

Social justice advocacy depends on the support and involvement of many people. Consolidating and using this kind of citizen power depends on good leaders. There are many different leadership roles and tasks necessary for building advocacy, from community organizing and public speaking to running a meeting and lobbying. Some of these involve more visible and formal roles, while others are less visible and informal. All of them demand a wide array of skills and talents that are rarely found in a single person. That is why advocacy needs a range of different kinds of leaders in different roles. The one core element for all types of advocacy leaders is a clear understanding of and sensitivity to power dynamics in the personal, organizational, and policy arenas.

For example, leadership for advocacy can mean giving direction to actions and being able to recognize opportunities to shift direction when necessary. We discuss these assertive forms of leadership more in Chapter 15 on Lobbying and Negotiation.

Another kind of advocacy leadership involves being able to communicate ideas and plans in a way that inspires, persuades, and informs. We discuss communication skills in Chapter 13 and in the Annex.

Advocacy leadership is also about facilitating the growth and leadership of others. Long-term commitment and participation in advocacy is sustained in part by opportunities for the people involved to try new things, develop new talents, gain confidence, and grow. We discuss this kind of leadership in more detail in Chapter 4 and in Part 2.

One of the most challenging yet important leadership tasks in advocacy is coordinating and managing the work of others. These special talents are what make organizations and advocacy initiatives successful. In this chapter, we focus on these kinds of leadership tasks and skills. We look especially at:

- **Leadership roles and styles;**
- **Promoting teamwork and accountability;**
- **Giving and receiving feedback.**

Leadership Roles: Formal and Informal

Leadership is often defined in individual terms yet leadership happens in relation to others. It is a collective process based on reciprocity and shared responsibility (see box on page ###). In addition to *formal* leadership, such as appointed or elected positions within organizations with an established hierarchy, there are also *informal* day-to-day acts of leadership that form the backbone of effective advocacy and strong organizations. Whether recognized or not, we all take on leadership roles at certain times. These roles range from providing ideas in small group discussions to developing budgets or holding colleagues accountable. The small acts of informal leadership and good teamwork help ensure effective action and build the next generation of leaders. So leadership is not just about the visible leaders of organizations, it is about all of us.

At the same time, formal and informal leadership tend to demand different kinds of qualities and skills that are found in different people. Certain kinds of people – often those who are more comfortable with decisionmaking or more

experienced communicators – tend to be formal leaders, while others who work behind-the-scenes as facilitators tend to be informal leaders. Although advocacy depends on both types, the formal hierarchies that inevitably bring more recognition and affirmation to formal leaders present serious challenges, particularly for advocacy concerned with inclusion and generating alternative kinds of power.

Leadership & Shared Responsibility: “Affidamento” and Pacts

Helpful insights about leadership and organization have come from women’s movements around the world¹. For example, the commonly held assumption that all women are equal (and therefore the same), despite the fact that this belief is far from reality, can make women uncomfortable with leadership roles.

Such discomfort, whether on the part of leader or led, can paralyze action. In any organization conflicts will inevitably arise. The all-are-equal problem makes conflict difficult to address since taking on leadership roles, no matter how consultative or participatory, is seen as a betrayal of principles of sisterhood, solidarity, and equality. A similar phenomenon occurs in people’s movements and social justice work where people may be uncomfortable with hierarchies.

The other problem that comes from the denial of or discomfort with hierarchy is that some of these same leaders fail to recognize when their own behavior is domineering and exclusionary. Without alternative models of leadership, many NGO and grassroots leaders simply repeat the top-down pattern of traditional power and authority.

Lessons from women’s movements emphasize

synergy and diversity. Since individuals have different identities and strengths, they need each other to advance their common concerns. Recognizing that women are not all equal, this new approach allows women to deal with conflict, power and hierarchy more realistically. It also allows them to assume roles as formal and informal leaders and use their differences to their advantage.

This perspective emphasizes the importance of mutual accountability. It is based on building trust and mechanisms of evaluation, and accepting differences in roles and certain forms of hierarchy. This new vision of leadership based on reciprocity and joint responsibility is also called ‘affidamento’ by some activists.

‘Affidamento’ is a helpful concept for dealing with leadership and structures in advocacy. On the one hand, it acknowledges that some people will have major decisionmaking authority, especially to meet the fast-paced demands of changing circumstances so common in policy work. At the same time, ‘affidamento’ stresses that effective decisionmaking and implementation are interwoven and require joint agreements on responsibilities. This interdependency demands a level of accountability and trust that is often implicit, but needs to be explicitly affirmed at different moments.

In the Framework for the Action Guide, on page X, you will see that there are two moments where leaders, organizers and constituents affirm their pact of trust and accountability by discussing plans, next steps, risks and responsibilities. The participatory planning processes described in Part 2 are geared to forming these kinds of “pacts” of trust and accountability. We discuss the notion of political accountability and responsibility in organizations in more depth in Chapter 17.

Transformative Leadership

Transformative leadership is a relatively new term but one that is important for social justice advocacy. It defines leadership in a context of more equitable relations of power and encompasses a vision of social change.

The Association for Women’s Rights in Development (AWID) in its 1999 forum explored the idea of transformative leadership. They emphasized that this type of leadership “goes beyond putting women into formal positions of power.”

Feminist leadership is “transformative in the sense that it questions and challenges existing power structures; *inclusive* in the sense that it takes into account the views and fosters empowerment of the most marginalized and poorest groups of society; and *holistic* in the sense that it addresses all forms of social injustice. [It] can be practiced by both women and men, and as such, is more than just women’s leadership.”²

Developing Local Leaders

Building and strengthening grassroots leadership can be a long, in-depth process sometimes involving 10 – 15 years of working closely with people in skill-building, critical reflection, confidence, organizing, problem solving and other forms of accompaniment. Rarely does leadership happen as a result of workshops alone. It involves a continual systematic process of examining and interacting with one’s own community and context in ever changing ways. This process of change is both empowering and painful for leaders as they challenge themselves and the status quo in many aspects of life.

Outside organizers and NGOs often identify potential leaders through workshops or community projects where opportunities for prolonged conversation and familiarization exist. Leadership promise can be demonstrated through a variety of qualities and characteristics –anger and impatience in the face of injustice, optimism, confidence, commitment to honesty and action, a critical sense of one’s own history and personality traits, a trust in people, and an ability to listen and inspire others. Poor women face additional challenges in becoming leaders because of their multiple work responsibilities in the family and outside the home, as well as social pressures to play traditional roles. Developing their leadership capacities usually requires more time and creative strategies to accommodate their schedules, needs and constraints. Generally, leadership development is significantly different for men and women because they encounter and use power so differently.

Leadership development involves a combination of approaches from structured learning activities such as workshops, courses and in-service training programs to more informal approaches such as apprenticeships and accompaniment. Structured programs include a mix of topics: self-reflection and personal awareness; knowledge of laws, political systems, and human rights; and skills in facilitation, communication, team building, organizational development, planning, analysis and persuasion. Grassroots organizers stress the importance of applying this learning to real life experiences and then analyzing those experiences to gain a deeper knowledge.

Some programs start with people telling their personal histories, analyzing those stories in the context of their community, neighborhood or village social structure, and then expanding the analysis to include provincial, national and global systems. They then structure learning around concrete efforts to solve local problems – from holding community meetings to meeting with government officials.

Transformative leaders mobilize people in ways that encourage collaboration, respect, shared values and action. Transformative leaders know both how power and conflict work and how their own needs, aspirations and identities interact with those of others. They are active learners and listeners and create the space for others to learn, make decisions, and act. They accept certain responsibilities that come with being a leader, but recognize that success depends on engaging others as informed decisionmakers.

Who's a Leader?

It should never be assumed that the apparent leaders in a group are the only, or ideal, leaders for advocacy. Sometimes leadership can emerge through the process of advocacy and is not immediately apparent in the first stages. One veteran citizen organizer from the USA says that he listens for passion among the people who speak last. The clearer the anger about the issue, the more motivated the person will be to fight. The combination of anger and compassion makes leaders, he says. His experience shows that leaders are rarely the people who speak up first.

Ernie Cortez, Industrial Areas Foundation, personal conversations.

Advocacy Leadership: Combining Styles and Approaches

There is no simple recipe for good leadership, but a few basic rules and skills help. Sometimes, advocates are catapulted into leadership positions as the coordinators of organizations or coalitions due to their good communication skills and strategic, quick thinking. However, in some cases, they have no background in the basics of management, interpersonal communication and organizational decisionmaking. So, making time for leaders to develop a full range of capacities is one important rule not to be overlooked.

Leaders involved in social justice advocacy balance contradictory demands. On the one hand, they are concerned about team building, participation and empowerment. On the other, the pace of politics and the scarcity of resources demand efficiency, quick decisions, and impact. While some tasks, like sustaining a shared vision and commitment, are continuous and common across advocacy efforts, different contexts call for different leadership approaches. The following examples illustrate four different kinds of leadership useful at different moments.

- *Facilitative* leadership encourages people to participate and pursue their own potential; leaders encourage others to assert themselves and have faith in their own judgment; they delegate responsibility.
- *Assertive* leadership gives direction, states positions, and helps others move toward agreements.
- *Supportive* leadership backs other people's positions, makes them feel validated and maintains group cohesion;
- *Disruptive* leadership shakes people up and helps the group think critically, disagree and challenge constructively.

With experience, leaders learn to match the appropriate approach to the right circumstances. This is crucial since using the wrong approach can cause divisive organizational misunderstanding and conflict. Not every leader has the capacity to use all of these approaches, but they learn to rely on others to complement their strengths.

How decisions are made within advocacy organizations and alliances is critical to their survival. Again, the tough balance between participation and clear lines of authority is important. While decisions about issue priorities and general strategies can and should be participatory, the implementation of strategies

involves different roles and responsibilities. A leader needs to ensure that people fulfill their tasks and obligations while encouraging their creativity and initiative.

Some basic rules about what makes organizations work well can help. Organizations can thrive based on the extent a leader promotes:³

Shared Understanding, by sustaining the vision and giving a group a sense of the 'big picture,' clarifying aims, and facilitating broad involvement in goal setting, problem analysis and strategic planning.

Teamwork, by helping individuals to join forces and to be part of a process where they feel a sense of belonging.

Autonomy, by delegating and respecting the ability of each individual to decide on the best way to accomplish a task within some general guidelines.

Accountability, by clarifying responsibilities and establishing a process for feedback and evaluation; by demonstrating responsibility to a group by minimizing action without consultation unless absolutely necessary.

Rewards, by recognizing people's individual contributions and growth in tangible or intangible ways.

Effective leadership is also difficult because personal needs, anxieties, pressures and backgrounds can get in the way. For example, if a person is very insecure, it is difficult to be a supportive leader. People assuming leadership positions need to understand their own personal experiences with subordination and find ways to address the negative impact this can have on their leadership style.

The exercises on the next few pages may help to stimulate reflection on these issues.



Participants for the Global Women in Politics Asia-Pacific Regional Advocacy Training of Trainers in Subic Bay, Philippines, September 1997

Purpose

To help participants analyze different styles of leadership and identify some characteristics of effective leaders.

Process

(Time: 1 ½ hours)

Divide participants into small groups. Give each group one of the case studies below or your own. Ask them to develop their role play based on the case, and to present the situation in a way that allows everyone to get a sense of the group dynamics. The aim is not to present answers to the problems but rather to give an overview of the situation.

Discussion

After the groups present their role plays, the following questions can assist in analyzing the skits.

- Describe the types of leadership presented? What made the leadership effective or not?
- What were the differences and similarities among the leadership approaches?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches?
- What other leadership styles have you seen? In what kinds of circumstances?
- What kind of leadership is needed for social justice advocacy? What kind of skills and attitudes are required?

Case Examples of Leadership Styles⁴

Case 1: Thandiwe is chairperson of Paso Women's Rights Group. She is the founder and has been the chair for the entire seven years that the group has been in existence. At a meeting of all members and staff of the group, she explains that there are several tasks to be carried out. She calls out names of some members and assigns each one a task. She tells them what to do and how to do it. She also gives them the time within which the task should be completed. She warns several of the members not to mess up their tasks like they had done the last time. All the members are quiet throughout the meeting.

Toward the end of the meeting, Winnie puts her hand up. She explains that she was glad to have the task assigned to her but thought it could be carried out with better results in a different way. Thandiwe replies that she has been the leader of the organization for seven years and that is how they have always carried out that particular task.

She asks if there are any further questions. There are none. She walks out of the room. The members start complaining among themselves about the way they are treated.

Case 2: Falomo Development Association is an organization that seeks to raise the awareness of rights among women in Falomo. Mumo is the leader of the Association. She is very interested in democracy and participation of all members. At a recent meeting to plan activities for a six month period, she asked for ideas. Sosi wanted the organization to conduct public meetings in all the districts of Falomo. Kuka preferred to publish a series of booklets and distribute them. Several other suggestions were given. Each contributor was so convinced that her idea was the only good one, Mumo did not quite know how to proceed. The meeting broke up. Neither Mumo nor the other members understood what was agreed upon.

Tips for Facilitators

Talking about current leaders and their styles in a workshop can be difficult, especially if more than one person from an organization is present. Participants may be reluctant to talk frankly in case what they say gets back to the leader. There is also a risk of personalizing the issues in a way that makes objective analysis difficult. Using role plays can help people examine problems more dispassionately before analyzing leadership styles in their own organizations.

Being an effective leader, especially one committed to building citizenship and empowerment, requires an understanding of one's own personal qualities and skills and relations with others. Providing people with opportunities to discuss leadership and identify their own leadership potential can help them recognize their own abilities and consider taking on new responsibilities.

Purpose

To explore effective leadership and identify individual potential for leadership. To assist people in reflecting on their own strengths and weaknesses as leaders and in determining what aspects of their leadership could be improved.

Process

(Time: 1 hour)

1. Divide participants into small groups and ask them to brainstorm what qualities and skills an effective leader should have.
2. Ask the to groups report back on their lists in plenary, record their answers on newsprint and then ask the group to add any that may be specific to leadership focused on advocacy and constituency building.
3. Give each participant 5 small stickers and ask them to prioritize the qualities and skills named in the list by placing a sticker next to the five they consider most important (small dot stickers work well)
3. In plenary, compare the lists and identify the top 10 qualities and skills
4. Ask everyone to reflect on these different characteristics and write down some of their own strong points and some that need improvement or further development. Make a list of new skills and attitudes they feel they need to acquire.
5. In small groups, have everyone discuss one of their strengths and one of their weaknesses and ways that they might improve or develop their qualities to become more effective leaders.

For another version of this exercise see *From the Roots Up: Strengthening Organizational Capacity through Guided Self-Assessment*, World Neighbors 2000

Leadership and Teamwork

Effective organizations depend on strong leadership and teamwork. Promoting teamwork is an important responsibility of a leader. It requires self-knowledge and an understanding of our strengths and weaknesses in working with others. What motivates us? What are our core values? How have our life experiences shaped us? In the Appendix and in Chapter 7 you will find different exercises for self-exploration that can be adapted for leadership training and development. The following four questions can help you to examine how you work with others and can be used with the chart *Group Maintenance and Task Needs* in Chapter 17 (page ###) for a fuller discussion:

- How do I act in a group?
- What positive and negative roles do I play?
- How does my behavior contribute to group process, creativity, solidarity, and decisionmaking?
- What skills can I learn to help increase group effectiveness?

Tips for Promoting Teamwork

- Clarify roles, relationships and responsibilities.
- Share leadership functions within the group and use all member resources.
- Tolerate uncertainty, and a seeming lack of structure.
- Take interest in each member's achievements as well as those of the group.
- Remain open to change and creative problem solving.
- Be committed to focusing group communication while permitting disagreements.
- Promote constructive criticism and feedback.

A Note on Group Process

Frequently people in groups get so involved in *what* they are doing that they lose sight of *how* they are doing it. Similarly, people are often unaware of how their own behavior affects a situation. They are so busy trying to finish a task that they don't realize their behavior may be contributing to misunderstanding or conflict.

- Foster trust and commitment within the group.
- Encourage members to support and respect one another.⁵

The skills of listening and asking questions are key to good leadership. The chart "Types of Questions" on the next page provides examples that have been effective in promoting teamwork and problem-solving.

Productive Meetings

Meetings, meetings, meetings. They are a tedious, but an important part of effective advocacy. Knowing how to facilitate a productive meeting is a critical leadership skill. The following guidelines⁶ provide some general rules.

1. Attend to the basics.

Prior to the meeting, check with those who will be presenting information to review their key points. Arrive early to ensure the room is set up appropriately. Start on time. Where appropriate, have participants introduce themselves.

2. Develop an agenda.

Prepare an agenda, including all unfinished points that emerged from the previous meeting where relevant. When possible, members should receive the agenda in advance of the meeting. If you do not have an agenda beforehand, the group can spend 5 - 10 minutes at

Types of Questions for Promoting Teamwork		
<i>This chart provides a typology of questions that can help promote teamwork and problem-solving</i>		
TYPES	PURPOSE	EXAMPLES
Factual	To get information To open discussion	What, where, why, when who and how?
Explanatory	To get reasons and explanations To broaden discussion To solicit additional information	In what way would this help solve the problem? What other aspects of this should be considered? Exactly how would this be done?
Justifying	To challenge old ideas To develop new ideas To get reasoning	Why do you think so? What other ways are there to think about this? What evidence do you have? How do you know?
Leading	To introduce new ideas To advance a suggestion of your own to others	Could this be a possible solution? Would this be a feasible alternative?
Hypothetical	To develop new ideas To suggest a possibility, unpopular idea or change in the course of the discussion	What would happen if we did it this way? Another group does this...Is this feasible here?
Alternative	To make a choice between alternatives To get agreement	Which of these solutions seems best, A or B?
Coordinating	To develop consensus To get agreement To take action	Can we agree that this is the next step? Is there general agreement on this plan? If this is so, then what do we need to move forward on this?

Adapted from *Working Together*, by Bob Biagi, Amherst, MA: Citizen Involvement Training Project, 1978.

the beginning of the meeting to draft one on newsprint so that everyone can see it.

Agendas should include the topics to be discussed. They can also include the reasons the issues are included, the presenters and approximate time limits for discussion. It may also help to indicate which items require a decision.

3. Follow the flow.

Meetings usually start with an acknowledgment of new participants, taking attendance, and reviewing the agenda. You may want to read minutes from the last meeting and review

action items from the prior meeting. Agenda items should be discussed in order and the meeting should conclude with a decision on the priorities, time and place for the next meeting.

4. Use a facilitator.

Meetings tend to run more smoothly when they are coordinated by a facilitator or chairperson who keeps the discussions focused; prevents anyone from dominating; encourages participation from everyone; summarizes key points and seeks clarification on confusing ones; and brings discussions to an end. In a network, this role can be rotated among members.

At certain times, an outside facilitator may be more appropriate, for example when a coalition is dealing with an issue that may produce conflict.

5. Keep a written record.

At each meeting, notes should be taken regarding attendance, key items discussed, the main points raised, all decisions made, and topics to be addressed in the future. The record should include who has agreed to take responsibility for what and the timeline for doing things. A written record can serve as an accountability mechanism that allows a group to review decisions and fulfillment of obligations. In a network that has no secretariat, note-taking can be rotated.

6. Celebrate personal and organizational achievements.

When appropriate, include a time in meetings to recognize individual and organizational

achievements. This can be useful for building the team and sustaining energy. Some groups also include an inspirational moment in their meetings, like a song, poetry, prayer, poignant stories or funny anecdotes.

7. Draft next meeting's agenda.

At the conclusion of each meeting, list items that need to be included in the next meeting and clarify, if necessary, who will develop the complete agenda.

8. Evaluate the meeting.

End by reviewing the process and progress of the meeting. In some cases, groups assign process observers at the beginning of a session. These observers watch the dynamics of the meeting and report briefly at its conclusion. Other groups use an open-ended approach. Feedback should include discussion of helpful and unhelpful behaviors and suggestions for improving the process and achievements.



Celebrate accomplishments

Feedback

Getting and giving feedback is an important leadership task. Feedback about performance and behavior helps us learn more about ourselves, change unhelpful behavior, and increase group effectiveness. Each of us has blind spots about ourselves -- good and bad. Feedback allows others to help us identify them. Since feedback can touch on personal issues, it is important to handle negative issues sensitively.

There are direct and indirect ways to get feedback.⁷ For example, observation provides indirect feedback – are people staring out the window as we speak? Do they leave the room early when we are leading meetings? Do groups implement plans that we design with them? But observation can also be misleading. A person staring out the window may appear bored, when in fact she is simply worried about something. Asking others for their opinions provides more reliable feedback as long as people are prepared to be open and direct, even with negative information. This varies significantly from culture to culture.

The following are tips for giving and receiving feedback. Groups should determine which of these are appropriate to their own cultural contexts and adapt them accordingly.

Tips for Giving Feedback⁸

- Give feedback in a climate of trust.
- Provide feedback when a person wants it. Feedback can be offered but never forced.
- Speak in the first person. “I felt... or “When I heard you say...” In this way you do not claim to represent everyone.
- Present negative feedback as your own problem explaining how it affected you personally. “I felt disrespected when you interrupted me and wouldn’t let me finish my comments.”
- Provide feedback on what people actually did, their behavior, not their motivation.
- Give feedback about both positive as well as unhelpful behaviors. For example, if someone sounds condescending in one part of a presentation but is engaging at another time, speak about the positive style, tone or body language.

Facilitator’s Tip on Feedback

One way to practice principles of feedback is to have people review the tips on feedback and then ask for volunteers who want to practice their skills. The volunteer can choose the people from whom they want to receive feedback.

The following questions can guide the process:

- What do I appreciate or find helpful about your participation and behavior in the group?
- What do I find difficult or unhelpful about your behavior or participation?
- What I would like to ask of you so that your participation and teamwork is more effective.

To start off, the facilitator might say “I like the way you are always willing to volunteer for jobs that need to be done.” Ask those providing feedback to start with helpful behaviors. After three or four people have given feedback, move on to the next volunteer and repeat the process.

Ask people what was difficult about this experience as 1) a giver of feedback and 2) a receiver of feedback. Ask them what they found easy or useful.

See *Training for Transformation* Volume II, London: IT Publications, revised version 1995.

- Give feedback only about behaviors that can be changed.
- Ask questions that clarify reasons for behavior or action. For example, “Why did you decide to do...? In this way you credit people with judgment, and validate critical thinking.
- Acknowledge your connection to the problem. For example, statements such as “This is helpful for us/me to think about because...” allow people to understand they are not alone.
- When possible, suggest alternative responses. For example, “Have you thought about....”
- Have someone take notes if you are in a group so you can review the feedback later. If someone else takes notes, you can also listen more carefully.
- If one person is especially negative about a behavior, check with others to see if it’s a common problem.
- Stop when you have had enough. Thank everyone, and assure them you will think about their comments.

Tips for Receiving Feedback

- Direct your own feedback. Whether in a group or one-on-one setting, ask people directly what has been helpful and unhelpful about your behavior.
- Listen carefully to comments. Try not to get defensive or explain away behavior that people find unhelpful. Accept the positive comments.

NOTES

¹ Marta Lamas, “Feminismo y Liderazgo”, in *Mujeres al Timon*, Agende, Flora Tristan, et al. (eds.). Mexico, D.F.: Equidad de Genero, 1998.

² Marleen Nolten of The Netherlands Organization for International Development Cooperation (Novib).

³ Adapted from leadership workshop materials, The Support Center of Massachusetts, 1991.

⁴ Adapted from *Legal Rights Organizing for Women in Africa: A Trainer’s Manual*, WILDAF, Zimbabwe

⁵ Adapted from Robert Moran and Phillip Harris. 1982. *Managing Cultural Synergy*. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Co. in *Networking for Policy Change*. The Policy Project. Washington D.C. 1999.

⁶ Drawn and adapted from Michael Doyle and David Straus. 1976. *How to Make Meetings Work*. New York: Berkeley Publishing Group. Peter R. Scholtes. 1998. *The Team Handbook: How to Use Teams to Improve Quality*. Madison, Wisconsin: Joiner Associates and The Policy Project 2000. *Networking for Policy Change*. Washington, DC.: The Policy Project, 1999.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Hope, A. and S. Timmel. *Training for Transformation II*. London: IT Publications, revised version 1995, p. 66-67; *Educating for a change*, p.130-131.