

## Planning nonviolent campaigns

Joanne Sheehan and Andreas Speck

**D**emonstrations alone do not end a particular war or correct a deep-rooted injustice. Faced with the horrors of the world, it's easy to do the nonviolent equivalent of lashing out – jumping into action or activity without stepping back or looking ahead. Too often groups go directly from recognising a problem to picking a tactic. Alternatively, we might suffer from the 'paralysis of analysis', educating ourselves and others but never getting to action, and never reaching our goals. The power of a nonviolent campaign comes in creatively combining tactics, strategic thinking, and participants' commitment.

Influencing change on a specific issue requires a campaign or several campaigns. A campaign is a connected series of activities and actions carried out over a period of time to achieve specific, stated goals. Campaigns are started by a group of people or of groups and organisations with a common concern. The participants develop a common understanding and vision, identify goals, and begin the process of research, education, and training that strengthens and increases the number of participants.

A campaign has goals on different levels. First is a specific campaign demand or stated goal. Most campaigns challenge the policies of people at the top of a hierarchy. To reach this goal, we need to bring a new factor into their decision-making – be that persuading them with new information, convincing those on whose support they depend, or warning them of the resistance they will face (see 'how can nonviolence strengthen a campaign?', p12). We do not treat them as enemies, but as adversaries – people who have to be stopped or moved in order for us to end a specific injustice.

A campaign also has internal goals such as building the capacity of and number of participants. A nonviolent campaign takes people through processes of empowerment (see 'nonviolence and power', p34). This involves personal empowerment (people discovering and exercising their own power against oppression, exclusion, and violence, and for participation, peace, and human rights) and builds collective power. Groups learn how to be organisers and become political strategists in the process.

Campaigns should also communicate something of the vision of what we want, leading to further campaigns that challenge existing power structures.

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Multiple campaigns can move us towards the social empowerment that leads to the social transformation we are working for. In our training and planning we need to consider all aspects of this nonviolent social empowerment process: personal empowerment, community power, people power. To develop an effective nonviolent strategy we need to develop strategic thinking skills.

### **Developing effective strategies**

Creative campaigns hold the key to exploring the potential of nonviolence. When groups are excited about the power and possibilities of a nonviolent campaign, they are more likely to develop an effective campaign strategy. The exercises suggested below can help produce that enthusiasm and excitement; they also offer suggestions on making campaigns effective as well as giving an understanding of how change happens.

If you are working for social change in your community, you may want to undertake a group process to prepare an effective strategy for moving towards this change. A group process draws on the resources already in the group and can generate enthusiasm and commitment.

To begin, you may want to have the group share its own knowledge of campaigns, using either the '10/10 strategies' (p198) exercise or discussing how change happens by asking participants what effective campaigns they know about and what made them effective. Create a check-list from the responses. Case studies are another way of learning from what has been done in the past. They do not offer blueprints, but show the determination, resourcefulness, and patience of successful nonviolent campaigns. See the Resources section (p228) for films and books that describe nonviolent campaigns or use some of the stories told in 'case studies: stories and experience' (p144).

If your group has a wide range of knowledge, you can move right into developing your own process for a successful strategy for change. In order to develop effective strategies, a useful process is to:

- clarify the groups shared values and perspectives;
- name and describe the problem or situation ;
- analyse why it exists;
- create a vision of what the group wants, including clear goals;
- develop a strategy to reach those goal;
- move from strategy to tactics.

### **Clarify the groups shared values and perspectives**

Who we are as a group (or as an alliance or coalition), and what our shared values and world views are has a huge influence on how we understand a problem, the strategy we develop to respond to it, and the solutions we might come up with. For a new group it will be particularly important to clarify these points before moving to planning a strategy. Some guiding questions are:

- What belief systems, values, visions guide me/us in my/our activities?

- Is the group an action group that wants to solve the problem through individual or collective action, or is the group more educational or investigative to provide resources for others?
- How do we relate to official (parliamentary/government) processes of decision making? Do we see ourselves engaging directly (lobbying), do we see ourselves relating to others who do so, or do we act completely outside established channels?
- Do we have a common understanding of what it means to have a nonviolent campaign?
- Do we have an agreed upon decision-making process?

The questions above can help to clarify the main shared values and assumptions of the group or coalition of groups which are relevant for working together on a shared strategy.

### Name and describe the problem

For many who face problems in their daily lives, describing and analysing problems is a natural part of the process of living. But others need to be more focused about it. These steps are intended to help people move together in a non-hierarchical, inclusive manner to a deeper understanding of effective non-violent strategies.

Naming and describing the problem or situation may seem a simple first step, but if it is not done collectively then people may have different assumptions, different descriptions, and different messages and goals. We can't analyse without clarity about what we are analysing. Going through this process together strengthens individual participation while also developing collective strength.

**Exercises:** A group can use either 'The problem tree/healthy tree' (p199) or 'The pillars of power' (p203) exercise to use throughout the strategic thinking and planning process.

#### *Questions for checking in:*

- Is there a common understanding of the problem or situation that exists?
- Have we analysed why it exists?
- Does the analysis include the social, economic, and political structures?

### Analyse why the problem exists

To transform a problem situation, we need to understand why it exists and who potentially supports and opposes it. We need to analyse the power structure to find entry points for resistance and constructive work. An analysis should consider the following questions:

- Do we understand the context and the root causes of the problem?
- Who benefits and who suffers from it and how? Who holds the power, and who has the power to create change? (Who forms part of the structures

underpinning this? Who opposes this?)

■ Does the problem impact people differently depending on their position in society, based on their gender, age, race, class? (See 'gender and nonviolence', p22.)

■ How does our commitment to nonviolent social change affect our analysis?

*Research and Information Gathering: Avoiding paralysis through analysis:* What do we know, and what do we need to know? Are we searching for the truth or just trying to 'prove our side'? Who can gather the information we need? Research includes finding out how others think about the issue. Listening Projects Community Surveys (see <http://www.listeningproject.info>) are one way to do that. Listening Projects help activists look more deeply at an issue, gathering information on which to base future strategy while developing a connection between those being interviewed and those listening.

### Create a vision of what we want

To move forward, a campaign needs a vision of what it wants. Otherwise actions can simply be reactions, protests easy to disregard. A vision is likely to include ambitious long-term goals. It is worth asking groups to discuss their vision of big questions: world peace, economic justice, the society we want.

### From visions to goals

The challenge is to identify the first steps in those journeys: the short and medium-range goals that lead towards the long-term goals. Campaigns face



SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS WATCH DEMONSTRATION, FORT BENNING, USA. PHOTO: JOANNE SHEEHAN

dilemmas in setting goals. To get the maximum possible support, a campaign might choose a short-term goal as a 'lowest common denominator'—that is, a point upon which a wide range of people can agree. However, if this does not have deeper implications, if it does not suggest further steps for social transformation, then any change that results is likely to be shallow and unsatisfactory. On the other hand, utopian goals that seem unrealistic are not likely to mobilise people unless there are more attainable intermediate objectives. When the ultimate goals are revolutionary, campaigns need to identify limited, but more acceptable, stepping stones.

The Movement Action Plan (p67) or the Stages of Escalation (p64) can also be useful guides when developing a campaign goal. For example, the different phases of the MAP give some hints about what strategic goals can be useful for a campaign which would contribute to moving a movement forward into a new phase.

Goals can be external goals (achieving social change) or internal goals (building the strength of a campaign or organisation to achieve its external goals). For example, increasing the number of names on a mailing list is not going to achieve a campaign goal itself, but it can be seen as an internal goal, which contributes to building the capacity to achieve an external goal. Also, 'giving out information', 'educating' or 'mobilising' are not goals, but methods to achieve a goal.

At the end of this phase it can be useful to check the acceptance of the goals among the participants. A spectrum exercise (p) similar to the following scale in relation to acceptance of the goal can be a good way to do this.

#### ***Visions – goals – objectives***

A vision describes the society we want to live in – the world we want to see. As such, it can provide us with motivation, but also with guiding principles for our actions or campaigns. However, it is usually too far removed to provide us with a suitable goal for a campaign. When we think about our vision, we probably think about time frames of decades – or even centuries.

A goal describes what we want to achieve with a specific campaign, It should be SMART (see sidebar on the next page), meaning it should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound.

A goal can usually be broken down into several short-term goals which need to be achieved on the way to the campaign goal. These should also be SMART, but the time frame is usually even shorter than the one for the campaign goal – weeks or months.



**What is a SMART goal?**

SMART is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time bound.

**Specific:** Clearly define what you mean, avoid jargon or buzz-words such as “sensitise”, “empower”, “raise awareness” which are vague.

**Measurable:** Be specific enough to know whether or not you have achieved them.

**Achievable:** The more concrete the objective is especially in relation to who, what, where, and when, the more realistic the goal is likely to be.

**Realistic:** Be realistic about who you need to reach to achieve your goals, and the resources you can realistically obtain/make use of. At the same time, be ambitious enough to be able to energise and mobilise people.

**Time bound:** Take account of time, is there an opportunity or deadline we need to consider? While it might not be possible to predict exactly when you will be successful, it is a good idea to set time frames.

When using consensus decision making, it is unlikely that anyone would position themselves at -2 or -3. Nevertheless, the individual positioning in relation to the goal will have consequences regarding the quality of the future involvement of each member of the group. If there is too little acceptance of the objective, it is therefore important to review and revise the goal.

Those who stand at +3 will put in all their energy. At the other extreme, people who positioned at -3 will put in a veto, if the group is based on consensus, or will leave the group and possibly form an opposing group. This is not necessarily far-fetched. It could happen that during the analysis and development of the objective different positions surface within the group which question the initial common ground and assumptions on the goals.

**Acceptance of the goal**

+3	+2	+1	-1	-2	-3
I share this goal and will do everything I can for us to achieve it.	I will do everything that I can to achieve our goal.	I respect the objective, but I don't feel committed to helping achieve it.	I won't have anything to do with this goal, because I don't care about it.	I don't want to have anything to do with the goal because I am opposed to it.	I will do everything I can to stop the group from achieving its goal.

**Exercises:** ‘The pillars of power’ (p203)—What are the short- and medium-range goals that weaken the pillars? What do we aim to do with the underlying principles? Can we answer the above questions positively? For more information on messages, see ‘media’ (p131) and ‘Sending the protest message’ (p84).

### A word on framing

How you word or 'frame' a goal can have a huge impact on its acceptance among the members of the group, and potential allies and adversaries. It can be useful to test the suitability of your goal using the following tool.

A table similar to the one opposite can help to identify how the acceptance of the goal influences the members of the group and potential allies, adversaries, or groups considered more or less neutral. The areas in grey illustrate where you might expect most people/groups from that particular column to be.

The goal can be brilliant and highly motivating for you or the other members of the group, but if there are too few people and potential allies that can be placed in the first two categories, and too many neutral people and adversaries that will be placed in the last two categories, then the goal should be reviewed and possibly revised. For example, a Canadian campaign against fracking 'softened' their goal from a complete ban of fracking to a generation moratorium, because they thought this would make it more acceptable for people who did not yet come around to a complete rejection of fracking. This allowed them to reach out to people considered more neutral, and to overcome resistance to the campaign.

### Develop a Strategy

Once you have described and analysed the problem, a vision of what you want, and goals (SMART ones, see the sidebar p51) to move you towards that, you need to develop a strategy to get there. The analysis of the problem describes where you are now. The goal is where you want to get to. The strategy is how you get from where you are now to where you want to be. It is not so much the individual steps you need to take (these are the methods or tactics), but the milestones, the interim goals you need to achieve along the way. When you think of strategy as getting from point A to point Z, then the strategy defines the interim points. The individual steps you take – walking from A to B, hitch-hiking from B to C, bus from C to D, cycling from D to E – are the methods (tactics) you employ to achieve your interim goals.

When developing a strategy, it can be useful to work from your campaign goal backwards, asking yourself what needs to have happened to make this change possible. The 'imagine the future' (p197), 'pillars of power' (p203) or the 'the healthy tree/the problem tree' (p199) all give you important starting points to develop your strategy.

Your strategy will need to address several aspects, including the following:

- how you make use of your strengths and opportunities.
- what measures you are taking to address your weaknesses and threats.
- how you shift or change different forces.
- how you develop the necessary resources, skills, and so on.

The overall strategy is likely to consist of several strategies in parallel, addressing different audiences or forces. For example, a strategy for a campaign goal to get the military out of schools (see diagram on p55) might focus on teachers and students simultaneously; one strand could focus on the teachers' unions to

**Acceptance of the goal and consequences for activities**

Acceptance of the goal	Members of the group	(Potential) Allies	(Potential) Adversaries
I share this goal and will do everything I can to achieve it	Very engaged. Fully working in the group	Might join the group or support a group with similar goals, and will join the movement	Might turn into allies: join the group or support a group with similar goals, will join the movement
I support the achievement of the goal	Supporting within the available means without being directly involved/engaged	Support through signing petitions, donations, public declarations of sympathy, providing information, contacts, and so on	Might turn into allies: Support through signing petitions, donations, declarations of sympathy, providing information, contacts, and so on
I respect the goal, but I don't feel committed to help the campaign	"Let them do it."	Allies might turn away, become neutral, or observe	Adversaries might turn neutral, or observe
I don't have anything to do with this goal, because I don't care about it	Ignore	Allies might turn away, ignore. Retreat	Adversaries might soften their opposition, or ignore
I don't want to have anything to do with their goal because I am opposed to it	Distancing oneself. Oppose it. Leave the group	Allies might turn into adversaries: Distancing. Opposition. Changing sides, possibly supporting a group opposing the goal	Opposition, possibly supporting a group opposing the goal
I will do everything I can to stop them from achieving their goal.	Opposing the goal, putting in a veto, forming a group opposing the goal.	Allies might turn into adversaries: Resisting the goal. Forming an opposing group. Withdrawal of support. Using oppression	Resisting the goal. Forming an opposing group. Withdrawal of support. Using oppression

Strategy

get them to pass a resolution against the presence of the military in schools and to support teachers who refuse to invite the military, while a second strand might focus on empowering students to take action whenever the military enters a school, disrupting their presence or even preventing them from entering. A third strand might focus on the school administration, and a fourth one on the local council, or the state government, to make legislative changes. These different strands would work in parallel towards the campaign goal 'military out of schools', but would require their own strategy, with their own objectives and activities. Of course, to work on all of them might be too much for your group. Look at your strategy in the context of the broader social movement, which also involves other actors: what are others doing which might address some aspects of our strategy? What can we do to convince others to take on some of these strands? Where are the gaps?

Which part or parts of the overall strategy you choose to focus on also depends on your group, and the values and belief systems of your group (see 'Clarify the groups shared values and perspectives', p47). If your group prefers nonviolent direct action, then it makes little sense to select a strategy which focuses on lobbying. Your strategy needs to fit your group, but at the same time it can make sense to build alliances or coalitions which can address a wide range of strategies to achieve a campaign goal.

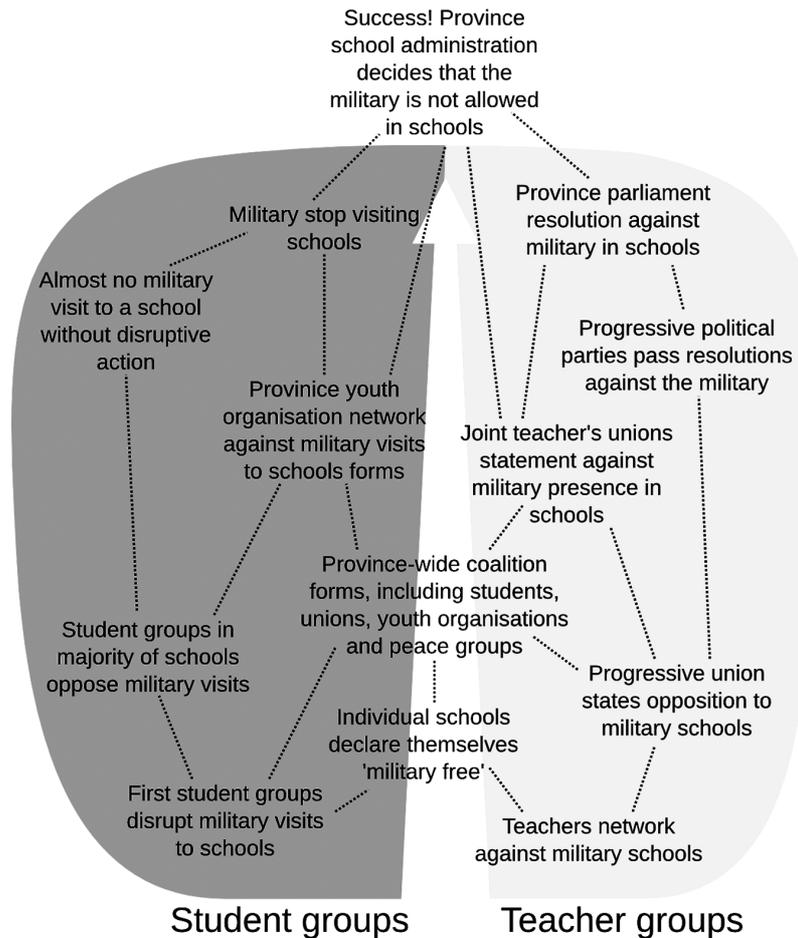
Strategy development is not done in one meeting or by one person. It is a process of decision-making, organising, mobilising, and creative thinking.

### From strategy to action

Once you have your strategy you can move on to your tactics – the steps you take to reach your goal and objectives, or the activities. For more information or ideas on moving to action, (see 'tactic star' p127, 'forms of nonviolent action' p124, and the 'nonviolent and direct action' resources at the back of this handbook p228). Tactics can include:

- **Negotiation:** Have we clearly identified who we need to negotiate with? How will we communicate with them? Are we clear what we want? Are we strong enough, have we built enough power to negotiate with our opponents? Are we clear that our aims are not to humiliate our opponent but to work for a peaceful solution?
- **Legal action:** Is legal action – going to court and challenging a government's decision, a planning permit, or challenging human rights violations – part of our campaign? What is the goal of legal action? What can we gain, what compromises would we need to make, and what are the dangers if we win, or if we lose? How does the legal action relate to other campaigning activities?
- **Constructive work/alternative institutions:** Gandhi saw constructive programmes as the beginning of building a new society, even in the shell of the old. While we say 'no' to an injustice, how do we say 'yes'? How do we begin building the vision of what we are working towards? (see 'constructive programme' p56) Alternative institutions may be temporary creations, such as setting up alternative transportation while boycotting a segregated bus system.

## Goal: Military out of schools



■ **Legislative and electoral action:** Is legislative or electoral action part of the campaign, either as an educational tactic or a goal? How will we put pressure on politicians? How do we exercise our power? How will people participate in that action? What are our plans if our goals are not met?

■ **Demonstrations:** How can we best demonstrate our concerns? Have we considered the many methods of nonviolent action? (See 'forms of nonviolent action' p124) Are we clear about the objectives of the demonstration and how

they will help us reach our goals? How will we involve the public? Will our actions make sense to the local community?

■ **Nonviolent direct action/civil disobedience/civil resistance:** Have we done all we can to build support for our action? Will it encourage more community involvement or will it be counter-productive? How will it advance our cause rather than be an end in itself? Are our objectives clear? Will it put the kind of pressure on our adversaries that will influence them to move? Who will it pressure?

■ **Celebrate:** Take time to recognise what we have done and celebrate our achievements. This is important for sustaining ourselves and strengthening our sense of community. Celebrate after an important event, and when you reach a particular goal.

■ **Evaluate:** It's important to evaluate our campaign, not just at the end, but throughout the process. Unless we do so, we may be making mistakes that we will not recognise until it is too late. We should listen to everyone involved. Keeping a record of our meetings, our decisions, and our work becomes the basis of our own case study. See 'action evaluation' for a series of questions to assess how an action contributed to a campaign (p142).

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## Constructive programme

Andrew Dey, Joanne Sheehan and Subhash Katel

According to Gandhi, nonviolent social change requires building a new society in the shell of the old, which he called 'constructive programme'. 'Nonviolence for Gandhi was more than just a technique of struggle or a strategy for resisting military aggression,' Robert Burrowes explains in *The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense: A Gandhian Approach*. Rather, 'it was intimately related to the wider struggle for social justice, economic self-reliance, and ecological harmony as well as the quest for self-realisation.' As Burrowes describes it:

*"For the individual, constructive programme meant increased power-from-within through the development of personal identity, self-reliance, and fearlessness. For the community, it meant the creation of a new set of political, social, and economic relations".*

In cases where political revolutions have taken place but the population was not organised to exercise self-determination, creating a new society has been

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