which we will analyse in further details in a next version of this Empowerment Guide. Local level organisations will have a much wider effect when linked up with national advocacy initiatives and will speak with a stronger voice if part of national alliances and broader social movements.

Definition of Terms

Internal democratic procedures – specific systems or manner of dong things within an organisation or organised group of citizens that embody democratic principles.

Alliance and network-building - the process of encouraging and facilitating the creation of networks, coalitions and alliances between citizens groups and civil society organisations within and across different localities so as to enable a strong civil society voice at sub-national and national levels.

Social movements – are large informal groupings of individuals and/or organizations focused on specific political or social issues, on carrying out, resisting or undoing social change.

An Overview

Organising is the process of moving from the mobilising of a number of persons to becoming a more organised group, such as a CBO, a movement, a forum, a committee, an NGO. It involves facilitating the internal organisation of the group in question; for example, in terms of its leadership structure, membership conditions, representation, membership fees/contributions and internal democratic procedures. Organising may also involve building partnerships and coalitions with like-minded organisations and agencies in order to pool efforts for greater influence and effectiveness in the implementation of activities.

When the poor and marginalized in the local areas organise themselves, they can more effectively take action to solve particular issues, and they can also contribute to solving the problem of power imbalances in society. This is because, as an organised group, they have a stronger voice to challenge their leaders and hold them to account. In addition to giving voice, people who were previously excluded from, or passive in, decision-making within a given locality can now be involved as instigators of change and as active citizens. Support to organising might be done to strengthen already existing groups working in and around political empowerment, and/or it might be part of enlarging already existing groups through the mobilisation of new members . Organising can also involve support to creating networks or platforms of different citizen groups to work together and exchange experiences. Social movements do often not have a formal set-up with an elected leader, but have their own ways of working, that vary.

Sometimes groups of citizens need assistance in forming organised groups. Citizens will in some cases come together into groups but will not have a good understanding of how to develop a strong

organisation. You can facilitate such groups to better organise their internal leadership structures and procedures, which can make their work more effective in addressing issues and also give them a stronger position from where to engage with local leaders and the state. You can also support groups to have more democratic internal procedures.

There is a good example in the Kenya case study. The women in the group all had many problems, but they also identified with one particular one that they all felt should be tackled urgently – violence against women. They were able to organise the group through the help of an 'outsider' who understood that this was a common problem. The women only needed to be assisted in forming the group, and once their management capacity had been built, they were able to run it on their own.

Formation of Vision Sisters Women's Group

Domestic and sexual violence is rife in Kibera and, because the inhabitants are poor and far from their rural homes, women victims are vulnerable and usually have nowhere to turn. Because of the little police presence in slums, and the levels of poverty there, crime rates are higher than in other areas of Nairobi. The women are left in an especially vulnerable position and have few avenues of recourse.

In 2003, a lady Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Gender approached a colleague of hers who had lived in Kibera for many years, and still maintained contact with a number of women still living there. This colleague mentioned the idea of forming a group to a number of Kibera women, and asked them to talk to women friends and neighbours who might be interested. All this was done by word of mouth; no advertisements or mobilisation drives were carried out, and many of the women approached were either friends or neighbours.

A number of women – 21 in total – showed interest, and a meeting was organised between them and the PS so she could explain her idea to them. She laid out her plan for helping them to form a group, and she also explained to them about a working structure that would help in its management.

Methods for strengthening the internal organisation

The methods available for improving or strengthening the internal organisation of a group are many. There are hierarchical systems, as well as horizontal structures, that groups could use. For example, the traditional hierarchical structure of chairman, vice-chairman, secretary and treasurer, may be effective for decision-making but, if the election to these posts is not democratic, it might be seen as another power structure that the members have to contend with. It is also important to guard against elite capture of the group. You will find that, at times, the citizens who hold some form of power in a given locality are the ones that are initiating the formation of a group to deal with certain issues. This is fine, because they are also mostly the ones who have an idea of the current trends around political empowerment, have easier access to information, and so on. But, in many cases, they also end up forming the executive of the group and, at times, they do not allow for others to take up positions.

There are also many examples where the founders of groups stay in leadership positions over many years. This might be because there are no regular internal elections held, or it might be because the other members do not feel they have the right to become part of the executive. To ensure equal representation and involvement of the rest of the members in the leadership of the group, the structures and rules guiding the group should allow for anyone who is capable of filling a leadership position to have the opportunity to do so. Moreover, it is significant that the structures and rules allow for new people to become members.

Such a scenario was evident in Mozambique, where the founder members held the senior leadership positions in the groups and elections did not appear to happen regularly. ACUDES, the local NGO working in political empowerment, had taken up this as a matter to be improved and had initiated training programmes to strengthen and democratise the structural organisation of the local groups.

Groups are made of people with differing backgrounds, skills, knowledge and opinions – so some kind of conflict is inevitable. This may be manifested in the form of opposition to ideas, not attending group meetings, disrupting them, and so on. Disagreement may be around an approach to a particular issue, around leadership, between personalities and so forth.

Find in the following some ideas of phases to go through when facilitating organisation of people or groups that have a democratic and inclusive structure in place and that will eventually bring positive change in the political empowerment of citizens at large.

ACUDES is especially looking into improving this area of organisational development as part of its training of CSOs. It has already begun this work with the district platform itself, which now has a clear organisational structure and is beginning to make plans, meeting agendas and minutes. The organisational development of the District Platform itself can serve as inspiration to its member organisations.
Jangamo, Mozambique

Initial phase of organising

Gain an understanding of the core issue to be tackled - Get to understand the outlook of the groups and understand the main issue they are dealing with. For example, it may be that the group is seeking increased participation in the management of local resources. It is important that you understand what level of management they have in mind, and use this as a point of departure. This will mean that your expected outcomes and actions are in tandem with those of the group members and that you do not encounter resistance from them.

Know the stakeholders - As soon as you understand the issues that the group is working with, you will be in a position to find out who the stakeholders are and how they have been involved with the group so far. If some members have been less involved, you could discuss with them how they could be more involved. This could also entail discussions about which stakeholders to involve in order to improve the group's work, and what kind of partnerships they could adopt that would be ideal for the group. It could be a loose partnership, or it could be a more elaborate collaboration where they would be able to share experiences and activities. A stakeholder analysis with the members of the group would be one good exercise to assist in the analysis.

Take stock of other groups and organisations where there is a potential for collaboration.

Next phase of Organising – deciding on a Management structure

There are different models that the management structure can adopt: horizontal modes or hierarchical modes. It could, for example, be a structure that includes a board of directors. But this might be more suited to a larger community-based organisation or to a network, coalition or platform of local organisations.

In a horizontal structure, the group is run through dialogue and consensus. Before any decision is made, it is discussed with the group members until everyone has agreed. This may be a familiar model in Africa, especially with the older generation where, traditionally, the village elders in many communities ruled by consensus – only that it was consensus among the men (usually elderly ones) and not the women. A horizontal model of management can mean that it takes a longer time to arrive at decisions but, when decisions are made, none of the members feel left out. They have been consulted; they have been involved. The action to be taken is then assigned to specific members to carry out and report back to the group.

A hierarchical structure, on the other hand, entails electing an Executive, usually a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, a Secretary and a Treasurer. The titles vary from group to group but the functions are usually the same. The group gives the Executive the mandate to make decisions on their behalf and to represent them to the outside. In a well functioning group, where the leadership has not been captured and retained by a few powerful members, the Executive will usually report back to the members on decisions made, and consult with them on what needs to be done. This is the structure we found to be most prevalent in the case-study countries informing this guide. Decision making tends to be faster with this model because it does not entail broad-based consultation in every step of decision-making. However, there is a danger that the Executive sometimes makes decisions that are contrary to the wishes of the majority of the members. That is why the group – to be democratic – should also have a policy requiring the Executive to consult and report back on any decisions made on their behalf. Also, the group should have a good information sharing mechanism where all the members are kept abreast of all that is happening and can intervene when they need to.

Whichever structure the group members' end up choosing, the representation should be through a democratic process, and this could be ensured through transparent and fair elections. The goal here would be to have members who have a mix of skills and can complement each other in running the organisation. To ensure that specific categories of people who tend to be excluded are included, such as women and youth, you could suggest that the group introduces quotas for representation in the Executive (such as a minimum of 30% women). In the case studies, we found that the groups held elections every one or two years to elect their Executive representatives. Each member had one vote with which they could nominate a member who they felt was suited to fill a particular post and, during elections, they cast ballots to elect the nominees to the various positions.

The case studies showed that the most popular structure was the hierarchical one, because it provides for faster decision making. But the groups also tried to incorporate the horizontal style of management, but there were comments that it took more time for all the members to come to an agreement. In Uganda, for example, the Lodoi Women's group practised a mix of the hierarchical and horizontal type of management. Before the executive decided on anything, they would first consult with the rest of the group members and reach a consensus. But the Executive had the mandate to represent them to the outside; for example, to state officials – as long as they reported back to the group.

> **Lodoi Women's Group, Nakapiripirit, Uganda**
> *'You know how women are: talk, talk, talk…. And then some people are not even heard because others are so loud! That is why we have a chairman to control the meeting. Everyone is allowed to talk and tell what they think. But some others have a voice like children; you can't hear them. When we have discussed enough, the chairman repeats what we have been talking and asks if we agree with the topic. Sometimes we meet for many hours before we agree if we will do a drama on school or on fighting or what. So the chairman asks if we agree and we say "Yes" and that is all. Then we start to practise'.*

In Kenya, on the other hand, in the interest of saving time, rather than having long drawn-out discussions, the Women's Group based in an urban slum had given their Executive the mandate to make decisions on their behalf, as long as these decisions were then communicated to the group members before any action was taken.

> *Tosha 2 Women's Group*
> The Tosha 2 Women's Group also agreed that, in decision making, all the members are present and participate. They, however, said that this can sometimes bring challenges because the group is so big, and many opinions are expressed. In some cases, then, the Executive will make decisions and bring them to the members to seek their approval, or to see if the members would like anything to be changed. They said, '*This is sometimes faster than asking everyone to come and give their thoughts, because some discussions will never end*.'
>
> When asked if there were some members who sometimes dominated the meetings, they said, '*People are not the same. Some are stronger than others and are not afraid to talk about what they think. Others are calm and watch when others are discussing, but if they don't agree with something, they will speak up. We are all friends in this group, so no-one is afraid to talk if they have something to say*.'

Formalising the group

By-laws are the rules and regulations that govern how the group will be managed and run. They will include things, such as, how to recruit new members and how to form the Executive. They will indicate how the Executive will perform its tasks and what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure that all the members are aware of decisions that have been made. They will also include a code of conduct for the members, for example; on active participation and how to treat each other with respect.

The group's policy and its by-laws will also spell out how often the members will meet and the procedure for conducting the meetings; who will call the meetings and how often; how the meeting agenda will be made; who will take minutes; how soon the minutes will be made available to members after the meeting. They will also lay out the procedure for recruiting new members and the rules governing members.

It is usually a good idea to investigate the legal requirements that govern organised groups and to adhere to them. In certain countries, groups cannot legally operate without first being registered but, in others, the guidelines are either not very strict or very clear. Either way, it is good to know what the law of the country says about it.

Official registration usually gives organised groups credibility within the area where it operates, as well as with the authorities. However, it is good to note that, although registration may be a legal requirement, there are times that governments have been known to use these registration rules to blacklist and stop activities of organisations that they perceive as posing a threat to them.

Networking and alliance building

Networking with other local groups and organisations working around political empowerment issues is important, and they should not be viewed as competition but rather as an additional way to meet the needs of the group and, by extension, the local society as a whole. In cases where opposition is encountered from the government – and this is likely to happen with groups working in political empowerment – being part of a group, or forming coalitions, is one way of combating it because with numbers comes more strength to withstand pressure.

Networking and coalition building between local groups and CSO and national NGOs is also useful for mobilisation of social movements and is an important aspect when it comes to national advocacy for policy changes and rights-realisation, which again has an extreme significance for

political empowerment at local levels. Advocacy at national level includes activities such as monitoring the state and local government's delivery of social and economic services.

Knowledge about the reality at local level, claims from poor and marginalised groups and their representation at national level is crucial in the process of influencing political decisions and priorities and herewith also structural changes. Unfortunately this guide does not provide the details on how to link local level activities with national level advocacy. However, a more in-depth analysis is provided in the MS AAI "Accountability Source Book". Furthermore, by the end of 2010, AA International Governance Team will have finalised a second edition of this Empowerment Guide, where social movements, national advocacy etc. will be discussed.

Planning and strategising

A good organisation strategy is guided by a number of factors.

- Gives people a sense of having power. When people actually see what the concrete results of political empowerment can be, and that they can – through concerted efforts – influence what happens in their lives, they become motivated to achieve even more. This is evident in the case of Ms Gurundoro from Zimbabwe. She was one of the people who had read the free publications on political empowerment that were produced by ACPDT, and she was a regular member of the study circles organised in her village.

'*One time, ZFU came to distribute fertiliser. But not everyone was told. Only those who are loyal to ZANU-PF. So, I went round to all my neighbours' houses and knocked on their doors. I told them, ZFU is here; if you want fertiliser, go to the centre quickly. I know my rights, and I know that this fertiliser is for everybody, not just a few people. Now I'm not afraid to ask for my rights, but before, I was afraid and couldn't do that.*

'*Before, in this village, people couldn't stand up and talk about these things. So I go from door to door, talking to my neighbours about the books. Now we are confident in this village. We can stand and say things to our leaders without fear, because we know what they are supposed to do, and what we are supposed to do.*'

- Changes the relations of power. For example, when the local leaders realise that they are actually accountable to the electorate, the ensuing relations with the citizens will be different. They might not be very cordial to start with, because it means that the leaders will feel challenged, but through dialogue and good management, the relationship will become more amenable and positive. The change in power relations could also happen when those who were previously marginalized get a new 'voice' by being members of a group – maybe even getting leadership positions within the group.

- Results in real improvements in people's lives. For example, if a group advocates for better health care in their area – and this happens – it will be a real improvement that will be felt, not only by the group members, but also by the surrounding society.

- Should build the capacity of its members. When a group enables its members to gain leadership experience, get wider exposure, and grow in terms of knowledge and communication skills, this also gives the members respect and a good standing with the wider society. A result could be that the group is entrusted with more responsibilities. It might also create job opportunities – and even lead to a political career!

Possible Barriers to Organising

A number of barriers might get in the way of successful organising. These could include:

- Perception from some group members that organising takes up time and is not as important as being out in the field doing 'actual' work. This could mean that they would not be fully committed to participate in meetings;
- The political landscape of an area might get in the way of group organising successfully if the state is not in favour of such groupings;
- The socio-cultural context might get in the way of equal participation of women in group leadership structures if they dictate that women may not hold such positions;
- Although lack of funds to implement activities could act as a driving force for people to become more organised, it might also make them become demoralised and cat as a deterrent to successful organising;
- When the leadership structures in a group are not seen as democratic or representative of all the group members' interests. Also, when the leadership replicates existing power structures in an area or other unsavoury practices, such as corruption, people may not have the enthusiasm to organise as they would see it as benefiting only a few people.
- It is useful to understanding of roles and relations that individuals play within organized groups and when they are outside of the groups. Poor women, for example, may not be able to participate in 'collective' empowerment activities before they are able to tackle the power dynamics at the household level which may constrain them.
- Lack of understanding of the individual group members and who they represent (groups are composed of various individuals and groups of interests, political actors).
- If 'community' is perceived as one collective actor – e.g. present in language such as the community's interest, issue, drive or the community can do this and that – then the core PE issue of addressing inequalities (not only between 'the people' and 'the government/state' but also within societies or local areas) is undermined.
- Understanding the context; economic and social problems as well as political conflicts. The power is not equally distributed. For different historical, political and socio-economic reasons, some sub-groups have access to resources and decision-making while others are excluded, marginalized. The understanding of the configuration of power at the local level is a necessary condition to work on empowerment issues. It is important to understand the relationships between local economy and the distribution of power; who are the marginalized and why are they so?

Checklist

- What is the issue around which the group first organised? Is the reality the same or has it changed; and if so, how has the group adapted to this change?
- Are there any other groups or organisations in the area that are dealing with the same issue? Or are there other groups that would complement the work you already plan to do; in which case, it could become an important partner?
- What challenges might get in the way of supporting the internal organisation of the groups in focus?
- Does the group's organisational structure and internal procedures embody democratic principles?
- Does the group value the empowerment of individual group members to enable them to initiate better manage their own affairs
- Is there gender sensitivity and balance in the organising and management of the group?
- Does the group take into account the interests of the marginalized in the area? Are they encouraged to become part of the management structures of the group?
- Is the running of the group's activities – and the procedures – transparent and accessible to all the members?
- Is the group self reliant? If not, what measures have been put in place to ensure its sustainability?
- What organisations in the area can the group seek to build partnerships and alliances with for lesson learning and creation of opportunities?
- Developing a work plan – did it include a financial plan?
- How to raise funds for activities? What activities can be funded and which ones cannot?

Some questions you might explore:
- What forms of organizations exist locally and are there experiences with democratic forms of group organizations already that could be drawn on?
- Who are the persons that tend to take up leadership positions, and who tend to be excluded?
- What are the characteristics of such leaders? For example, do they tend to belong to the traditional leadership, attached to the ruling party, or are they local businessmen?

Summary

Organising involves the facilitation of groups to form or strengthen internal organisation structures. This could be in terms of leadership structures, membership conditions, developing codes of conducts etc.

Some guiding principles could include: standing for democracy; encouraging participation; working for empowerment; maintaining a gender balance; involving the marginalized; demonstrating transparency; promoting self-reliance and building partnerships.

There will be some indicators showing that your organising process has been successful.

- A new sense of power to the people. When, after organising, the people begin to realise that by being politically empowered they can affect and influence what happens in their lives.
- Change in power relations. When being part of the group lends people a 'voice' to deal with local power structures. Also, when previously marginalized people get a new sense of self by being active members of a group.
- Real improvements in people's lives. When citizens and groups begin to gain influence that have a real effect on local issues that translate into tangible changes and improvements in real life.
- Improved capacity of members. When a group enables its members to grow in experience and eventually be able to hold even more responsibility.

Initial phase of organising

- Gain an understanding of how people have hitherto been organised, including leadership positions and internal organisational structure and procedures. This will give you a good idea of what aspects of organising that can be further strengthened and where the weaknesses from a democratic perspective are.
- Gain an understanding of the core issue the people want to tackle. This ensures that the expected outcomes and planned actions are in tandem with those of the group members.
- Know the stakeholders. Find out who they are and if and how you and the group can plan to collaborate or partner with them.

Next phase of organising

- Management structure. Agree on what structure or mix of structures suits the group best based on information about the range of alternatives that are available and the benefits of these for the group.
- Group management policy/by-laws. Together with the members, develop a set of rules and regulations that will govern the running of the group.
- Develop a plan. This will be the strategy to guide the activities of the group. Include a plan of work and allocate responsibilities. Ideally, it will include a budget, short and long-term goals of the group, and how it intends to accomplish them.
- Formalising the group. This will involve registering the group with whatever official body is relevant. It will give the group more credibility, both with the state and with a local area.

The next edition of this Empowerment Guide tackles the different ways in which groups can network and build alliances with organisations at national level.

There is a variety of tools that you could utilise in the process of organising to enable political empowerment; Stake holder analysis; Problem group exercise; Leadership styles; Timelines and Historical profiles and SWOT analysis (refer to the tool box).

5. Action

Political empowerment is about strengthening the citizen part of the social contract between the state/government and its citizens in a way that ensures that duty bearers cater for all citizens based on demands from below. This is achieved in a climate where the citizens also understand and practice their responsibilities in relation to this social contract. However, it should not, focus on empowerment as reducing the responsibility of the state in service delivery etc. and 'producing' citizens that cater for themselves and, alone, solve their own problems.

Definition of Terms

Invited space – Invited spaces are those forums, platforms and arenas that are developed by the authorities for citizen participation in local governance. These include local village meetings called by the local authorities, village assemblies called by the administrative village headman, planning meetings organised by the administration, and so on.

Invented spaces - are forums and platforms of participation that are created either by the citizens or other agencies that are not within the 'official' political structure. These can include platforms that CSOs constitute to engage with local government leaders, public meetings, or even radio talk shows, that provide an opportunity for citizens to interact with their leaders.

Social contract – an agreement (it could be moral or legal, informal or formal, implicit or explicit) that binds people or groups of citizens to undertake certain duties within a state and in return, the well-being of the general inhabitants is safeguarded.

Culture - understood as an environment, which is continuously evolving (rather than unchanging) set of values, beliefs, symbols that shapes human behaviors and that is shaped by everyday social and political interactions as well.

An Overview

We are talking here about actions that citizens decide to take in order to rectify problems in their area or to deal with certain issues that affect their general well-being. It could be in relation to issues such as a lack of access to public services, violation of rights or unequal power relations which either marginalize them or leave them frustrated in a situation where they feel oppressed and 'voiceless'.

When organised citizens decide to take action – for example, in demanding their rights in regards to improved service provision in their area, such an action may lead to polarised situations where the citizens and the local leaders are pitted against each other with no amicable solution in sight. Taking action does not necessarily mean that the parties involved have to 'fight' or engage in overt confrontations with local governments. Dialogue and negotiations between the organised citizens and local government officials, for example, through joint meetings and more informal encounters is often a more effective way to ensure that actions yield results. However, you should be aware that demanding your rights in some cases may lead to violence and you should therefore consider how to tackle a violent confrontation. The way to do this will differ from place to place.

The kind of action that citizens decided to take and how they go about implementing it, depends on:

- *Relevance:* what has already been done in the locality about the issue they want to address – and whether the issue is relevant to the majority of citizens in the area?

- *Degree of preparedness:* for example, are they a new CBO or an established CSO venturing for the first time into implementing specific actions? An established CSO will most probably have structures in olace to support its activities, as opposed to a small newly established CBO. The relationships that already exist among those deciding to take action. This is not only personal relationships among the group members, but also the kind of networks and alliances with other groups, CBO or CSO that already exist.

- *Challenges and risks that are foreseen:* This might depend, to a certain extent, on the political climate in the area; is it open for high profile actions and demands or is there a need to take smaller actions to acooid overt conflicts? For example, in stead of taking one big action, say, to congregate and demand the sacking of a corrupt leader, the citizens might decide to take smaller steps first to test the waters and gauge what reaction they are likely to get when they launch more significant activities

The role as facilitator will often be to ensure that the action plan developed explores a mix of strategies in dealing with the issue, so that negotiations are first attempted before the group resorts to more assertive actions. This is very much about facilitating an enabling environment where the citizens are not afraid to speak their minds to the established power-holders, and also, where local authorities see the benefits of listening and responding to citizen demands and contributions. One way to allow for this could be to support different forums or platforms for interaction and dialogue between organised citizens and local leaders. These may already exist in some contexts, and here you could help to strengthen such spaces so that citizens have increased influence. Where they do not exist, you could inspire the groups in the area to come together and establish such spaces.

Approaches to Action

In influencing public service delivery or infrastructural development, it is important that the citizens are aware of the planning cycles of the local government. An action is more likely to be successful if the groups try to place a demand or raise a need, for example, for better water access, if this happens when the local government is drawing up its yearly plan. [10]

It is essential for the group to understand the effects that taking action will have on the group. Action around political empowerment is likely to carry a certain amount of risk – and the group should weigh the benefits of successful action against these risks. For example, if the citizens want to take an action against a corrupt local leader, if the timing was to coincide with local elections, he/she could turn back and accuse the citizens of being from the opposition or as having been sent by his competitor to scuttle his being elected.

The risks involved for any individual, group or organisation undertaking political empowerment activities is demonstrated in the Zimbabwe case study. A village councillor was brutally attacked for daring to run for elections under the opposition party. This was construed to be a hostile action towards the national party and he suffered greatly as a result.

Story of Councillor Mangezvo
Councillor Mangezvo was elected in the fiercely contested elections of 2008. He campaigned and won on an MDC ticket. But his win came at a price. Soon after he won, he was attacked in his home and almost killed by members of the rival political party.

'It was around midnight, and me, my wife and my daughter were asleep. Then, there was a lot of noise from outside the house. We heard stones being thrown on the roof and people shouting at us, "Come out, we know you're inside and we want you defect from MDC". Then they started to destroy the wall of my house and broke down the door. They beat me thoroughly. They broke my legs and beat me very hard everywhere. But my daughter was brave, she was screaming and shouting at them, "Leave my father alone. Why are you beating him?" She was also making a lot of noise to alert the people around. But I was afraid for her because it was a big gang of almost 200 boys. They could hurt her very badly. The gang took me to their base and told me, "You have to surrender your MDC ticket and you will be elected again as a member of ZANU-PF when we hold the by-election." But I knew my rights, and I told them they can't force me to do anything because it was against the law. Then, their bosses came to the base later and told them, "Why did you bring him here? Now people know that you took him. You should have just killed him and thrown his body in the river." They told them to let me go because it was too late to do anything now. By this time, it was almost four in the morning. My brave daughter ran home and brought a wheelbarrow to carry me home. But my state was bad. I could not walk because of my broken legs, and I had a very bad cut on my head and on my hands. They told me, "If you go to hospital, we shall come back and finish you and your family. But in the morning, my family had to take me to hospital in the city. I stayed there for six months, and I still have metal plates in my legs.'

Strategising action

Gaining an understanding of the local context with regard to existing political legislation will be a help in determining the kind of action strategy a group should adopt. Although legislation is drawn centrally, how it is applied on the ground differs from place to place, and it is important to understand how it is applied in each area. It could be important to find out whether existing legislation supports channels and avenues through which groups of citizens can influence local government decisions on service delivery and local governance issues, and whether such legislation has actually been implemented.

The kind of resources available in the area will also determine what kind of action the citizens can take. This is not only financial resources but human resources as well. For example, if the group decides that they want to be involved in the management of their local resources – it could be that they have a mine located in their area – they might decide to use the skills and knowledge of a fellow citizen or member of the group to help them navigate through the process of getting to do this. On the other hand, if the group decides that it would like to engage in a court battle, say, over the polluting of their water source by a private company, this might call for both human and financial resources – and they would need to consider both of these carefully before deciding to proceed.

After getting to know the specific issues, the people involved, and the context, the next step could mean getting down to discussing possible action strategies/approaches depending on the issues to be tackled. For example, the group might want to lobby for new boreholes to be dug in their area. They know that they need to engage with the local government agency in charge of water, but they might not have a plan beyond this engagement. In the country case studies, the citizens and NGOs adopted a mix of soft and confrontational approaches:

Kenya - The Kibera Community Development Agenda (KCODA) facilitated meetings where the leaders and citizens could hold dialogue. It also published a monthly journal where leaders and the citizens were welcome to contribute articles of mutual interest around topic so of local governance and development.

Uganda - The NGO Association for World Education-Uganda National Chapter (AWE-UNC) working in rural Uganda conducted political empowerment sessions specifically for the local leaders to empower them to be more responsive to citizens' demand, by building their capacity around the existing local government laws and the leaders' mandate regarding these laws. In the process, the leaders, slowly, started to become more open and responsive to citizens' demands. In one area, the National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) started visiting when they heard that the citizens were making complaints to The NGO Link Forum-Apac (NLFA) about non-delivery of agricultural extension services in the area. Although no formal complaint was made to them, the citizens' complaints put subtle pressure on NAADS to resume, although sporadically, their visits to the villages in the area.

Zimbabwe - The residents of a Village gathered in force to receive fertiliser. This action took the initiative of one active member of the village to effect. A local female farmer and study circle member, realised that fertiliser was being distributed to villagers – and specifically to those who were ZANU-PF supporters. She rallied many of the villagers to congregate at the distribution venue and demand to be given fertiliser. On another occasion, some villagers walked out of a meeting in protest because they did not approve of how some people were attempting to turn a local development meeting into a political one.

Mozambique: The District Platform in Jangamo District lobbied the local government to gain access to development plans and budgets. Through meetings and capacity building activities aimed at local state officials, the DP was able to influence the sub-district level government offices to develop their own local development plans, which previously did not exist. In addition, a member association of the DP started a literacy project and lobbied the government to provide material contributions. It did so through meetings where it held discussions with representatives from the district, provincial and national education departments.

Public hearings/people's parliament

This is a technique that has started to gain popularity in many countries and with a number of organisations involved in civic awareness and political empowerment programmes. The idea is for a government representative – usually the higher up he is on the political ladder, the better – to be invited to a specific venue, normally by a media company, and the public is invited to have a discussion session with him. This is tricky because, if not facilitated by a skilled individual, it could disintegrate into chaos. But, if handled well, the public gets to hear from the 'horse's mouth', and is able to discuss empowerment issues affecting them. This, in turn, creates an increased awareness on the part of the people.

In Nepal, this technique has been used very successfully:
The main purpose of Public Hearings is to help citizens break away from the old ways of either remaining indifferent or reacting destructively, particularly in matters relating to good governance. It encourages citizens to talk about pro-poor governance and helps them identify what they really need. In a Public Hearing, the general public have an opportunity to directly put their questions to a representative or an authority..... Apart from being a practical weapon to help eradicate corruption at the local government level, the Public Hearing has proved to be a creative exercise in translating the concept of 'government for the people and by the people' into a reality. It is a small but meaningful step towards participatory democracy.
And when such occasions are broadcast, of course, the hearing takes on a heightened significance and reaches a much wider audience.[11]

The Mozambique Case Study illustrates how AMOPROC, a local NGO operating in a rural area successfully uses meetings – "palestras" as they are known locally.

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[11] John Fox, Julie Tharup, Glen Swanson and Yadab Chapagain, Nepal Country Case Study: Citizen's Voice and Accountability Evaluation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, Danida, March 2008.

AMOPROC uses 'palestras' – a kind of public speech – as a main method to create awareness among the wider population about the Lei dos Orgãos Locais do Estado (law on the local organs of the state – LOLE) and as exercises where citizens can reflect upon their needs and problems. *Palestras* have also been used as a way to present the district development plans to the public. They are held by the community activists at locality level and everyone is free to participate, as individuals and as groups.

It is also important to stimulate people who are already part of organised groups to continuously engage in informal conversations with neighbours and other people living in their area about the benefits of mobilisation. Training other citizens to mobilise fellow citizens can be a way to ensure sustainability of PE efforts and to anchor such efforts in the local context.

Developing an action plan

The action plan will act as a guide that clearly shows where the group is going, how it proposes to get there, and what it hopes to accomplish in the process. The plan, therefore, should show: Where the group is now; where it wants to be within a certain period of time and how it intends to get where it intends to be.

When developing an action plan, it is vital to identify the key tasks and to break this down further to the steps that will lead to the accomplishment of each task. Also, it is important to discuss in the group, agree and assign responsibilities for each task, plus an accompanying time schedule within which each step, and consequently, each task should be accomplished. For example, a key task could be ensuring more citizen participation in local government planning processes. The steps that will lead to the accomplishment of this task might include: holding a public rally to talk to the leaders and the citizens, talking to local leaders about publicising better the dates of these meetings, where citizens can influence decisions, collecting local development plans and presenting these to the citizens to analyse, and so on.

The action plan could cover any length of time that the group decides on – a one year or a five year plan. If working with a group that includes illiterate people, it is important to use visual tools to make sure that they are involved. One tool could be the "Mapping of institutional relationships" (the group members would be able to illustrate the organisations that are working in the area on political empowerment and how the group can create partnerships with them).

The action plan should include:

Goals – to describe what the group plans to achieve and how this will be done.

Description of tasks – a description of all the key tasks that will support the achievement of its goals.

Time-line – a proposed schedule for accomplishing the key tasks.

Completeness – to see that all the changes and efforts intended by the group are addressed; that there is a mix of strategies in the implementation of activities.

Clarity – to ensure that the plan is clear on what activities will be done, by whom and when.

Sufficiency – to check that all the activities proposed meet with the goals of the group. If not, to make additional changes that will ensure that this happens.

Currency – to ensure that the information contained in the plan is current and relevant; that it anticipates future opportunities and barriers to enable the group to adapt itself to changing scenarios.

Flexibility – so that as the plan unfolds, it is flexible enough to accommodate and respond to changing (un-anticipated) realities within the group and the area of operation in general.

Possible Barriers to Taking Action

When the group starts taking action to rectify a certain situation in their area they are likely to encounter a few barriers along the way. These may include:

- Negative reception by the elites: The activities of the group might encounter some opposition from powerful people in the area who feel that their power is under threat. This might in turn discourage some members from wanting to continue taking action within the group because at times, this opposition could get to the point of outright intimidation.

- Lack of resources: During action planning, the activities should be based on available resources. Should these resources fall short, it might affect the morale of group members when they have to struggle a lot to fund planned tasks.

- Lack of commitment from group members: When tasks are assigned to specific members within a group and they fail to see these through because of a lack of commitment, this might affect the fulfilment of other planned tasks in the action plan.

- Lack of visible results: If the first few actions that a group takes end up in failure, it can discourage them from taking further action. That is why while developing an action plan, the first activities should be those that are easy to accomplish and show results within a short time.

Take, for example, the women's group in the slum. They said that, because sometimes it took long to see results, they had lost a number of members along the way.

> The women's groups agreed that when some members joined they did not realise that they would not immediately start to see results. They said that some members only stayed a few months and left. The Vision Sister's Group only has one operational income generating activity – providing outside catering services when individuals and organisations have functions at which they want meals to be provided. They said that sometimes they can go a whole month without getting these jobs and, because of this, some members leave. They, however, said that they did not regret that they lost some. '*We only want to keep those who are dedicated to changing Kibera, and not those who come here only to make money.*'

Checklist

During the development of the action plan, some principles should be built into it that will guide the members in implementing their activities; ones that should be developed in collaboration with the group members.
Some questions that would guide this process could include:
- Where the group is now;
- Where it wants to be within a certain period of time;
- How it intends to get where it intends to be.

- What potential conflicts may arise when formerly marginalised people begin to demand their rights or question how public institutions operate?

- Is the plan realistic – and will it lead to tangible results for the target group?

- Does the plan build on the skills and strengths of the group?

- Is there a concrete plan of documenting the results of action taking? This will assist the group in analysing what actions work, how results were achieved, or if anything needs to change in the strategy they have adopted. While developing the action plan, and as mentioned earlier, this should be a key task in the plan.

- Does the plan include a strategy of how to engage with other organisations; partnerships and alliances? Working in political empowerment, a group will find that its adversary today will turn out to be a valuable partner tomorrow. Therefore, although it is not always possible to do so, it is a good idea to maintain working relationships with organisations/agencies working in or around political empowerment. For example, if at one time the group has to confront the local government official about an issue, it is not a personal matter, and the working relationship should be respectfully maintained even if they have agreed to disagree on it. It is also important to create and maintain alliances and networks with like-minded organisations. This could be for exchange of experiences and therefore learning from each other. It could also be that pooling resources and skills will make the planned activities of the partner organisation more compelling.

- Does the action plan inclusive towards marginalised groups, such as youth, women and poor people and accountable to all participants?

It is important that PE initiatives are not only engaged with the more technical development aspects of district development planning, but that they are also reflective about constraints in participation. Examples of such constraints could be: the presence of an authority and, therefore, the fear of speaking up in meetings; low self esteem; distrust of the motives of the exercise; fear of loss of face; fear of overstepping customary roles; a sense of powerlessness; lack of experience in working with groups; lack of skills in planning and problem solving.

Summary

Taking action is a process by which citizens decide to engage to resolve particular problems or issues that are affecting them.
How the citizens go about taking action is determined by a number of things:

- The relationships that already exist among the group.

- What has already been done around the issue they want to address?

- How organised the group is, that is how well developed the organisation's support structures are.

- The anticipated challenges and risks that the group expects to encounter when it starts implementing its activities.

- The kind of resources (human and financial) they have at their disposal.

- The support the group has from the rest of the citizens in the area.

- The involvement of charismatic local leaders.

In preparation for developing the action plan with a group, there are a number of activities that will come in handy.

Agree a possible action plan. With the group and, ideally, including a few resource people from other organisations or neighbourhoods to give different perspectives, brainstorm and come up with a possible strategy that the group is comfortable with and one that is commensurate with the resources available to them. It should be a strategy that employs a mix of tactics to get things done.

While implementing activities that demand for more active citizen participation in local governance, the group is likely to encounter some obstacles along the way. These might include:

- Negative reception by elites in the area;

- Lack of resources to fund the activities of the group;

- Lack of commitment from some group members resulting in non performance on assigned tasks;

- Lack of visible results; this might demoralise some group members.

Relevant tools and techniques are described in the Tool-kit section. Relevant tools could be: SWOT Analysis; Semi-structured interviews when getting to know the citizens; Historical scans and Stakeholder analysis.

Part II: Tool kit

Political Empowerment Tools

This chapter consists of a collection of tools and methods that can be used in facilitating political empowerment processes: conducting rights-aware situation analyses, issue raising exercises, frameworks for facilitating discussion, decision-making approaches, and so on. They are taken from a variety of sources, manuals, handbooks and guides from the fields of adult education, community development, participatory rural appraisal (PRA), and management training.

Some of the tools described have been inspired by the Reflect approach to literacy and adult learning, where political empowerment has been synonymous with strengthening literacy and communication skills. This has been achieved by basing literacy programmes on the communities' experiences and by documenting local knowledge; by reading and analysing newspapers, using report cards etc.). On the following page you will find a complete list of the tools that will be described. The majority of the tools are useful for both data collection and for awareness/mobilization processes.

The tools and techniques are - when applying a Rights Based Approach – to be used with the purpose of mobilizing citizens and letting people know their rights. When you have identified a need or a problem, the objective is to start or to continue a social process. The aim of this field guide is to guide a systematic, participatory and coherent process of empowering people towards political mobilization, and not simply to extract their knowledge and lessons from their experiences for our own purposes. So, if you for example identify a problem in the local health clinic, it's necessary to find out what your rights are in regards to the legislation before you go into action.

If you would like to go deeper into some of the approaches and theories from which this Tool-kit is derived, then we have provided a list of references.[12]

Please question, challenge (or add to) the tools, approaches and techniques that you will find in the following pages (we have reserved space for "personal comments" under each of the tools).

Symbols used for the tools:

For further reading:
Warning Mark, something is highlighted as a risk assumption

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[12] Some of the comments and inputs already received to the first draft of the E.G., have been to include more tools on Power analysis. There also needs to be some specific reflection on the power of the user of this guide (Please refer to the Reflect team within Action Aid, which has produced a document about our "own power" as an outsider to political empowerment)

List of Tools:

	Mobilisation	Awareness raising	Participation	Organisation	Action
Who speaks		X			
Gender Awareness Tool	X		X		
Timelines/hist. prof.	X	X			
Ranking		X			X
Seasonal calendars	X		X		
Mobility mapping	X				
Community analysis	X				
Mapping inst. Rel.	X				
Sketch maps	X		X		
Access and control Profiles		X			
Activity profiles/calendars		X			
Problem trees		X			
Role plays	X	X			
Flow diagram			X		
Leadership styles				X	
Group dynamics				X	
Stakeholder analysis	X				X
SWOT analysis		X			X
Force Field Analysis			X	X	
Action Plans		X			X
Com Contracts			X		X
Semi-Struc. Int.views					X
Focus Groups		X			X

Tools for mobilisation and setting up groups/CBOs

"Who speaks"

What?
The 'Who Speaks?' is a tool that can be used to uncover the power that comes with the ability to speak up or speak out in the public and private domain. This ability is important, but it can have a dramatic effect on power relations, if it is misused to dominate less strong members of the communities.

Why?
There should be made space in meetings to let all have their democratic right to speak out on issues that are important to them. The respect for all members, no matter their age, gender, ethnic group, education or status, is fundamental when working to empower people. When you bring a group together for an activity, the group dynamics will be established from the first day, and therefore it is important to be sensitive towards who speaks, and to create an equal balance in the group between those that are very outspoken and those who are more quiet and timid.

How?

Materials	A simple stick
Steps	1. **Discussion:** Explain that in this exercise everybody's voice will be given equal status. Explain the dynamics of a group and that the purpose of the exercise is to create a more equal balance in the group between the members with different abilities and courage to speak out. 2. Select an issue to discuss which is relevant for all members; it could, for example, be the planning of the upcoming harvest, making of the local development plan to be discussed with the local authorities. 3. Divide the group into smaller groups of 2 or 3 and let them 'buzz' together over the selected issue. Place the more vocal persons in the same group in order to allow the more quiet persons have space in their groups. 4. **Role-play**: another technique is to simulate a discussion giving the members different roles to play, such as: dominating, timid, bored. After the play the spectators guess who played what. 5. **Controlling contributions:** The person who talks should hold a stick, and no one is allowed to talk without holding the stick. When the person has finished the stick is handed over to the next person.
Issues for discussion	• What has been discovered about the group dynamics in the group? • What strengths were discovered among the participants? • How can these strengths be used in promoting activities?

Reflection
The space which is created by letting participants sum in clusters of two or three gives everybody a chance to express and formulate their concerns and views.

The role play contributes to raising the awareness among the members about the group dynamics and powers in the group. By taking on roles that differ from their normal behaviour, people can become aware of how other persons behave and feel.
The stick-exercise helps to stimulate the awareness about the frequency of speaking as well as about discipline in the meeting, so that the participants listen to one another.

Notes:

Gender Awareness Tool

What?

A Gender Awareness Tool is used to assess the potential effects of a specific project on men and women, boys and girls, in terms of their time, labour, resources and culture.

Why?

Working with women's rights is very relevant when it comes to political empowerment. Empowering women to take action according to their own priorities is much needed, because women across the world are disadvantaged and discriminated against. The degrees and ways in which this takes place vary in different contexts, which must be accounted for when designing components on political empowerment.

Who?

Both men and women and, in particular, young men and women. Sometimes it can make sense to divide the participants according to gender.

How?

Materials	Cards, pins, pin board, large sheets of paper.
Steps	1. Explain the concept of the Gender Awareness Tool – and how it can be useful in promoting the interest and involvement of everyone in the empowerment and development process. 2. Help the participants to agree on definitions for the terms in the matrix: *Time* refers to changes in the amount of time it takes each group to carry out tasks associated with the project under discussion; *Labour* refers to changes in those tasks; *Resources* refers to changes in access to capital as a result of the project; and *Culture* refers to changes in the social aspects of the participants' lives. 3. Record on the board the objectives, problems and activities of the project under discussion. 4. Draw up a matrix and invite the participants to share their feelings on the expected impact of planned empowerment activities on their own social group. 5. Record the expected effects with short phrases in each cell of the matrix. Beside each, mark whether the effects are desirable or consistent with the project objectives, using positive (+), negative (–) or neutral (+/–) signs. (Note that quantitative effects can be marked with multiple +s or –s according to an agreed scale.) 6. Initiate a discussion on the findings of the Gender Awareness Tool.
Issues for discussion	• What effects will the planned activities have on the resources of women? • Will they lose access to land or control over money they earn? • What impact will the planned activities have on men's time? • Are the planned activities going to challenge or reinforce unequal gender relations?

Reflection

The Gender Awareness Tool is best used in a group in which men and women are equally represented. If this is not the case, it may be useful to split the participants along gender lines, and to compare their matrices afterwards.

***:
Bridge 2009: Gender and Governance – Supporting Resources Collection.
http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk

UNIFEM, 2008: Who answers to Women? – Gender and accountability
http://www.unifem.org/progress/2008

UNDP, UNIFEM, 2009: A Users Guide to Measuring Gender-Sensitive Basic Service Delivery.
http://www.unifem.org/materials/item_detail.php?ProductID=151

We have been recommended to add some more gender tools: HAF, gender equity plans, gender mainstreaming tool, gender budgeting tool, GEWEF, which will be added in the next edition of this Empowerment Guide.

The table below might be useful when monitoring level of recognition of members in a group:

Level of recognition/ Equality	Negative	Neutral	Positive
Control			
Participation			
Conscientisation			
Access			
Welfare			

Notes:

Timelines or Historical Profiles

What?
The Timeline is a history of major events in the recollected life of a group of people – important incidents, developments, disasters and achievements. The Timeline helps both village development workers/advisors and village members to understand why things are the way they are.

Why?
Like all historical records, it can reveal how the village commonly responds to problems and opportunities. For political empowerment, this would establish the existing trends and the village's responses and, from this, they would be able to get a snap-shot view of how they act and probably encourage them to reflect on why they have acted or reacted this way – and if this has benefited them or been to their detriment.

Who?
!!!: It is very important to have a good knowledge of the participants when composing the groups and sub-groups, so people feel free to speak and are not disturbed by hierarchies – social status or power positions, etc. Furthermore it is important to think about power relationships within the composed groups and sub-groups; for example, in some cases it could be difficult for young educated men to contribute in front of illiterate elders who are respected and have knowledge about the village's history.

How?

Materials	Large sheets of paper and pens.

Steps	1. Try to ensure that the composition of the group is as varied as possible – including elders, women, religious leaders, youth, members of the local administration, etc.
	2. If the group is too large, divide it into sub-groups.
	3. Use group discussion rather than one-to-one interviews, because the dialogue that will be generated will prompt others' memories, and cross-check for accuracy.
	4. Explain to the groups the purpose of the exercise.
	5. If the talk doesn't flow smoothly to begin with, try some of the following questions:
	  ➢ 'When did this settlement start?'
	  ➢ 'Who were its founders?'
	  ➢ 'What would you say is the most important event you can remember in this village?'
	  ➢ 'When were the last elections?'
	  ➢ 'What kind of civic education did you receive?'
	  ➢ 'What has been the worst thing that has happened to this village?'
	  ➢ 'What has been the best thing that has happened?'
	!!!: The questions above are just examples, not a questionnaire.
	If there is difficulty in fixing dates, establish some 'markers', such as Independence, the beginning of multi-partyism, the beginning or end of local clashes or civil wars, etc. When the lists are complete, review them and try to establish significant trends.

Issues for discussion	• What are the high/low points or successes/challenges? • Where are the shifts or turning points? What kind? Why? • What trends/issues do you see over the period? Vertically? Horizontally? • What has been learnt about recurring problems in the village? • What have we learnt that will help us to draft an Action Plan?

Reflection
The participants might choose to continue the timeline into the future. What is planned? What do they hope will happen?

Time is an important dimension of most issues: looking at how something came about, learning from experience, or anticipating what might happen. Many problems are experienced in a very immediate way; but responding to them effectively requires a long-term perspective, recognising the factors that led to the situation in order to ensure sustainable solutions. Visualising these in the form of a calendar or timeline can be very effective.
Examination of routine uses of time can clearly show differences in individuals' patterns of work or behaviour, encouraging shared analysis, debate and in many cases assisting planning for change. A time dimension is useful in analysis of nearly any issue or situation, and can be introduced at any point. With this tool you can get an insight into different stages involved in a process. It can be elaborated to include many details such as roles, time or costs involved at each stage.

Notes:

Ranking

What?
This is a prioritisation exercise: how to determine, through a structured group discussion, which problems or objectives should be dealt with first. Two techniques are briefly described here: Voting and Preference Ranking. This can be used in cases where an organisation wants to facilitate political empowerment by addressing a specific issue.

Why?
For example, citizens might feel that their land rights are being violated; with the ranking exercise they can structure and prioritise possible solutions to their constraints.

How?

Materials	Large sheets of paper and pens.
Steps	1. For **Voting**, invite the group to simply vote on each problem from, say, the Problem Tree that they have constructed, with each participant casting a vote for what he or she believes is the most pressing issue. The issue that attracts the most votes is the winner – after some discussion, of course, to check that this really is what the group thinks is the most vital line of action. 2. Alternatively, you could use seeds or stones for casting votes: agreeing that each person has, say, 10 stones for prioritising six items – and they distribute their stones according to the perceived importance of each item. Someone might, for example, put five stones against item 2, three against item 5, one against items 1 and 6, and none against items 3 and 4. A more precise tool could be developed by specifying criteria and voting on each item according to these criteria. 3. In **Preference Ranking**, the problems/objectives are first paired up in a matrix – so that each problem/objective is matched up with all the others, thus ensuring a more focused consideration and eliminating the possibility of a tie. This is done by drawing up a matrix with the same problems/objectives on both axes. 4. Take each pair in turn, and ask the group which should have priority. 5. Again, the 'winning' problem/objective will be the one with the most votes.
Issues for discussion	• How clear-cut is the decision? • How can we account for the different preferences? (Men versus women? Settlement people versus pastoralists, youth versus the older generation?)

Notes:

Seasonal Calendars

What?
A tool for identifying the main activities and everyday routines of a group of people and how they fit into the annual cycle – and the periods of difficulty and opportunity related to different seasons. A seasonal calendar can be useful in working towards an Action Plan. It explores seasonal constraints and opportunities by recording changes in activities and practices month by month throughout a typical year. It indicates whether there are common problems that recur at certain times of the year.

Why?
Such a calendar can assist in determining the availability of water and pasture, of labour or cash – and therefore appropriate timing of project activities. For example, participants have more time on their hands after the planting or harvesting seasons are over. In such cases, empowerment activities should revolve around these seasons to allow for broad coverage. In other cases, when there is drought, women and youth probably have to travel further to fetch water and this should be taken into account.

Such a calendar is also useful for the CBO to plan meetings and activities with groups of citizens.

How?

Materials	Paper and pens – or any objects at hand.
Steps	1. Begin by explaining what a Seasonal Calendar is 2. With the group, decide which topics should be recorded. They will probably include rainfall patterns, water availability, pasture availability, migration, sources of income, and availability of food. 3. Try to ensure that there is sufficient diversity in each group in terms of experience, age and gender (Or split the groups according to gender/age, etc. The activities of the various groups may vary considerably). 4. Decide whether to work first on the ground, using sticks and stones – or to go straight to a chart on paper. 5. Mark out the 12 months at the top and/or bottom of the chart. 6. Remind the group that they should consider the activities of a 'normal' year. 7. To start the discussion, it might be helpful to ask such questions as: ➢ 'When do/should the rains come?' ➢ 'When are the animals taken out to the pastures?' ➢ 'When are crops planted?' ➢ 'When is harvest time for the local staples?' Sometimes it might help to show an example of a Seasonal Calendar produced by another group.
Issues for discussion	• What have you learned about the attitudes towards certain seasonal activities? • Who or what controls these activities? • What are the implications for your empowerment work?

Reflection
It is important that PE work is not only engaged with the more technical development aspects of district development planning, but that it is also reflective about **constraints in participation**. Examples of such constraints could be: the presence of an authority and, therefore, the fear of speaking up in meetings; low self esteem; distrust of the motives of the exercise; fear of loss of face; fear of overstepping customary roles; a sense of powerlessness; lack of experience in working with groups; lack of skills in planning and problem solving. (

Mobility Mapping

Once you have identified and ranked the basic resources used and produced by a village, the information can be transferred to a Mobility Map – a map showing how resources flow to and from (or in more commercial terms, how they are imported and exported by) the village.

What?
Mobility Maps are an entertaining, challenging and invariably informative method of establishing and analysing the movement of goods and services between neighbouring settlements. Like Resource and Social Maps, they often lead to a comprehensive discussion about the constraints, opportunities and requirements associated with a village's external trade.

Why?
In political empowerment, they could indicate areas that the village feel they need to be 'empowered in'. It could be in starting up their own local market instead of transporting their wares for long distances to another market, or in negotiating for better prices for their goods when they have to deal with middle-men, and so on.

Who?
Often, change processes are led by the more powerful and influential personalities or leaders who have the influence to start certain processes and initiatives which can mobilise others to do the same.
!!! It is very important to have a good knowledge of the target group when composing the groups and sub-groups, so people feel free to speak and are not disturbed by hierarchies – social status or power positions, etc.

How?

Materials	Large sheets of paper, felt pens, pieces of card, pins.
Steps	1. Ask the participants to draw a map of their area on the ground with a stick, filling in the lines with ash or a different coloured soil to make them stand out. Their area should be represented by a large central circle, other settlements by circles proportionate to their size. 2. Ask the participants to collect symbols of the main resources identified in the Community Livelihood Analysis exercise – i.e. rolls of paper for salt, leaves for vegetables, and a bone for cattle. (When using local materials remember not to use food items, as this could be quite insensitive in communities that are struggling to put food on the table. Also ensure leaves/twigs etc are from the ground and that no harm is done to the environment). 3. Using the symbols or drawings, identify the place of each important resource on the map – 'imported' resources outside the circle; 'exports' inside – with arrows indicating the direction of their trade. 4. Lead a discussion on the main sources of income and expenditure – and on means of increasing the former and reducing the latter.
Issues for discussion	• Can increased income be generated from any of the available resources? • How can this be done? • How can the cost of importing key resources be reduced?

Reflection
If applied properly, Mobility Mapping can inspire a rush of enthusiasm and inventiveness among the participants of a workshop or gathering. It can also give a picture of where the main resources are centred and why.

This tool could be applied together or before the Community Livelihood Analysis; Participants could identify the resources and their position outside and inside their local area and then discuss the relative importance of these exports and imports in the community livelihood analysis activity.

Notes:

Community Livelihood Analysis

What?
Livelihood Analysis is a tool for ranking the economic and social capital that affects the livelihoods of a specific household or groups of people. Basically, it gives a picture of the economic resources available. This is done by listing and ranking through 'proportional piling' – by piling beans, seeds or stones in circles on the ground. The information is then transferred to a pie-chart to illustrate the importance of each activity or resource. This can in turn be used in the preparation of a Mobility Map to show the flow of resources between communities.

Why?
The understanding of the distribution of resources and configuration of power at the local level is a necessary condition to work on empowerment issues. Who are the marginalized and why are they so?

Who?
The proportional piling of beans, seeds or stones makes this tool good for those who struggle with literacy

How?

Materials	Large sheets of paper, felt pens, pieces of card, pins and beans, seeds or stones?
Steps	1. Explain that the purpose of Community Livelihood Analysis is to list all the resources that the groups considers essential – and identify those that generate its income. 2. Every time a resource is mentioned, the participants should consider whether it can be regarded as a basic household need – and whether it is a resource used for income. Resources should be ranked according to their relative importance and the level of income generated. 3. Assign someone to record the information. 4. Write each agreed resource on a separate card. 5. Draw a large circle on the ground or on paper. 6. Place the cards inside, across the line of the circle, or outside it – depending on whether the group considers it to be widely available, partially available, or completely unavailable. 7. Indicate the importance of each resource by 'piling' stones or other objects (the higher the pile, the more important the resource). 8. Transfer the information to a conventional pie-chart
Issues for discussion	• What has been discovered about the groups' needs and wants for particular resources? • What constraints have been identified in obtaining basic resources? • How can these constraints be overcome? • What activities might be helpful to tackle these issues? How?

Reflection
This exercise could be followed up by an activity looking at availability and cost of services (Refer to the scorecard tool in the Accountability Sourcebook), which will lead to a discussion on whether the groups have access to sufficient resources to pay for these services? Next step could be a priority-making exercise; for instance, to prepare for inputs to local government budget analysis planning processes. Which services are already available for the citizens? Do the citizens have resources to pay for instance schools for their children, to use health facilities etc?

Notes:

Mapping of institutional relationships

What?
The purpose of this tool is to map institutional relationships, so that citizens can better understand each institution's importance and mandates towards the citizens; get a picture of which institutions are most and least respected – and the reasons for these feelings/perceptions. How can we engage with them or hold them accountable?
If it is repeated, the institutional mapping can become a monitoring tool for indicating changes in values and relationships.

Why?
The tool can assist you and the groups of people you are working with to establish strategic relationship/alliances between established interest groups and institutions operating in the same field. By 'institutions' we are referring to government institutions, CBOs, private companies, etc. Some relationships might be more relevant than others, and you have to prioritise where to invest your energy and resources.

How?
The symbols or circles of varying sizes are representing individuals or organisations and their perceived importance. The size of the symbols or circles indicates their importance; the positioning – overlapping, touching or separate – indicates their degree of contact. The diagram can thus illustrate the relationships between several different institutions – and reveal those most in need of improvement. For example, if there is an Interest group/development committee that should be collaborating with the local government office but is not, an institutional mapping would be able to highlight this.

Materials	Few materials are needed (large sheets of paper, pens)
Steps	1. Divide the participants into manageable groups for conducting the activity – maintaining a good cross-section of experience in each group. 2. Explain the purpose and the process of the mapping. 3. Ask the participants to make a list of all the institutions operating in the area, or those involved in a particular project. 4. Invite the group to choose an object or a symbol for each institution and to place them inside or outside a circle, near or far. The position of the object symbolises the how the group assesses their importance or the quality of service each institution is providing. Alternatively, the group can draw the institutions as circles – on paper or on the ground. 5. Establish clear scales for representing each institution's importance to the citizens represented – through different sized circles (the bigger the circle, the greater the perceived influence of the institution) – and their degree of contact. The latter may be represented as follows: Separate circles = no contact Touching circles = some information passing between institutions Small overlap = some cooperation in decision making Large overlap = substantial cooperation in decision making. 6. When the groups are finished, invite them to display their mappings.
Issues for discussion	• How similar or different are the groups' mappings? What are the reasons for the differences? • What can be learnt from the exercise about those institutions that are most and least respected – and the reasons for these feelings/perceptions? • What can be done about important institutions – e.g. those related to health or education – that have been placed far away from the centre? • Who is responsible for doing these things? How can we engage with them or hold them accountable?

	• What other institutions do the participants want to 'bring back to the centre'?

Reflection:
The exercise could be followed up by discussions that would lead to increased networks and information sharing between involved public and private institutions and actors at various levels (local, regional and national).
Notes:

Sketch Maps

What?
Sketch Maps are the primary participatory tools for collecting data about a particular area – its boundaries, layout and significant features. Although maps can be used to record all manner of information, the most common maps are: Resource Maps, which document an area's physical resources (land, water points, grazing areas); Social Maps, which illustrate its social conditions (houses, wealth levels, family sizes); and Mobility Charts, which record the pattern of people's movements.

Why?
Since drawing Sketch Maps doesn't require special expertise or equipment (they can first be drawn on the ground, using whatever materials are lying around), and since the drawing can be a group activity, they can provide an excellent opportunity for sharing information between the "outsider" and citizens living in the area – as well as for identifying local problems and potentials. Each 'side' has its special knowledge, of course; the "Outsiders" might be better informed about technical subjects, such as, on legislative or legal matters, but the citizens living in the area will have direct knowledge about such things as boundaries and inter-group relationships – and they will certainly have a sharper insight into the social and political problems experienced.

Who?
!!!: It is important that you understand the roles and relationships in a group, because some people are so influential that they can control the mapping process in order to prevent important information from being revealed.

How?

Materials	Anything to hand – such as sticks, stones and leaves – plus pens and large sheets of paper for transferring the model to a more permanent and displayable format.
Steps	1. Divide the people into groups to produce models and maps of the project area (each group would take a different area/focus) 2. If there is diversity in terms of background, experience and expertise, use this as the criteria for the division into groups. 3. Decide which kind of map will be drawn and whether it will be constructed inside or outside, in the sand or on paper, with objects or with pens. 4. Whichever way is chosen, emphasise that this is a job for everyone; not just for those with an artistic flair – and certainly not just for the 'outsider' development workers. 5. If it is a basic Sketch Map, ask the groups to plot the boundaries, the position of houses, wells and so forth. (But do not be too prescriptive, because it is important that the exercise captures the varying perceptions of the participants). 6. If it is a Resource Map, ask the groups to add details such as boreholes, animals and pastures. 7. If it is a Social Map, make sure that all the households in the village are included. Use symbols to indicate whatever information you have decided to collect – ethnic differences, wealth (poor/rich), education, age, health status, number of children, etc. 8. When the groups have finished (or when they are 'time-barred'), display the products on the wall. (If the groups choose to work with models, allow time for a paper-and-pen record to be made.) Invite each group to present its map – focusing on whatever themes they have chosen to highlight.
Issues for	• What do we now know about the area and the village that we didn't know

discussion	before?
	• How can this knowledge help us to identify priorities in our political empowerment work?
	• Will our maps be useful for monitoring the progress and achievements of our work?

Reflection

Maps are a particularly useful tool for <u>planning</u> with communities. They help communities to put many aspects of their lives, their problems and possibilities, in a clearer perspective. Whether tracing the topography of an area, its physical resources and social structure, or the movement of goods and services, maps provide a graphic illustration of the situation on the ground – and the way people perceive it.

How the activity is started is quite crucial. If you give out paper and pencils and ask people to draw a map, they might get a bit bewildered or intimidated. But if you simply start a conversation by asking 'Where are we now?' then quite naturally, someone will start to draw.

!!!: It is important to avoid the tendency of some 'experts' to produce existing maps of an area as a stimulus for a mapping exercise. More often than not, these will only serve to inhibit the participants' creativity. If *accurate* maps of the local area are available, they should be produced after the participants' maps are drawn – for cross-referencing and comparing.

Notes:

Access and Control Profiles

What?
The Access and Control Profile is an important tool for identifying the different resources owned by women and men – and the extent to which they have access to or control over them.

Why?
In the planning of empowerment projects, it is a vital tool for identifying the distribution of benefits between women and men and the effects on their motivation – and for reducing the barriers to the access and control of future beneficiaries.

Who?
Both men and women and, in particular, young men and women. Sometimes it can make sense to divide the participants according to gender and then bring the men and women together afterwards to discuss the results.

How?

Materials	Flipchart, card, pins, pin board.

Steps	1. Explain that this is a tool for identifying resources, their ownership and benefits to women, men and the youth.
	2. Brainstorm the difference in meaning between 'access to' and 'control of'. Explain that 'access' means that you can use something – but not that it cannot be taken away from you!
	3. In small groups, list some important resources within the project areas (land, pasture, water, labour, etc.) and ask the following questions:
	  ➢ 'What resources do men and women require for their work?'
	  ➢ 'Who has access to these resources?'
	  ➢ 'Who has control of them?'
	  ➢ 'What kind of empowerment activities is needed to improve the situation?
	  ➢ 'How will this access and control be affected by project interventions?'
	4. Now consider the issue of benefits:
	  ➢ 'What benefits do men and women derive from their work?'
	  ➢ 'Are these benefits commensurate with their inputs?'
	  ➢ 'Who controls these benefits?'
	5. Discuss the conclusions in a final plenary session.

Issues for discussion	• What barriers make participation difficult – for either women or men? • How will the planned empowerment activities contribute to the lifting of these barriers?

Reflection
In many communities, especially in rural areas, the traditional women's roles of cooking and housekeeping are set in stone – and no amount of gender-sensitive facilitation will change that! However, Access and Control Profiles can still be very useful in launching a discussion on the difficult (if not occasionally taboo) subject of control over key resources. As with the Daily Activity Profile, the facilitator must be wary of offending elders or male leaders with their own views on the subject.

📘 For further reading "Training for transformation": www.librarything.com/author/hopeanne

Notes:

Activity Profiles or Daily Calendars

What?
An Activity Profile is used to analyse the differing roles and responsibilities of men and women, boys and girls, based on a description of the tasks they carry out on a typical day. The purpose is to differentiate these tasks according to gender. An understanding of specific gender roles will help to gauge the development needs of different groups and adjust empowerment activities accordingly to avoid infringing cultural norms or overburdening a particular group.

Why?
Activity Profiles – both the preliminary task-lists and the full daily timetables – are vital preparation for the later Access & Control Profiles that are so important to the balanced management of resources within a given area. However, because of the sensitive nature of the subject, it is nearly always better to conduct Activity Profiles in single-sex groups – using female facilitators to guide the groups of women. As well as avoiding potential conflicts, this also reduces opportunities for men to dominate or influence the exercise.

Who?
Given the likely differences in the daily charts of the men and women it would make sense to do them separately and come together for presentation and discussion afterwards.
!!! You can ease potential conflicts by avoiding specific questions about gender-related activities and guiding the discussion through more general questions, such as, 'What can we learn from what different people do in the afternoon?' In this way, the gender-related implications can usually be drawn out more subtly – without the facilitator being seen to be taking sides.

How?

Materials	Pens and paper.
Steps	1. Divide the participants into male and female groups. (Alternatively, you might conduct the interviews in people's homes, talking separately with men and women.) 2. Ask each group to log their own activities – and those of the opposite sex. 3. Translate the tasks into a daily programme of activities – for a typical day in each season. 4. Help the groups to develop a detailed daily timetable – from what they do when they wake up in the morning to the last activity performed before going to sleep. 5. When the groups have finished their calendars, display them so that each group can comment on all the others'. 6. Compare the calendars produced by each group – and their different perceptions of each other's days. 7. Record the data in charts that distinguish between household tasks, work and activities. 8. Discuss options and solutions to address imbalances.
Issues for discussion	• 'Who does what?' • 'How much time is spent on these activities by men and women, boys and girls?' • What has been learnt about who does what in the village? • Is either 'side' surprised at the others' activities? If so, why? • What are the implications to the implementation of planned empowerment activities?

Reflection
This exercise can be expanded to include aspirations for the future. When it comes to political empowerment and youth, aspects of young men and women's possibilities for establishing

themselves as adults with sufficient income and secured livelihood to provide for their family are of particular relevance. Are the possibilities in the locality satisfactory or will the young people feel forced to migrate to the city or abroad? What are the long-term considerations for resource allocation and management that will be of interest to the young in view of their taking over responsibility for, and having a right to, the local resources at later stages?

Notes:

Problem Trees

What?
The Problem Tree is an activity in which participants are asked to declare their problems – and then to explore their causes. Once a cause is stated, the group is prompted to consider the cause of that cause – and so on, until a 'root cause' is identified. Similarly, once an effect is identified, the group is encouraged to consider its further effects.

Why?
It could be very useful when identifying the barriers to political empowerment: in identifying what spaces are open for PE, what local assets for organisation and collective action already exist in a given context.

Who?
Both literate and illiterate men and women and, in particular, young men and women
!!!: Watch out that people feel they can speak freely

How?

Materials	Cards, pins, pin board, large sheets of paper, glue or LCD projector.
Steps	1. Briefly describe the format and purpose of a Problem Tree (a hierarchy of problems arrayed according to their 'cause and effect' relationships), and explain its use. 2. Ask the participants to 'brainstorm' all the problems that they are facing. 3. Write each problem on a separate card. 4. Choose an initial 'key problem' and post it on the board. 5. See if the cards can be arranged according to cause and effect, in relation to the first problem. 6. Ask the group to suggest causes for each of the problems – if they are not already identified. 7. When 'root causes' have been identified, ask the group to suggest possible solutions – which can then be ranked using the methods described on the previous pages.
Issues for discussion	• Have the problems been worded precisely enough? • Does each card feature only one problem? • Are the cause/effect relationships logical? • Is the card directly below a problem the direct or immediate cause of that problem? • If this is a repeated exercise for monitoring purposes, how does the problem tree compare with the initial one made in the needs identifying stage of the project's development?

*** : www.barefootguide.org and Alan Fowler www.iss.nl/cdc

Notes:

Forum- Theatre

What?
The themes of short forum-theatre or skits could revolve around any of the issues that have been coming up through interviews and discussions carried out before hand, and that the participants have identified as priority areas that they would like to see tackled. The performance can be held anywhere: in market areas, play grounds, community halls, and so on. The theatre play should be interactive – involving the spectators and engaging them by asking for their views and ideas on how to solve the problem or dilemma dramatised.

Why?
Such role playing – as also the performance of short plays or skits (called in Mozambique, 'dilemma plays) – can be used as a powerful awareness making activity

Who?
All

How?

Materials	
Steps	1. Explain the purpose of the role plays.
	2. Invite a group to choose a subject based on the research of the specific situation in their area. The group makes a short (10 min.) play showing different views about an issue that is ongoing among the stakeholders in the community.
	3. Ask the group to distribute the roles among themselves and decide upon how they will present the play. There should be no solution indicated, the play should only display the issue, so that the audience can be involved.
	4. Invite them to perform their role-play (10 min) for the audience.
	5. When the play has been shown, now ask the spectators about their views on the issue or problem – and invite the spectators to interact and substitute some of the actors to provide alternative suggestions for solving it.
	6.
Issues for discussion	• Questions like: what is the issue here? How does Mercy look at Mary and why? What should they do to solve the conflict?

Reflection
Theatre and drama are effective tools for mobilisation and awareness raising processes. Community theatre is widely used across the world to illustrate empowerment issues and to trigger discussion. In Mozambique, when conducting the case study, there was the excellent example of what they call 'dilemma plays' – very interactive, inviting spectators to take a part in solving whatever dilemma is illustrated.

***: www.interactive-theatre.com
www.theatreoftheoppresed.org

Notes:

Flow Diagrams

What?
Flow diagrams are a means to explore causal relationships between events – following the process as each event causes another event to occur and so on.

Why?
Flow diagrams have been used in *Reflect* processes to analyse the impact of many issues, including conflict, deforestation, drought, girls' education and road building.
It can also be a process that can lead to documentation of the achieved results, which is an important incentive that can be used to induce participation.

How?

Materials	Cards, pins, pin board, large sheets of paper, glue – or LCD projector.
Steps	1. Divide the participants into manageable groups for conducting the activity – maintaining a good cross-section of experience in each group. 2. Explain the purpose of the flow diagram. 3. Place a card representing the central theme in the middle of a large, empty area. 4. Participants can then start to identify the causes and effects of this phenomenon, marking a card for each suggestion using words or symbols and placing it in relation to the central theme. These might be of different colours to capture different categories or types of event. It is essential to use moveable cards, as flow diagrams can get very complex with new connections identified during the process, leading to radical restructuring. Threads of different colours can be used to make links with different meanings between cards. 5. Urge participants to consider the effects of each effect (and the causes of each cause) and the flow diagram starts to expand. 6. Each time a new card is formulated attempts are made to link it to any others that are there already and gradually clusters of cards are likely to occur around certain key cards. At some point, the group will have to decide to end the exercise, stepping back to review the overall picture and discuss where action or intervention might be most effective.
Issues for discussion	• Have the causes and effects been worded precisely enough? • Does each card feature only one problem? • Are the cause/effect relationships logical? • Is the card directly below a problem the direct or immediate cause of that problem? • If this is a repeated exercise for monitoring purposes, how does the problem tree compare with the initial one made in the needs identifying stage of the project's development?

■ For further reading: www.reflect-action.org

Notes:

Leadership and management Tools

Leadership Styles

What?
The case studies that make up the core material for this session are used to identify the three very common leadership styles. The tool could lead to discussions about key qualities of local leaders and which qualifications they need/lack to be able to represent, organize and mobilize locally?

Why?
This exercise can increase awareness about existing barriers related to influence in a specific area. For instance, are local leaders reluctant to let people get education and advancement – because it might pose a threat?

Who?
Such an exercise would be especially useful when helping a group to strengthen its structures and assign roles and responsibilities

How?

Material	Mini case studies on leadership styles, score sheet and notes.
Steps	1. Explain the objectives of the session. 2. Distribute the leadership case studies and invite each individual to note down his or her chosen responses. 3. In small groups, evaluate if consensus can be reached on the appropriate response to each scenario. 4. In plenary, check on the choices that the groups have made. 5. Relate the choices to the polarity positions of Directing and Facilitating leadership styles, and present the model to distinguish between these two styles. 6. Consider the conditions and skills involved in running the groups.
Issues for discussion	• How does this analysis of leadership apply to the different decision-making levels in typical community-based organisations? • What are the implications for training and awareness creation?

Case Studies: What Kind of Leader are you?

Read each of the following case studies and then circle the letter of the action that you think would be the more appropriate, were you in charge of the situation – the leader, manager or chairperson.

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1. Shepherding the Lost Sheep
You are the Chairperson of a local CBO that is working to provide cheap fertilizer to local farmers. The man who is supposed to be co-ordinating the fertilizer procurement, George, has recently been very 'lost' – and you are worried that the fertilizer will not arrive in time for the next village meeting. On previous assignments, George has always been an efficient and reliable worker. But now he is letting the whole team down. He has been absent from the last two meetings without notifying you. When he was asked about progress with the fertilizer, he gave a very weak excuse about being unable to contact the supplier. The rest of the CBO members are becoming increasingly concerned about the delay.

A. You take time off to visit George at his home. You express your concern for his welfare and invite him to talk about any problems he might be experiencing.

B. You send a message for George to come to the office. You tell him of the changes

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you have observed in his behaviour. You remind him of the deadline you have to meet – and warn him of the consequences if the fertilizer is not available in time.

2. Dealing with Complaints
You are the head of a project committee overseeing the construction of a new primary school. While monitoring progress at the site one day, the school's headmistress approaches you to complain that the construction manager, Frank, has behaved towards her in an off-hand and arrogant manner.

A. You inform Frank of the complaint and ask him to tell you what happened.

B. You inform Frank of the complaint and tell him to make sure he gives no similar cause for complaint in the future.

3. Dealing with Hostility
You are chairing a village development committee meeting at which two members are becoming openly hostile towards each other. As the discussion progresses, the pair start trading insults. Their animosity is beginning to seriously affect the atmosphere of the meeting.

A. You tell the two members to stop quarrelling, so that the meeting can continue with its business in a calm and productive manner.

B. After the meeting, you have a friendly chat with the pair – pointing out how their arguments are beginning to affect the work of the group, and asking them if they would like to air their differences to see if some way can be found of resolving them.

4. Sticking to the Agenda
It is getting late and the group meeting you are chairing should be drawn to a close. It is, however, important that the members reach a decision on the particular matter you are discussing. Yet a few of the members are constantly straying from the point.

A. You remind the members that there is a deadline for making a decision.

B. You tell the members that are causing the greatest distraction to pay attention to the job at hand.

5. Treating a Grievance
You are the head of a team that has been charged with conducting a transect walk through a valley in the locality. But you have detected an 'atmosphere' among some members of the team, who seem to be nursing a grudge – and you suspect that it relates to something you have done.

A. You stress the importance of teamwork. You tell the members that you are aware that some problems exist, and appeal to them to set aside any personal grievances so the team's work can be accomplished in time.

B. You tell the members that you have noticed they are concerned about something – and that you assume that you are the cause of their concern. You invite them to

discuss whatever problems they are facing – without, at first, your being present. You say that you will join them in 30 minutes, so that they can take up any issues with you.

Scoring

Here is a score sheet for the exercise on leadership styles that you have just completed. For each scenario, circle the letter representing the action you chose.

Scenario	Column 1	Column 2
1	B	A
2	B	A
3	A	B
4	B	A
5	A	B
Total (circles)		

If you have scored four or five circles in either of the columns, then it might well indicate that this is your dominant style: what you do on most occasions when you make a decision as a leader or manager. The accuracy of the forecast, of course, depends on how honest you have been with yourself. If you want to take the experiment further, you could ask someone who knows you well to complete the questionnaire on your behalf – filling in the choices they think you would make. The result can be quite different from your own – and quite revealing.

But what are the two different leadership styles? We can say that Column 1 responses represent the **Directing** style and Column 2 responses represent the **Facilitating** style. And we can distinguish between them by using simple diagrams that show the pattern of interaction in each case: the communication that occurs between a leader and his or her group when a problem situation arises:
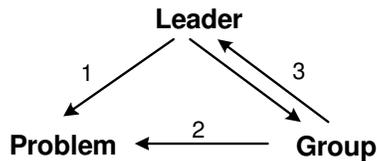
Directing
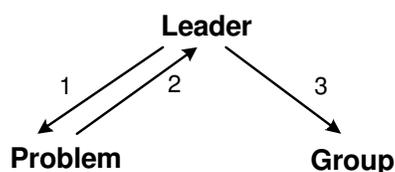
Using the Directing style, leaders make their own assessment of the problem (1). They then decide what action to take (2), communicate their decision to the group and see that it is implemented (3).

What is most significant about this diagram is the missing line between the group and the problem.

Facilitating

Using the Facilitating style, the group as well as the leader have the opportunity to study and make an assessment of the problem (1 & 2). However, the leader might take the initiative in posing ideas for the group to comment on. There is a discussion of the problem and a decision is reached by the group as a whole (3).

Note that there is a midway position between the Directing and the Facilitating styles that we might call the **Consulting** style – where the leader alone makes the decision, but only after asking for the views of the group.

None of these styles – Directing, Consulting or Facilitating – is necessarily good or bad. The appropriate style will usually depend on the circumstances. At times of crisis – a platoon of soldiers who come under fire, for example, or an emergency such as a collapsed roof in a public building – no one would question an efficient use of the Directing style by whoever is in a position of responsibility. But with the questionnaire that you have just completed, there is always a clear preference for the Facilitating style; whereas, in practice, most leaders seem to rely on the Directing style.

This common discrepancy is usually caused by a complex web of factors – from cultural norms and traditional views to insecurity and personal factors. It is often worth taking a discussion of leadership styles that little bit further – to address common attitudes and traits that may be hindering progress in a project. And there should be little doubt about which of the two leadership styles is more appropriate for political empowerment work. But, with many projects, there could be some interesting discussions about why this doesn't seem to be the case!

Reflection
This exercise has proved very applicable with groups across a number of continents – and it seems that the three leadership styles are universal. But are there dominant preferences for one or other of the styles in your own culture?

Notes:

Role-play: The Problem Group

What?
It is a role-play that highlights certain aspects of group dynamics that can strongly affect the smooth running of community groups and organisations. It should also lead to a discussion of key chairmanship skills and other roles and responsibilities in the organisation.

Why?
Many civil society groups have a weak internal organisation. They lack the capacity to plan and make project proposals, and often they have an undemocratic leadership structure. This is a role-play that can reveal roles and hidden conflicts in an organisation and how to address this as part of its capacity building exercise.

How?

Materials	Cards with the various characters (described below) for the role-play
Steps	1. Explain the objectives and the two-phase nature of the session. 2. Decide on a topic for the role-play of a typical CBO meeting. 3. Invite eight volunteers to form the Problem Group. 4. Start off the meeting and let it run for about 20 minutes – making a video recording if the equipment is available. 5. Play back excerpts (not the whole thing!) and invite discussion on how typical were the different 'events' and characters portrayed in the meeting. 6. In small groups, produce a list of essential chairmanship skills.
Issues for discussion	• How does this session help in identifying relevant issues to be tackled in community based organisations? • Do the members identify with the exercise and do they feel that there are issues that they should tackle to enhance the cohesion in their group?

Characters in the Role-Play:

1 The Chairperson
Be yourself. Try your best to conduct the meeting in an orderly and appropriate manner.

2 The Silent Member
You are a very shy person and, although you are pleased to be in the group and listening to what others have to say, you never voluntarily make any contributions yourself. You reply only to questions directly asked of you – and then with the briefest of answers. Avoid being drawn into long explanations of your views. You don't hold strong views on anything, anyway!

3 The Compulsive Talker
You are an assertive, dominant person who loves the sound of your own voice. You have an opinion on just about everything, and you are very keen to air it – and will resist any attempts to interrupt you! You do not listen to what other people are saying; you simply ignore them and say what you want to say.

4 The Victim
There is someone in the group (No.5) who seems to really dislike you. This person is picking

on you all the time, criticising your views, and trying to interrupt whenever you are speaking. You resent this very much, and try to fight back by arguing the merits of your own position – and by making critical remarks about No.5's behaviour.

5 The Persecutor
There is someone in the group (No.4) who you really dislike, and who you think is talking a lot of nonsense. You criticise what this person says, interrupt them, and generally try to get the rest of the group to discount what they have to say.

6 The Rival
You think that the group leader is not doing a very good job. You think you could do better. You take it upon yourself to summarise what other people are saying, to encourage the group discussion in directions you think best, to ask questions of individual members, encourage their contributions and ignore, as far as possible, the contributions of the chairman. You are making a takeover bid for leadership of the group.

7 The Joker
You enjoy being in the group, but today there are other things you would rather be doing. Certainly, you do not feel like working and talking about the topic at hand. You would rather put off the decision and have a laugh and a friendly chat with your colleagues. You do your best to either rush a decision – or to postpone it – so that you can get away as soon as possible.

8 The Friendly Helper
Your role in the group is to be friendly and helpful. You are responsive to the needs of all the others. You attempt to reduce tension, reconcile disagreements and resolve conflicts. You want everyone in the group to feel valued and important. You believe that any decision must be made democratically – and only after everyone has been heard.

Reflection
The roles to be played are quite clear, but it might be helpful to allow time to brief the participants – but on their own, because there must be an element of surprise in the way the role-play unfolds. Make sure that each character wears his/her appropriate number.

This is a particularly good exercise to record on either audio or video-tape (particularly the latter), for the purpose of play-back to prompt discussion. From experience, this exercise creates a lot of constructive hilarity!

Notes:

Stakeholder Analysis

What?
A stakeholder analysis is a method of assessing what interests a range of people or organisations have, or could have, in an intervention. As well as being a very important planning tool; also, from a monitoring perspective, a stakeholder analysis can assist in determining a sample of respondents and for analysing stakeholder relations (in collaboration or in conflict).
Ideally, the stakeholder identification and analysis should take place at the early stages of a project. But we reiterate here that the participation of stakeholders in all stages of interventions is vital.

Why?
To identify all the people likely to be affected (either positively or negatively), and to clarify how they will be affected; to maximise the social and institutional benefits of a project/programme and minimise negative impacts; to maximise the use of the knowledge and experiences of all actors involved; to enhance ownership and so affect the sustainability of outcomes.

How?

Materials	Cards or flipchart papers, felt pens.
Steps	1. Clarify your purpose in conducting the stakeholder analysis – depending on what stage you are in a project. 2. Compile a list of all the people or organisations that meet the criteria – most likely in a brainstorming session with colleagues. 3. Construct a matrix that lists for each stakeholder: its general characteristics, and specific interests related to the project, problems and potentials, and its possible (refer to the matrix in the Gender Awareness Tool). 4. Use this analysis to assist in developing a checklist of issues to explore when interviewing representatives of the stakeholders or engaging them in a focus group discussion.
Issues	• Are you sure you have included all possible stakeholders in this review? • Would there be an advantage in organising a discussion session for a mixed group of stakeholders, in which different perceptions could be explored?

Reflection
This tool is particularly relevant for the study of local powers in small communities (villages, urban quarters, slums, tribes…). Three related assumptions are central to this procedure: 1. communities are political arenas where struggles take place; 2. Struggles or conflicts may arise between strategic groups (or actors) around the control of/or access to resources; 3. These conflicts are a good entry point for the understanding of the distribution of power within the people of a given village. Such an exercise, then, will identify risks of opposition, as well as opportunities for collaboration.

Notes:

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

What?
The SWOT analysis is a common and very effective discussion format to appraise the situation of a group or to assess the performance of an organisation or a project.

Why?
This tool is useful in planning for possible impact of political empowerment processes. This tool is widely used and is relevant for all of the elements of Political Empowerment.

Material	Profiles of relevant organisations/members, cards.
Steps	1. Explain the meaning of the key terms: ➢ Strengths – those internal factors that contribute to effective performance; ➢ Weaknesses - those internal factors that are working against the group/project achieving its objectives; ➢ Opportunities – those external factors that could be of help in ensuring the group's/project's success; ➢ Threats – those external factors that could hinder or block the group's/project's progress. 2. Either run the exercise as a brainstorm with the whole group, if it is small enough (less than twelve participants) – or divide the participants into sub-groups, if the group is large or if there would be an advantage in exploring the different perceptions of different stakeholders. 3. Suggest that the following questions might prove useful: • To assess strengths: ➢ What are the things or activities in the current situation that are continually successful? ➢ What is working well? ➢ What important resources are available? ➢ What advantages are there? ➢ What, if anything, can it claim is unique? • To assess weaknesses: ➢ What continually goes wrong? ➢ What are the things that the group/programme needs to improve? ➢ What is lacking – in terms of qualities, skills, experiences? ➢ What is lacking – in terms of resources? ➢ What do other groups/programmes do better? • To assess opportunities: ➢ What are the untapped potentials of the group's/programme's context? ➢ What situations exist – or will likely exist in the future – that could be turned to advantage? ➢ What are the 'good ideas' that people have discussed but never actually tried out? • To assess threats: ➢ What could threaten the group's/programme's very survival? ➢ What could stop it from achieving its goals? ➢ What could diminish motivation and reduce effectiveness? ➢ Tell the participants that, when answering these questions, they should try to avoid guesswork – and deal only with what exists, and not what should be the case!
Issues	• What are the key issues that have emerged?

	• What actions need to be taken to address them? (This is already a pointer to a preliminary action plan for your empowerment activities).

Reflections

Although it is one of the most important and versatile development tools, the SWOT analysis is of little use if its concepts are not properly understood. Among some communities it is not always easy to explain the concepts of 'opportunities' and 'threats'. While 'strengths' and 'weaknesses' are clear-cut notions, the other two can prove difficult to translate – particularly in differentiating 'opportunities' from 'strengths'. But it helps if you distinguish 'strengths' and 'weaknesses' as mainly internal factors – and 'opportunities' and 'threats' as external ones.

Another common problem with using a SWOT analysis with communities is their tendency to view it as a fault-finding mission, an oppressive tool whose results may be turned against them or used to justify unreasonable donor demands. For this reason, it is crucial for facilitators to carefully explain the value of a SWOT analysis – how it can help a group or an organisation to review and strengthen the performance and status of their own projects and players.

Even after emphasising that there is no hidden agenda, however, a SWOT Analysis will often raise sticky issues or spur one individual to start grilling another. It is important that the facilitator is aware of the risks involved – and prepared to mediate in any heated discussions that might arise. Remember that conflict is not always a bad thing; in fact, some of the best solutions emerge through good old-fashioned arguments!

Notes:

Force Field Analysis

What?

Force Field Analysis (FFA) is a decision-making technique that can be effectively adapted for political empowerment brain storming activities, planning and decision making. It is an easily grasped tool for involving a group in exploring perceptions related to main objectives of a project.

How?
In any process of political empowerment there can be seen to be a field of forces working in opposite directions. There are the 'restraining forces' that hold a group of citizens back from reaching their objectives; there are the 'driving forces' that help to achieve them. There are two main tasks in working through an FFA: first, identifying both sets of forces; second, assessing how the restraining forces can be counteracted and the driving forces increased, so we can break down the barriers and move in the direction we wish to go.

How?

Material	Flipchart
Steps	1. Write up on the flipchart the objective that you are 'reality testing'. 2. Draw a line down the middle of the sheet and the arrows pointing in the opposite directions. 3. On the right-hand side, brainstorm and list all the restraining forces – those factors that have a negative influence on the achievement of the objective. Explain to the group that they should resist getting involved in much debate as the 'forces' are identified. (Note that it seems to be psychologically more productive to begin with the negative factors.) 4. On the left-hand side, identify and list all the driving forces – that factors that have a positive influence on the achievement of the objective. 5. Analyse both sets of forces, asking yourselves, 'How can the restraining forces be reduced or weakened?' 'How can the driving forces be strengthened?' and 'Can any driving forces be added?' 6. In this final step you will be generating 'action points' that could form the basis of an action plan for designing a programme – or for reviewing and improving the programme's implementation.
Issues for discussion	• How does this array of forces fit with any situation analysis already conducted? • What does the exercise reveal about a strategy that should be adopted by the group?

Notes:

Action Plans

What?
An Action Plan is a statement of development priorities and a description of what a certain group intends to do to achieve their intended goals. The action plan could incorporate the following: priority problems; proposed actions; target area; resources and budget required (both local contributions and external assistance); responsibilities of the various actors in the proposed development initiatives; timeframe and other remarks.

Why?
To insure that citizens who are part of empowerment processes have an overview of what they would like to change and achieve with their involvement.

Who?
If this exercise is carried out as a planning workshop, it is important that the number of participants should not exceed 27; the ideal is around 24, so that three smaller groups can be formed. This allows for closer interaction among participants.

How?

Materials	Large sheets of paper and pens.
Steps	1. Explain the reason for making a formal plan. 2. Review the priority objectives that have already been considered 3. Formulate specific actions related to the priority problem areas – with technical staff and, ideally, local authority officials providing inputs on technical matters and estimated costs, and citizens identifying local resources and labour sources. 4. Assign responsibilities and duties to specific individuals. 5. Ensure that the participants are assigned duties are actually present (or contacted) and that they commit themselves. 6. Construct a schedule of activities, fixing times within which activities will be undertaken or duties performed. 7. Indicate which outside bodies will be providing resources, which will be responsible for securing them, and when. 8. Specify fund-raising activities within the local area. 9. Specify where proposals will be written, and to which donors they will be submitted. 10. Ensure ownership by having one of the participants – a teacher, for example – who can assist in writing up the Action Plan and follow-up project proposals. 11. **‼**: If the exercises/meetings always choose the same leaders, they may run the risk of reinforcing the position of particular powerful individuals, rather than allowing for other actors to assume a role. A way of addressing this is to conduct in-depth local power analysis in each context.
Issues for discussion	• Does the plan genuinely reflect the wishes of the community members themselves? • Was everyone included in drawing up the plan? • Is it relevant to the various problems and priorities identified? • Will the plan lead to the community's empowerment?

Reflection
As indicated in Part One, it is important to remember that framing short term goals is a good way of strengthening motivation.
Notes:

Community Contracts

What and Why?

A Community Contract is a document that specifies the commitments of each partner in a community-based project. It can be the key mechanism for stimulating and facilitating action. In as much as it describes the obligations and responsibilities of all parties to the agreement and provides a work schedule and budget, it provides a valuable guide for project planning meetings and for monitoring a project's progress.

How?

Materials	Large sheets of paper and pens.
Steps	1. Give a short presentation on Community Contracts, emphasising their importance in securing commitment and clarifying the roles and specific contributions of all parties involved in collaborative community projects. All stakeholders, including local government officers, should be included in coming up with it. 2. Describe an example of such a contract. 3. In groups, ask the participants to discuss whether this example would be applicable in the current programme. 4. Set them the task of adapting this model for use in the empowerment activities/project they are concerned with.
Issues for discussion	• What use are Community Contracts? • What format do you think is most appropriate? • Who should be the signatories? • Which language should be used?

Reflection

In order to help communities to conquer their understandable fear of written commitments, it is important not only to inform them how a contract can help them at a local level, but how it will legitimise their projects at a national or international level. Again, it is vital that your introduction of this sensitive subject be allocated considerable time. It may be useful to draw up a model contract, and to use it to compare the different priorities and expectations of the local groups involved, the assisting agency/NGO and donor/s.

Notes:

Semi-Structured Interviews

What and Why?
Unlike formal 'structured' interviews in which all the questions are pre-determined, the Semi-Structured Interview allows for more flexible questioning and helps the facilitator to break down the barriers surrounding sensitive local issues.

Who?
As with all data-gathering and analytical exercises, it is important to include a broad cross-section of people among your interviewees – local leaders, elders, teachers, local officials, as well as 'ordinary people' – to confirm that what is being said in meetings really does reflect the views and aspirations of the citizens. It is equally important to achieve a good balance between men and women, old and young, rich and poor.

How?

Materials	Notebooks and pencils. (Sometimes it might be appropriate to use a tape-recorder.)
Steps	1. Consult local residents in setting up the interview sample. 2. Visit households, or choose other suitable places, for conducting the interviews. 3. Introduce yourself (and the members of your interviewing team) and explain the purpose of the interviews. 4. Assure your respondents about confidentiality. 5. Use a prepared checklist of questions for guidance, but conduct the interview in an informal manner – creating a relaxed atmosphere and avoiding an interrogative style. 6. Make sure your posture and manner show that you are really attending to what is being said. 7. Use open questions – rather than those that only call for a 'Yes' or 'No' answer. 8. When you would like more information on a particular point, use questions such as: 'That's a very interesting point – can you tell me something more about it?' 9. Listen carefully and avoid interrupting. 10. Give positive feedback whenever possible – the nods, smiles and other non-verbal signals that show you are interested – as well as encouraging comments such as 'I think what you are saying here is very important'. 11. Don't be afraid to add new questions if they seem relevant to the way the interview are proceeding. 12. If 'interviewees' seem to be contradicting themselves – or if they seem to be withholding information – find a polite way of pointing it out. (But be careful not to push too hard.) 13. It is a useful technique to occasionally check that you are really picking up the views and feelings of a respondent: 'Can I just check that I am interpreting you correctly? My understanding is that you are saying…'
Issues for discussion	• How does the information collected in the interviews compare with that collected by the other tools? • What new information has emerged? • Are there any issues that should be taken up in the project group meetings?

Reflection

As to the style of interviewing, the choice is between formal and informal. If the intention is to make people relax and encourage them to be open and frank, then an informal, friendly but purposeful approach is, of course, more likely to succeed.

You should keep in mind the cultural norms. For example, if the women cannot speak freely in the presence of their male relatives, a separate interview session should be arranged with them. This also counts for youth and other marginalized people in the local area.

Notes:

Focus Group Discussions

What?
The Focus Group tool is a discussion technique that uses a small group of members representing different interests to explore different perspectives on issues. For political empowerment projects, it can be very useful for assessing opinions about how things have changed, about the effectiveness of a programme – and for identifying topics that need do be investigated more deeply.

Why?
This method can generate focused insights more quickly, and generally more cheaply, than through a series of key informants or formal social surveys.

How?

Materials	Flipcharts; perhaps tape-recorder
Steps	1. Decide on the number of people to include in the group – four is, we suggest, the minimum; 12 the maximum. 2. Decide on the membership of the group. If you wish to obtain information/ideas from different viewpoints, you can either set up a heterogeneous group or you can bring together a number of homogeneous groups – but the groups being different from each other – and compare responses. 3. At the beginning, clarify the topic and the objective of the meeting – which will also mean introducing yourself and your role in monitoring a particular programme or exploring a specific issue. 4. Make clear the key topic for discussion. 5. Let the group debate the issue with minimum intervention from you. Your role is to facilitate – trying to make sure every member has a chance to put his or her point of view. 6. Occasionally, it might be helpful to summarise the main points emerging, saying something like, 'Am I right that there seem to be two main opinions here: on the one hand, some are saying……… on the other hand, others are saying…..' 7. Keep good notes and log key points on a flipchart. Usually it helps if there are two of you running the meeting: one, to facilitate the discussion; the other to keep full notes. 8. Decide whether recording the meeting would be an inhibiting factor. Usually it is not, if little fuss is made and the equipment is unobtrusive. But remember that transcribing such discussion sessions is very time consuming. 9. Take note of non-verbal communication – which members seem to be uncomfortable, keep quiet, or show signs of disagreement even if they do not declare it. 10. At the end of the session, review the main points written up on the flipchart in order to check whether they indicate a good understanding of the group's views on the issues.
Issues for discussion	• Was the group as representative as hoped for? • What has been learnt about the main issue being explored? • Are there strongly divergent views, and what are the reasons? • How should they be followed up?

Reflection
Focus group discussions and other techniques/tools can be supplemented with individual interviews or conversations. It is important to note that because dealing with groups entails various biases. For example, when a NGO uses timelines or historical profiles with focus groups in a post-war context, this can lead to serious misunderstandings. It happens that the 'village' does not want

to remember and speak about a certain period of the past because it was dramatic and traumatic (a kind of controlled collective amnesia). For that reason the focus group can give a superficial historical profile. It is exactly the contrary of what the NGO expect as an output of such an investigation process. Therefore it is sometimes important to supplement this kind of date collection with semi-structured individual interviews.

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