

# **FAMILY AND SOCIAL PLANNING**

**Catholic University of Rwanda**

**Faculty of Social Work**

**Course Notes**

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## LEARNING OUTCOMES

On the completion of the course, students should be able to:

- Understand and explain the purposes of FP and the main methods used;
- Detect and analyse the coercive interfering with FP
- Discuss and propose strategies to reduce the obstacles for FP, human rights and development
- Explain the participation of community, policy makers and activists in social planning and social change process
- Understand and Explain how people engage in, prepare and carry out a social action strategy
- Develop an action plan

# COMPONENT ONE: FAMILY PLANNING

## Chapter 1. Overview of Family Planning

### 1.1.Introduction

Family planning, simply put, is the practice of controlling the number of children in a family and the intervals between their births, particularly by means of artificial contraception or voluntary sterilization. Because "family" is included in the concept's name, consideration of a couple's desire to bear children, in the context of a family unit, is often considered primarily. Contemporary notions of family planning, however, tend to place a woman and her childbearing decisions at the center of the discussion, as notions of women's empowerment and reproductive autonomy have gained traction in many parts of the world. Family planning may involve consideration of the number of children a woman wishes to have, including the choice to have no children, as well as the age at which she wishes to have them. These matters are obviously influenced by external factors such as marital situation, career considerations, financial position, any disabilities that may affect their ability to have children and raise them, besides many other considerations. If sexually active, family planning may involve the use of contraception<sup>[1][2]</sup> and other techniques to control the timing of reproduction. Other techniques commonly used include sexuality education,<sup>[2][3]</sup> prevention and management of sexually transmitted infections,<sup>[2]</sup> pre-conception counseling<sup>[2]</sup> and management, and infertility management.<sup>[1]</sup>

Family planning is sometimes used as a synonym or euphemism for access to and the use of contraception. However, it often involves methods and practices in addition to contraception. Additionally, there are many who might wish to use contraception but are not, necessarily, planning a family (e.g., unmarried adolescents, young married couples delaying childbearing while building a career); family planning has become a catch-all phrase for much of the work undertaken in this realm. It is most usually applied to a female-male couple who wish to limit the number of children they have and/or to control the timing of pregnancy (also known as *spacing children*). Family planning may encompass sterilization, as well as abortion.<sup>[4]</sup>

Family planning services are defined as "educational, comprehensive medical or social activities which enable individuals, including minors, to determine freely the number and spacing of their children and to select the means by which this may be achieved".<sup>[3]</sup>

## **1.2.Purposes**

"Raising" a child requires significant amounts of resources: time,<sup>[5]</sup> social, financial,<sup>[6]</sup> and environmental. Planning can help assure that resources are available. The purpose of family planning is to make sure that any couple, man, or woman who has the desire to have a child has the resources that are needed in order to complete this goal.<sup>[7]</sup> With these resources a couple, man or women can explore the options of natural birth, surrogacy, artificial insemination, or adoption. In the other case, if the person does not wish to have a child at the specific time, they can investigate the resources that are needed to prevent pregnancy, such as birth control, contraceptives, or physical protection and prevention.

## **1.3.Health**

The WHO states about maternal health that:

"Maternal health refers to the health of women during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period. While motherhood is often a positive and fulfilling experience, for too many women it is associated with suffering, ill-health and even death."

About 99% of maternal deaths occur in less developed countries; > ½ occur in sub-Saharan Africa and almost ⅓ in South Asia.<sup>[8]</sup>

Both early and late motherhood have increased risks. Young teenagers face a higher risk of complications and death as a result of pregnancy.<sup>[8]</sup> Waiting until the mother is at least 18 years old before trying to have children improves maternal and child health.<sup>[9]</sup>

Also, if additional children are desired after a child is born, it is healthier for the mother and the child to wait at least 2 years after the previous birth before attempting to conceive (but not more than 5 years).<sup>[9]</sup> After a miscarriage or abortion, it is healthier to wait at least 6 months.<sup>[9]</sup>

When planning a family, women should be aware that reproductive risks increase with the age of the woman. Like older men, older women have a higher chance of having a child with autism or Down syndrome, the chances of having multiple births increases, which cause further late-pregnancy risks, they have an increased chance of developing gestational diabetes, the need for a Caesarian section is greater, older women's bodies are not as well-suited for delivering a baby. The risk of prolonged labor is higher. Older mothers have a higher risk of a long labor, putting the baby in distress.

"Family planning benefits the health and well-being of women and families throughout the world. Using contraception can help to avoid unwanted pregnancies and space births; protect against STDs, including HIV/AIDS; and provide other health benefits."<sup>[10]</sup>

#### **1.4.Modern methods**

Modern methods of family planning include birth control, assisted reproductive technology and family planning programs.

The use of modern methods of contraception is an important basis for improving the long-term health of adolescent girls. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) says that, "Contraceptives prevent unintended pregnancies, reduce the number of abortions, and lower the incidence of death and disability related to complications of pregnancy and childbirth."<sup>[11]</sup> UNFPA states that, "If all women with an unmet need for contraceptives were able to use modern methods, an additional 24 million abortions (14 million of which would be unsafe), 6 million miscarriages, 70,000 maternal deaths and 500,000 infant deaths would be prevented."<sup>[11]</sup>

In cases where couples may not want to have children just yet, family planning programs help a lot. Federal family planning programs reduced childbearing among poor women by as much as 29 percent, according to a University of Michigan study.<sup>[12]</sup>

Adoption is sometimes used to build a family. There are seven steps that one must make towards adoption. You must decide to pursue an adoption, apply to adopt, complete an adoption home study, get approved to adopt, be matched with a child, receive an adoptive placement, and then legalize the adoption.<sup>[13]</sup>

### 1.4.1. Contraception

A number of contraceptive methods are available to prevent unwanted pregnancy. There are a range of contraceptive methods, each with particular advantages and disadvantages. Behavioral methods to avoid pregnancy that involve vaginal intercourse include the withdrawal and calendar-based methods, which have little upfront cost and are readily available, but are much less effective in typical use than most other methods. Long-acting reversible contraceptive methods, such as intrauterine device (IUD) and implant are highly effective and convenient, requiring little user action. When cost of failure is included, IUDs and vasectomy are much less costly than other methods. In addition to providing birth control, male and/or female condoms protect against sexually transmitted diseases (STD). Condoms may be used alone, or in addition to other methods, as backup or to prevent STD. Surgical methods (tubal ligation, vasectomy) provide long-term contraception for those who have completed their families.<sup>[14]</sup>

#### What are the different types of contraception?

Not all contraceptive methods are appropriate for all situations, and the most appropriate method of birth control depends on a woman's overall health, age, frequency of sexual activity, number of sexual partners, desire to have children in the future, and family history of certain diseases. Individuals should consult their health care providers to determine which method of birth control is best for them. Some types carry serious risks, although those risks are elevated with pregnancy and may be higher than the risks associated with the various methods.

The different methods of contraception include:<sup>1,2</sup>

- [Barrier methods](#)
- [Hormonal methods](#)
- [Emergency contraception](#)
- [Intrauterine methods](#)
- [Sterilization](#)

#### Barrier Methods

Designed to prevent sperm from entering the uterus, barrier methods are removable and may be an option for women who cannot use hormonal methods of contraception. Types of barrier methods include:

- **Male condoms.** This condom is a thin sheath that covers the penis to collect sperm and prevent it from entering the woman's body. Male condoms are generally made of latex or polyurethane, but a natural alternative is lambskin (made from the intestinal membrane of lambs). Latex or polyurethane condoms reduce the risk of spreading sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Lambskin condoms do not prevent STDs. Male condoms are disposable after a single use.
- **Female condoms.** These are thin, flexible plastic pouches. A portion of the condom is inserted into a woman's vagina before intercourse to prevent sperm from entering the uterus. The female condom also reduces the risk of STDs. Female condoms are disposed of after a single use.
- **Diaphragms.** Each diaphragm is a shallow, flexible cup made of latex or soft rubber that is inserted into the vagina before intercourse, blocking sperm from entering the uterus. Spermicidal cream or jelly should be used with a diaphragm. The diaphragm should remain in place for 6 to 8 hours after intercourse to prevent pregnancy, but it should be removed within 24 hours. Traditional latex diaphragms must be the correct size to work properly, and a health care provider can determine the proper fit.

A diaphragm should be replaced after 1 or 2 years. Women also need to be measured again for a diaphragm after giving birth, having pelvic surgery, or gaining or losing more than 15 pounds.<sup>3</sup> Newer diaphragms, such as the Silcs diaphragm, are designed to fit most women and do not require fitting by a health care provider. The Silcs diaphragm is currently in clinical trials for approval by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and other regulatory agencies.

- **Cervical caps.** These are similar to diaphragms, but smaller, more rigid, and less noticeable. The cervical cap is a thin silicone cup that is inserted into the vagina before intercourse to block sperm from entering the uterus. As with a diaphragm, the cervical cap should be used with spermicidal cream or jelly. The cap must remain in place for 6 to 8 hours after intercourse to prevent pregnancy, but it should be removed within 48 hours. Cervical caps come in different sizes, and a health care provider determines the proper fit.<sup>4</sup> With proper care, a cervical cap can be used for 2 years before replacement.<sup>2</sup> Currently, FemCap is the only cervical cap approved by the FDA.
- **Contraceptive sponges.** These are soft, disposable, spermicide-filled foam sponges. One is inserted into the vagina before intercourse.<sup>5</sup> The sponge blocks sperm from entering the uterus, and the spermicide also kills the sperm cells. The sponge should be left in place for at least 6 hours after intercourse and then removed within 30 hours after intercourse.
- **Spermicides.** A spermicide destroys sperm. A spermicide can be used alone or in combination with a diaphragm or cervical cap. The most common spermicidal agent is a chemical called nonoxynol-9 (N-9). It is available in several concentrations and forms, including foam, jelly, cream, suppository, and film. A spermicide should be inserted into

the vagina close to the uterus no more than 30 minutes prior to intercourse and left in place 6 to 8 hours after intercourse to prevent pregnancy. Spermicides do not prevent the transmission of STDs and may cause allergic reactions or [vaginitis](#) (pronounced *vaj-uh-NAHY-tis*).<sup>6</sup>

## Hormonal Methods

Hormonal methods of birth control use hormones to regulate or stop ovulation and prevent pregnancy. Ovulation is the biological process in which the ovary releases an egg, making it available for fertilization. Hormones can be introduced into the body through various methods, including pills, injections, skin patches, transdermal gels, vaginal rings, intrauterine systems, and implantable rods. Depending on the types of hormones that are used, these pills can prevent ovulation; thicken cervical mucus, which helps block sperm from reaching the egg; or thin the lining of the uterus. Health care providers prescribe, monitor, and administer hormonal contraceptives.

- **Combined oral contraceptives ("the pill").** Combined oral contraceptive pills (COCs) contain different combinations of the synthetic estrogens (pronounced *ES-truh-juhns*) and progestins (*proh-JES-tins*) and are given to interfere with ovulation. A woman takes one pill daily, preferably at the same time each day. Many types of oral contraceptives are available, and a health care provider helps to determine which type best meets a woman's needs. Use of COC pills is not recommended for women who smoke tobacco and are more than 35 years old or for any woman who has high blood pressure, a history of blood clots, or a history of breast, liver, or endometrial cancer.
- **Progestin-only pills (POPs).** A woman takes one pill daily, preferably at the same time each day. Progestin-only pills may interfere with ovulation or with sperm function. POPs thicken cervical mucus, making it difficult for sperm to swim into the uterus or to enter the fallopian tube. POPs alter the normal cyclical changes in the uterine lining and may result in unscheduled or breakthrough bleeding. These hormones do not appear to be associated with an increased risk of blood clots.
- **Contraceptive patch.** This is a thin, plastic patch that sticks to the skin and releases hormones through the skin into the bloodstream. The patch is placed on the lower abdomen, buttocks, outer arm, or upper body. A new patch is applied once a week for 3 weeks, and no patch is used on the fourth week to enable menstruation.<sup>4</sup>
- **Injectable birth control.** This method involves injection of a progestin, Depo-Provera® (DMPA—depo medroxyprogesterone acetate), given in the arm or buttocks once every 3 months.<sup>7</sup> This method of birth control can cause a temporary loss of bone density, particularly in adolescents. However, this bone loss is generally regained after discontinuing use of DMPA. Most patients using injectable birth control should eat a diet rich in calcium and vitamin D or take vitamin supplements while using this medication.



- **Vaginal rings.** The ring is thin, flexible, and approximately 2 inches in diameter. It delivers a combination of a synthetic estrogen (ethinyl estradiol) and a progestin. The ring is inserted into the vagina, where it continually releases hormones for 3 weeks. The woman removes it for the fourth week and reinserts a new ring 7 days later. Risks for this method of contraception are similar to those for the combined oral contraceptive pills, and a vaginal ring is not recommended for any woman with a history of blot clots, stroke, or heart attack, or with certain types of cancer.<sup>4</sup> Currently, the NuvaRing® is the only FDA-approved vaginal ring. A new contraceptive vaginal ring that can be used for 13 cycles is under clinical development.
- **Implantable rods.** Each rod is matchstick-sized, flexible, and plastic. A physician surgically inserts the rod under the skin of the woman's upper arm. The rods release a progestin and can remain implanted for up to 5 years.<sup>4</sup> Currently, Implanon®, which releases etonorgestrel, is the only implantable rod available in the United States. A two-rod method, Jadelle®, which releases levonorgestrel, is FDA approved but not currently distributed in America. A new levonorgestrel-releasing, two-rod method, Sino Implant, is in clinical development.
- **Emergency Contraceptive Pills (ECPs).** ECPs are hormonal pills, taken either as a single dose or two doses 12 hours apart, that are intended for use in the event of unprotected intercourse. If taken prior to ovulation, the pills can delay or inhibit ovulation for at least 5 days to allow the sperm to become inactive. They also cause thickening of cervical mucus and may interfere with sperm function. ECPs should be taken as soon as possible after semen exposure and should not be used as a regular contraceptive method. Pregnancy can occur if the pills are taken after ovulation or if there is subsequent semen exposure in the same cycle.

### **Intrauterine Methods**

An IUD is a small, T-shaped device that is inserted into the uterus to prevent pregnancy. A health care provider inserts the device. An IUD can remain and function effectively for many years at a time. After the recommended length of time, or when the woman no longer needs or desires contraception, a health care provider removes or replaces the device.

- A **copper IUD** releases a small amount of copper into the uterus, causing an inflammatory reaction that generally prevents sperm from reaching and fertilizing the egg.<sup>4</sup> If fertilization of the egg does occur, the physical presence of the device prevents the fertilized egg from implanting into the lining of the uterus. Copper IUDs may remain in the body for 12 years. A copper IUD is not recommended for women who may be pregnant, have pelvic infections, or had uterine perforations during previous IUD insertions. It also is not recommended for women who have cervical cancer or cancer of

the uterus, unexplained vaginal bleeding, or pelvic tuberculosis. Currently, ParaGard® is the only FDA-approved copper IUD.

- A **hormonal IUD** releases a progestin hormone into the uterus.<sup>4</sup> The released hormone causes thickening of the cervical mucus, inhibits sperm from reaching or fertilizing the egg, thins the uterine lining, and also may prevent the ovaries from releasing eggs. Hormonal IUDs can be used for up to 5 years. Currently, Mirena®, a levonorgestrel-releasing IUD, is the only FDA approved hormonal IUD that is available.

## Sterilization

Sterilization is a permanent form of birth control that either prevents a woman from getting pregnant or prevents a man from releasing sperm. A health care provider must perform the sterilization procedure, which usually involves surgery. These procedures usually are not reversible.

- A **sterilization implant** is a nonsurgical method for permanently blocking the fallopian (pronounced *fuh-LOH-pee-uhn*) tubes.<sup>8</sup> A health care provider threads a thin tube through the vagina and into the uterus to place a soft, flexible insert into each fallopian tube. No incisions are necessary. During the next 3 months, scar tissue forms around the inserts and blocks the fallopian tubes so that sperm cannot reach an egg. After 3 months, a health care provider conducts tests to ensure that scar tissue has fully blocked the fallopian tubes. A backup method of contraception is used until the tests show that the tubes are fully blocked.
- **Tubal ligation** (pronounced *TOO-buhl lahy-GEY-shuhn*) is a surgical procedure in which a doctor cuts, ties, or seals the fallopian tubes. This procedure blocks the path between the ovaries and the uterus. The sperm cannot reach the egg to fertilize it, and the egg cannot reach the uterus.<sup>9</sup>
- **Vasectomy** (*va-SEK-tuh-mee*) is a surgical procedure that cuts, closes, or blocks the vas deferens (pronounced *vas DEF-uh-renz*). This procedure blocks the path between the testes and the urethra (*yoo-REE-thruh*).<sup>10</sup> The sperm cannot leave the testes and cannot reach the egg. It can take as long as 3 months for the procedure to be fully effective. A backup method of contraception is used until tests confirm that there is no sperm in the semen.

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### 1.4.2. Assisted reproductive technology

When, for any reason, a woman is unable to conceive by natural means, she may seek assisted conception. For example, some families or women seek assistance through **surrogacy**, in which a woman agrees to become pregnant and deliver a child for another couple or person.

There are two types of surrogacy: **traditional and gestational**. In traditional surrogacy, the surrogate uses her own eggs *and* carries the child for her intended parents. This procedure is done in a doctor's office through IUI. This type of surrogacy obviously includes a genetic connection between the surrogate and the child. Legally, the surrogate will have to disclaim any interest in the child to complete the transfer to the intended parents. A gestational surrogacy occurs when the intended mother's or a donor egg is fertilized outside the body and then the embryos are transferred into the uterus. The woman who carries the child is often referred to as a gestational carrier. The legal steps to confirm parentage with the intended parents are generally easier than in a traditional because there is no genetic connection between child and carrier.<sup>[15]</sup>

**Sperm donation** is another form of assisted conception. It involves donated sperm being used to fertilise a woman's ova by artificial insemination (either by intracervical insemination or intrauterine insemination) and less commonly by **in vitro fertilization** (IVF), but insemination may also be achieved by a donor having sexual intercourse with a woman for the purpose of achieving conception. This method is known as **natural insemination** (NI).

Mapping of a woman's ovarian reserve, follicular dynamics and associated biomarkers can give an individual prognosis about future chances of pregnancy, facilitating an informed choice of when to have children.<sup>[16]</sup>

### 1.5. Finances

Family planning is among the most cost-effective of all health interventions.<sup>[17]</sup> "The cost savings stem from a reduction in unintended pregnancy, as well as a reduction in transmission of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV".<sup>[17]</sup>

Childbirth and prenatal health care cost averaged \$7,090 for normal delivery in the United States in 1996.<sup>[18]</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that for a child born in 2007, a U.S. family will spend an average of \$11,000 to \$23,000 per year for the first 17 years of child's life.<sup>[5]</sup> (Total inflation-adjusted estimated expenditure: \$196,000 to \$393,000, depending on household income.)<sup>[5]</sup> Breaks down cost by age, type of expense, region of country. Adjustments for number of children (one child — spend 24% more, 3 or more spend less on each child.)

Investing in family planning has clear economic benefits and can also help countries to achieve their “demographic dividend,” which means that countries productivity is able to increase when there are more people in the workforce and less dependents.<sup>[11]</sup> UNFPA says that, “For every dollar invested in contraception, the cost of pregnancy-related care is reduced by \$1.47.”<sup>[11]</sup>

UNFPA states that,

“The lifetime opportunity cost related to adolescent pregnancy – a measure of the annual income a young mother misses out on over her lifetime – ranges from 1 per cent of annual gross domestic product in a large country such as China to 30 per cent of annual GDP in a small economy such as Uganda. If adolescent girls in Brazil and India were able to wait until their early twenties to have children, the increased economic productivity would equal more than \$3.5 billion and \$7.7 billion, respectively.”<sup>[11]</sup>

### **1.6. International oversight**

The world's largest international source of funding for population and reproductive health programs is the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development set the main goals of its Program of Action as:

- Universal access to reproductive health services by 2015
- Universal primary education and ending the gender gap in education by 2015
- Reducing maternal mortality by 75% by 2015
- Reducing infant mortality
- Increasing life expectancy at birth

- Reducing HIV infection rates in persons aged 15–24 years by 25% in the most-affected countries by 2005, and by 25% globally by 2010

The World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank estimate that \$3 per person per year would provide basic family planning, maternal and neonatal health care to women in developing countries. This would include contraception, prenatal, delivery, and post-natal care in addition to postpartum family planning and the promotion of condoms to prevent sexually transmitted infections.<sup>[19]</sup>

## **1.7.Coercive interfering with family planning**

### **1.7.1. Forced sterilization**

Compulsory or forced sterilization programs or government policy attempt to force people to undergo surgical sterilization without their freely given consent. People from marginalized communities are at most risk of forced sterilization.<sup>[20]</sup> Forced sterilization has occurred in recent years in Eastern Europe (against Roma women),<sup>[20][21]</sup> and in Peru (during the 1990s against indigenous women).<sup>[22]</sup> China's one-child policy was intended to limit the rise in population numbers, but in some situations involved forced sterilisation.

### **1.7.2. Sexual violence**

Rape can result in a pregnancy. Rape can occur in a variety of situations, including war rape, forced prostitution and marital rape, and those that result in pregnancy add to the long-term psychological and economic anguish of the victim, besides other things, disturbing her plans for creating a family of her choosing.

In Rwanda, the National Population Office has estimated that between 2,000 and 5,000 children were born as a result of sexual violence perpetrated during the genocide, but victims' groups gave a higher estimated number of over 10,000 children.<sup>[23]</sup>

## **1.8.Family planning, human rights & development**

Access to safe, voluntary family planning is a human right and is central to gender equality, women's empowerment and poverty reduction. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) says that, "Some 225 million women who want to avoid pregnancy are not using safe and effective family planning methods, for reasons ranging from lack access to information or services to lack of support from their partners or communities."<sup>[24]</sup> UNFPA says that, "Most of these women with an unmet need for contraceptives live in 69 of the poorest countries on earth."<sup>[24]</sup>

Over the past 50 years, right-based family planning has enabled the cycle of poverty to be broken resulting in millions of women and children's lives being saved.<sup>[24]</sup>

UNFPA says that, "Global consensus that family planning is a human right was secured at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, in Principle 8 of the Programme of Action: All couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have the information, education and means to do so."<sup>[24]</sup>

As part of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) universal access to family planning is one of the key factors contributing to development and reducing poverty. Family planning creates benefits in areas such as, gender quality and women's health, access to sexual education and higher education, and improvements in maternal and child health.<sup>[24]</sup>

UNFPA and the Guttmacher Institute say that,

"Serving all women in developing countries that currently have an unmet need for modern contraceptives would prevent an additional 54 million unintended pregnancies, including 21 million unplanned births, 26 million abortions (of which 16 million would have been unsafe) and seven million miscarriages; this would also prevent 79,000 maternal deaths and 1.1 million infant deaths."<sup>[25]</sup>

### **1.9.Obstacles to family planning**

There are many reasons as to why women do not use contraceptives. These reasons include logistical problems, limited access to transportation in order to access health clinics, lack of education and knowledge and opposition by partners, families or communities.

UNFPA says that “efforts to increase access must be sensitive to cultural and national contexts, and must consider economic, geographic and age disparities within countries.”<sup>[11]</sup>

UNFPA states that, “Poorer women and those in rural areas often have less access to family planning services. Certain groups — including adolescents, unmarried people, the urban poor, rural populations, sex workers and people living with HIV also face a variety of barriers to family planning. This can lead to higher rates of unintended pregnancy, increased risk of HIV and other STIs, limited choice of contraceptive methods, and higher levels of unmet need for family planning.”<sup>[11]</sup>

#### **1.10. World Contraception Day**

September 26 is designated as World Contraception Day, devoted to raising awareness of contraception and improving education about sexual and reproductive health, with a vision of "a world where every pregnancy is wanted".<sup>[26]</sup> It is supported by a group of international NGOs, including:

Asian Pacific Council on Contraception, Centro Latinoamericano Salud y Mujer, European Society of Contraception and Reproductive Health, German Foundation for World Population, International Federation of Pediatric and Adolescent Gynecology, International Planned Parenthood Federation, Marie Stopes International, Population Services International, The Population Council, The USAID, Women Deliver.<sup>[26]</sup>

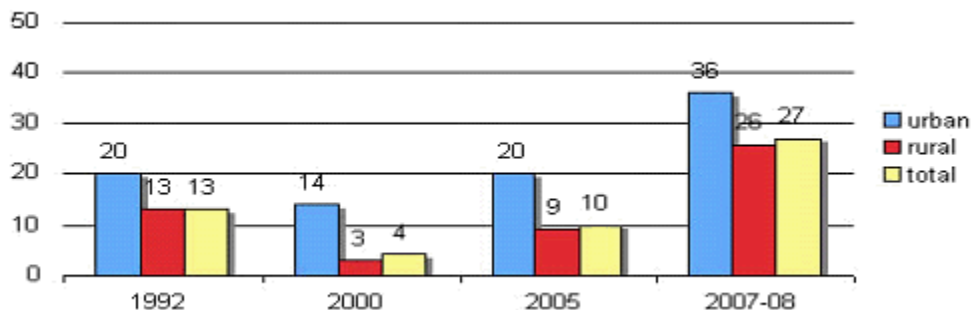


## Chapter 2. Family Planning in Rwanda

### 2.1. Background

In less than 10 years, Rwanda increased contraceptive use at one of the most rapid rates worldwide. The statistics clearly demonstrate the rapid acceleration: The 1992 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) found that 13 percent of married women were using modern contraceptive methods. Following the 1994 genocide, modern method use dropped to only four percent (DHS, 2000), and increased gradually to 10 percent by 2005. Less than three years later, in early 2008, this rate nearly tripled, reaching 27 percent.

Figure 1: Modern method CPR for married women of reproductive age, from DHS reports, 1992 to 2007–2008



This rapid progress was achieved in spite of daunting challenges the country faced in rebuilding its health system after the period of genocide. At the time, Rwanda also faced tremendous social and cultural barriers that inhibited the expansion of voluntary family planning programs. "The government was shy to talk about family planning because so many families had lost loved ones," explained one donor. The culture had always been strongly pronatalist, and the Catholic Church was a vocal critic and barrier to using modern methods of family planning.

### 2.2. How did this happen?

Genocide in Rwanda officially ended in July 1994, but its devastating effects remained for years. People suffered tremendous losses; morale was broken, and the country's infrastructure was destroyed, including human resource capital in all sectors. The fractured health system contributed to high infant and maternal mortality and increased rates of HIV transmission. The country was populated with sprawling camps of internally displaced people and returning refugees from the neighboring camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These factors contributed to widespread poverty, and left many without access to basic necessities such as food, water, and shelter.

Post genocide, the country of Rwanda was in a state of emergency and focused its efforts on rebuilding institutions and addressing areas of high priority for national survival. As the emergency phase ended, the general situation improved, and the government shifted its attention to long-term development issues such as improving access to quality health care, including family planning. It was in this context that President Paul Kagame declared family planning a "national priority."

A firm commitment from the Kagame Government to expand access to voluntary family planning services led to improvements in the supply and quality of services in the country. Family planning gained recognition among the Rwandan people as an essential element of a successful development strategy in one of the most densely populated countries in Africa. With 355 people per square kilometer, "there is no spare meter where you won't meet a person," noted one donor. Family planning was also recognized as essential to reducing the high levels of infant and maternal mortality, both of which had increased post genocide.

**Government Commitment.** Government support at both the national and district levels played a key role in family planning success.

**National-level support.** Government commitment came in many forms. Population growth was prominently addressed in such documents as the government's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy, 2008–2012. Donors, government representatives, parliamentarians and other stakeholders cited the 2005 RAPID model presentation to parliamentarians as a key influencer that graphically demonstrates the impact population growth has on achieving the country's overall development goals. Data from the Reproductive Health Subaccounts, which are part of the larger National Health Accounts analysis, also helped influence policy, as well as advocate for more reproductive health resources. By 2006, the government included a line item in the budget for contraceptives.

**District-level support.** Imihigo is a traditional Rwandan practice in which a person makes a public commitment to do something and is then held accountable for it. The concept has been adapted to design performance-based contracts, also called imihigo, signed between the President of Rwanda and the 30 district mayors on behalf of their constituents. The written contract is recorded publicly with a set of development targets backed by specific performance indicators over a period of one year, including one for family planning use. The imihigo that were introduced as part of the country's new phase of decentralization in April 2006 were not viewed as promises, but seen as concrete and specific targets that the mayors are publicly accountable for meeting. These contracts, accompanied by training of mayors and other district-level authorities in family planning and population issues, are showing great promise. To cite an example from the district of Nyamagabe, from 2006–2007, use of modern contraception increased from 7.2 to 18.4 percent.

**Improving supply and quality.** More women are using family planning services in part because the services are more available and the quality has vastly improved. Both clients and providers talked about the importance of trust – trust that health services will be available, appropriate, and confidential.

**A wider choice of methods is available.** At the national level, the logistics system has been greatly improved and resources have been mobilized to cover the costs of commodities. At the clinic level, one family planning nurse noted that more women come for services because they know that a full range of methods is available. The Gitega Health Center in Kigali noticed client visits increased from 1,312 in 2006 to 2,234 in 2007, a clear indication of family planning's growing popularity. Additionally, expanding access to long-acting methods, such as implants and the IUD, at the health center level has become a priority. Previously, these methods were only available at hospitals. Contrary to cultural norms, there is an ever increasing demand for vasectomy, which is now being offered at some district hospitals.

**Providers have received up-to-date training.** A decentralized training process, using a team of district-level trainers and on-the-job training, facilitated national coverage and minimized disruption to services. A family planning nurse and trainer said the training helps because "there is trust from the clients because the quality is better, since you know what you're talking about." Performance-based financing has also played an important role in motivating providers.

**Improvements are coordinated at a national scale.** There is increased donor support and coordination through the Family Planning Technical Working Group, a planned approach with standardized tools instituted to ensure that providers are trained and facilities are upgraded throughout the country.

**Addressing Demand.** The economic rationale proved to be a powerful persuader for the country's politicians; poverty reduction at the macro level would not be possible if women continued to have more than six children. Even though women who use family planning do not speak the same language as politicians, they do echo the economic arguments made at the micro level: They simply cannot afford large families.

**Involving communities.** A community-provider partnership approach called Partenariat pour l'Amélioration de la Qualité, or PAQ, has promoted improvements in quality and increased use of services at health facilities. This approach brings communities and health providers together as partners to discuss the quality of health care and increase community participation in the planning and management of health facilities. Small-scale success in one-third of the country's districts has led to the inclusion of this approach in the national quality assurance policy and plans for national expansion.

**Working with religious leaders.** A 2007 meeting with religious leaders resulted in a joint declaration that helped reduce religious opposition to family planning. A member of the Rwanda Parliamentarians' Network for Population and Development described the changing attitudes toward family planning among religious leaders: "Where they used to say 'go forth and fill the world,' now they say, 'the world is filled; what do we do?'"

Every country faces its own set of challenges to improve access to voluntary family planning services, but key lessons from Rwanda can inform other programs; its impressive success clearly demonstrates what is possible.

### **3.3.Results and Strategic Framework**

- **Target Group**

The target group for this FP Strategic Plan is principally women of reproductive age (15-49 years) and men (from 15 years). It additionally notes the need to prevent early pregnancies (among adolescent populations) as well as benefits of FP use among most at risk populations, such as sex workers, through contraceptives offering dual protection against pregnancy and HIV.

- **Minimum Package**

This strategy prescribes a range of services to be provided under FP Program as a minimum package. The package of services divided as non-clinical (information) and clinical, and is summarized as follows:

#### **Clinical (or Information) Services**

1. Pre-conception advice and fertility awareness information
2. Confidential advice about contraception
3. Unplanned pregnancy advice
4. Post abortion counseling
5. Female sterilization counseling
6. Vasectomy counseling
7. Confidential advice about sexually transmitted infections

#### **Clinical Services**

1. Contraceptive pills
2. Injections
3. Condoms
4. Emergency contraception
5. Free pregnancy tests
6. Fitting and checking of coils (IUCDs); implant insertion or removal
7. Lactational Amenorrhea Method
8. Standard Days Method
9. Permanent methods for male and female sterilization

- **Vision**

Rwanda's vision for family planning is one in which "all Rwandans contribute to the health and prosperity of their country by being well informed about the broad choice of family planning options, managing their own fertility choices and having equitable access to the services they chose close to where they live."  
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- **Goal and Objectives**

**Goal:** This strategy's goal is to increase the use of FP by Rwandan women of reproductive age group (15–49 years) and increase their male counterparts' involvement in FP programs. To this end, its general objective is to increase modern contraceptive use among women in union to 70% by 2016, through a programmatic framework supporting sustainable service quality, normative demand and an enabling environment.

**Strategic Objectives:** The strategic plan details the steps and priorities that will ensure timely and effective implementation of the National FP Policy and thus facilitate efforts to meet its goal.

The specific objectives of this strategic plan are therefore:

1. Support sustainable FP service delivery systems in both the public and private sectors. (Supply)
2. Increase the correct knowledge, acceptability and use of the full range of FP methods and services in the community. (Demand)
3. Strengthen and sustain a supportive environment for Comprehensive FP Programs. (Environment)
4. Identify and apply innovations, to support effective practices in FP.

This strategic plan draws inspiration and lessons from the performance of Rwanda's rapidly growing FP program. More importantly, it fully considers the priorities highlighted in the current policy and outlines key strategic interventions across its four objectives to address those priorities.

The seven priorities identified by stakeholders include:

1. Ensure sufficient focus and expansion of adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) programs and ensure that they are provided in a youth-friendly manner;
2. Continue to put in place the fundamentals of CBP and scale it up nationwide;
3. Expand distribution of condoms in the public and private sectors;
4. Deepen collaboration with the private sector to provide FP services;
5. Increase access to long-acting and permanent FP methods;
6. Ensure greater integration of FP services with MCH activities, such as immunization, nutrition, well-baby care, fistula care, postabortion care, postpartum, etc.,
7. and promote provider - initiated FP counseling; and promote greater male participation in FP programs.

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## **COMPONENT TWO: SOCIAL PLANNING**

### **Chapter 1. Social Planning and Policy Change**

Sometimes, the impetus for community health and development efforts comes from social planners and policy makers. For instance, data on the level of diseases or educational outcomes may be used to raise issues on the public agenda. This section discusses how social planning approaches can inform change efforts.

#### **1.1. Meaning of Social Planning and Policy Change**

Social planning is the process by which policymakers - legislators, government agencies, planners, and, often, funders - try to solve community problems or improve conditions in the community by devising and implementing policies intended to have certain results. These policies may take the form of laws, regulations, incentives, media campaigns, programs or services, information - a wide range of possibilities. A community or state Board of Health that adopts a regulation banning smoking in particular places, for example, is trying both to protect the public from second-hand smoke and to reduce smoking in general.

There is a long history in the U.S. and elsewhere of social planning. Traditionally, this has meant that policymakers decided what they thought was good for a community or a population, and imposed policy that was meant to bring about the results they wanted. At best, this has meant programs that benefited large numbers of people - Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, Head Start, various public health programs. At worst, social planning has been used largely for the benefit - economic or political - of the policymakers and their friends and supporters.

In other cases, well-intentioned planning has led to negative consequences. Urban renewal in the 1950s and '60s, for instance, by clearing "slum" neighborhoods, was meant to make cities into better places to live - safer, more attractive, and economically healthier. In fact, it often had that effect only for the people who moved into new housing and businesses after the original population had been displaced, and given nowhere else to go. In many cases, it destroyed vital, unblighted communities.



Perhaps the most famous instance of this was the leveling of Boston's West End, an immigrant and first-generation neighborhood profiled in *The Urban Villagers*, a well-known sociological study by Herbert Gans (ironically, first published in 1962, two years after the neighborhood had disappeared). Gans showed how this urban neighborhood functioned like a rural village, with social structures and institutions that made for a strong sense of community, even in the midst of a large, 20th Century city. Generations of immigrants, particularly Italians and Eastern European Jews, had become Americans there, while retaining their cultural and family ties.

Far from being blighted, although it was composed largely of tenements, the neighborhood was a true community with a colorful and lively street life, beloved by its residents. It was knocked down and replaced by a luxury apartment complex bounded by highways and surrounded by a chain-link fence. A sign next to the apartment complex, meant to be seen by people stuck in traffic on one of the highways, reads "If you lived here, you'd be home now." The residents of the West End had been "home now." The fact that, 50 years later, those surviving still publish a newsletter and hold reunions demonstrates just how out of touch the planners were with what was "good for" them.

Social planning, however, doesn't have to take a wholly top-down form. Starting in the 1960's, many social programs carried requirements for community participation in planning and implementing programs and initiatives. (The Model Cities Program, a cornerstone of Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty, is a prime example.) While these requirements were often honored more in the breach than in the observance, they acknowledged that social initiatives work better, and generate better policy, when those affected by them are involved in creating them.

Top-down planning, though well-meaning, may fail to take into account the realities of the situation it is addressing. This failure can stem from:

- Ignorance of the community, and of the fact that what works in one community may not work in another. Community social patterns, history (especially past attempts to deal with the issue in question), or economics may work, individually or in combination, to create a unique situation. That situation has to be understood before the creation of successful policy can follow.

- Ignorance of the lives of those at whom the plan is aimed. The cultural assumptions of immigrant groups, or those from particular ethnic or racial backgrounds, may be totally foreign to those engaged in planning for them. Even if the division between the policymakers and the population at whom their policies are aimed is solely economic, there may be vast differences in the ways they see the world, as well as vast differences in the worlds they inhabit. If policymakers don't understand the culture and assumptions - and real needs - of the people they hope to affect, their policies are doomed to fail.
- Unintended consequences that are not apparent initially. Sometimes, a plan or policy that seems positive on its face has results that are profoundly negative. The public housing complexes erected in the U.S. after World War II were meant to be clean, safe, comfortable residences for low-income citizens. Instead, their institutional character and isolation from the mainstream life of their communities bred alienation and despair in their residents, and led to crime and horrible living conditions.

The Cabrini-Green projects in Chicago, notorious for drugs and crime, were recently torn down and replaced by mixed-income housing designed to be part of the neighborhood, with a fair number of units reserved for former Cabrini-Green residents.

- Policymakers' lack of experience in the field. Practitioners - especially those who also have academic credentials - know that the difference between theory and reality can often be vast. When logical, best-possible-scenario initiatives or interventions come up against underfunding, street culture, political maneuvering, substance abuse, mistrust of outsiders, and turf battles, they don't always work the way planners think they should.

In addition, social planning can be used to further goals that have nothing to do with the welfare or advancement of those who are affected by them. Such goals may be intended to benefit friends or supporters of powerful politicians, or merely to generate political capital. In these cases, they are likely to be badly planned and administered, and to have little effect. On the other hand, the goals may be appropriate and praiseworthy, but aren't effectively addressed because of a lack of skill or will on the part of those assigned to carry them out. Citizen participation can help to prevent the social planning process from failing in these ways.

The Community Tool Box sees social planning and policy change as a partnership between the community and policymakers to create policy that brings about positive social change. As a result, we will look at social planning and policy change from two angles:

- a. From the **policymaker's** perspective, i.e., how to use the social planning process to create policy that achieves its goals with the best positive results for everyone in the community, as well as policymakers themselves.
- b. From a **grassroots** perspective, i.e., how to approach policymakers at the beginning of the process, so that those in the community affected by the policy change can participate in planning and implementing it.

## **1.2. Community and participatory social planning process**

While it would seem obvious that communities and grassroots groups would want to participate in planning and carrying out policy, that's not always the case. They may feel it's someone else's problem, or that they simply don't have the time or energy to be involved in a planning effort. People who haven't had the opportunity to be decision-makers often find the prospect intimidating. Because they haven't had experience in functioning in meetings, planning, and other similar activities, they feel awkward, and find it easier to let others make the decisions. They may also feel that they have little to contribute, or that they won't be listened to even if they are at the table.

It can take time and effort to make it possible for community members to contribute. They may need training and/or mentoring in order to become comfortable with the procedures and assumptions of a participatory process. They may have the skills to participate, but need to be motivated to do so. Establishing trust in the process and the policymakers may require a lot of community organizing - door-to-door canvassing, personal conversations, small meetings in people's houses - before the community is ready to take on the risk or the burden of participation.

The rewards for the community, however, can be great. Many of the reasons for the community to embrace participation are reflections of the reasons why policymakers would want it. Some of them are:

- **Participation provides the opportunity to educate policymakers to the community's real needs and concerns.** As we've discussed, when policymakers plan a vacuum, their plans usually fail, because they don't account for the realities of the situation and the real needs of the population they're aimed at. Community members can help policymakers understand their lives - the difficulties they face, the strengths they bring, and what they feel must be addressed.
- **Participation allows community members to help create policy that really works to meet their needs.** By participating in their development, community members can see policies put in place that actually improve their lives, rather than having no effect or imposing added burdens on them.
- **Participation affords community members the respect they deserve.** Rather than being seen as victims or nuisances, community members engaged in a participatory social planning process are seen as colleagues and concerned citizens working to improve their community. They are respected both as human beings - as should always be the case, but often isn't - and for the skills, knowledge, and effort they contribute to the process.
- **Participation puts community members in control of their own fate.** The participatory social planning and policy development process results in citizens deciding what policies will work for them, and gives them the opportunity to change those policies if they're not working. It puts into practice the motto of the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council in Chicago, founded by legendary organizer Saul Alinsky: "We, the people, will work out our own destiny."
- **Participation builds community leadership from within.** Those who take part in the process both learn and exercise leadership skills, and also start to see themselves as having the capacity to be leaders. The most important step to leadership, and to taking action to influence events that affect you, is to believe that you have the ability to do so.
- **Participation energizes the community to take on other issues or policy decisions in the future, and to see itself as in control of its future.** Thus, the community development process will continue over time.
- **Participation leads to long-term social change.** As community members take more control over more areas of their lives, as a result of the skills and attitudes gained from

the participatory process, they will create and institutionalize changes that improve the quality of life for everyone in the community.

"Community participation" can mean different things to policymakers and to community activists. As discussed briefly above, policymakers can pay lip service to community participation while getting around it or ignoring it. There are, in fact, levels of community participation, and each might be appropriate at different times and in different circumstances.

### **1.3.Policymakers and participatory social planning process**

For a social planning process to be successful, community members should actively participate. Community participation, as we will discuss later in this section, is a process that demands time, commitment, organization, and a good deal of work from everyone concerned. Why, then, is it worth it to policymakers - who usually have the ability to impose their own plans - to involve the community in social planning and policy change?

There are, in fact, a number of compelling reasons, both short- and long-term:

- **Community participation makes it more likely that you'll come up with policy that's effective.** Without the knowledge of the history and social structure of the community that community members can contribute, there's a risk of serious error. Attempting to repeat something that didn't work in the past, or assuming that particular groups will work together, when actually they've been at odds for years, can undermine a community development effort before it starts. Furthermore, community members can inform policymakers and planners of the real needs of the community, so that the most important problems and issues can be addressed.
- **Community participation leads to community ownership and support of whatever initiatives come out of a social planning effort.** When people have a hand in planning and decision-making, they feel that whatever plan is implemented is theirs, and therefore they'll strive to make it work. The same is rarely, if ever, true about plans that are imposed on a community from outside.
- **Policymakers - particularly elected officials - can gain politically from involving the community.** They will be seen as respecting their constituents, and will also gain respect

and credibility if initiatives they sponsor prove effective. If they can help improve the quality of life for community members, their political capital will increase.

- **Community members can inform policymakers about changes in circumstances that demand changes in policy over time.** What is effective or appropriate today may not be in five years. Community participation puts eyes and ears in the community to pick up changes that policymakers may not be aware of, and to keep programs and initiatives from becoming outmoded or stale.
- **Community participation can create community relationships and partnerships among diverse groups who can then work together.** By involving all sectors of the community, it can bring together groups and individuals who would normally not have - or might not want - contact with one another, and help them understand where their common interests lie.
- **Community participation helps keep community building going over the long run.** By placing planning and decision-making power partly or wholly with the community, the process assures that those who started the effort will remain interested and involved, and not be distracted by other issues, or by changes in the political climate.
- **Community participation contributes to institutionalizing the changes brought about by changes in policy.** Community members are far more likely to buy into policy that's been created with the participation of all sectors of the community. Their support over time will lead to permanent change.
- **Community participation energizes the community to continue to change in positive directions.** Once community members see what they can accomplish, they will be ready to take on new challenges. Community participation can change their attitude about what is possible - probably the single most important element to create changes.

#### **1.4. Appropriate Social planning and Policy change**

Unlike locality development and social action, the other two types of community organizing discussed in this chapter, social planning originates with policymakers or their contractors. From a policymaker's point of view, social planning is appropriate when:

- The community asks for it. A community problem may have reached the point where the community feels something needs to be done, and doesn't feel it knows what that is, or that it has the resources to do it. It may ask policymakers or an outside source for help.
- An issue or problem has reached crisis proportions, and it's obvious to everyone that something must be done. It sometimes takes one or more specific events - the riots in many American cities in the spring of 1968, for instance, or the 9/11 terrorist attack - to set a social planning process in motion. In other cases, however, the process may be a response to an ongoing condition (e.g., rising unemployment, or increasing youth crime).
- There is a long-standing major issue - poverty, violence, housing, hunger, etc. - that has attracted policymakers' attention. Because of media publicity or public opinion, elected officials, agencies, or others in a position to do something about it feel the need to respond.

Extreme poverty has always existed in the U.S., but President Johnson's War on Poverty was spurred in part by the 1962 publication of Michael Harrington's book *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*. The book shocked many Americans, who had been unaware of how serious the problem was, and forced the government to take action.

- There are resources made available to address the issue. The federal, state, or local government may decide to appropriate funds for a specific purpose, for instance, or a large foundation might turn its attention - and financial resources - to a specific issue.

The Gates Foundation is currently putting huge amounts of money into eradicating various diseases in the developing world, a fact that makes it necessary to create structures for evaluating research, distributing medication, teaching prevention techniques, and otherwise spending the money effectively.

- A powerful figure - a president or prime minister, a leader in Congress or Parliament, a governor, a mayor - is concerned about a particular problem, issue, or population, and determines to do something about it.

- A strategic or economic planning process that policymakers engage in determines that a particular issue must be addressed, or that particular communities or populations need some kind of assistance.
- It becomes apparent - on the municipal, state or provincial, or federal level - that there is a general economic, social, and/or environmental downhill slide that needs to be stopped.

Social planning can be appropriate from a community perspective at all these times as well. If the community has not already initiated some action - either to address the problem or to get help in doing so - it may need outside assistance in order for anything to happen.

### **1.5.Stakeholders in social planning and policy change**

Again, social planning is different from both locality development and social action. In locality development, all sectors of the population in a town or area - rich and poor, young and old, male and female, all races and ethnicities, etc. - should be represented in the effort. In social action, the necessary participants are only individuals and organizations that represent the particular population that is working to gain power. The number and character of the important participants in a social planning process fall somewhere between these two extremes

For social planning to work well, both policymakers and all stakeholders should at least be invited to participate; the more are actually represented, the better. "Stakeholders" is a term that includes all of those directly affected in some way by the potential policy changes or by the issues under discussion. Some examples of stakeholders include:

- Those whom a policy is meant to benefit.
- Those whom a policy is meant to control in some way. Land use policy, for instance, may place restrictions on developers, so they should be represented in discussing and creating it, although their voice should not dominate. They are one interested party among many.
- Those who will have to administer or enforce the policy.
- Those who work with or serve a population that is directly affected by a policy. This category may include health or human service workers, educators, clergy, etc.
- Organizations or businesses that stand to gain or lose revenue or other resources, or will have to alter their mode of operation because of a potential change in policy.



- Policymakers and public officials.

Although policymakers are usually public officials, that is not always the case. A large corporation develops and implements internal policies that may affect thousands of people. Individuals or organizations that own large tracts of land or important buildings may institute policies about their use that have an impact on whole municipalities.

### **1.6. Effective involvement of policymakers in social planning and policy change**

As a policymaker, you may have concerns over and above the outcomes of whatever policy you establish. You probably have to keep an eye on costs, deadlines, political fallout, and other factors that influence policy, but don't necessarily relate to whether a particular policy is workable, or whether it benefits or harms those it's aimed at. It may be tempting to skip community participation entirely, and simply create a plan and impose it on the community.

As tempting as it is to save time and be "efficient," it usually makes more sense to spend the time necessary to have everyone involved enthusiastically backing - or at least accepting - any new policy and willing to support it when it is put in place. You're likely to be most successful if you think and behave more like a community organizer, and less like an expert who knows what's good for the community.

Community participation is an important goal for almost any community organizer, and community participation starts one person at a time. In the previous section, we describe the process for making contacts, building trust in the community, and ultimately involving all sectors in community assessment and in the planning, carrying out, and evaluation of activities and policies aimed at improving the quality of life. Policymakers, if they're serious about community involvement and participation, should engage in that process as well.

As a policymaker, you have advantages and disadvantages in this process. You're a known quantity, so people are not likely to be confused about your involvement, but since you're a known quantity, with a reputation in the community that may not always be positive, you may be distrusted from the start. You'll have to overcome that, and convince people of your good will in order to get anything going, which may lead them to fear contact with anyone official.

For these reasons, and because you're coming into a community with an idea of what area you're going to address, the process of organizing is a little different than it might be for either locality development or social action. Something is going to go forward; the organizing task here is to involve the community, and particularly stakeholders, as much as possible in every phase of the effort, and to be guided, to the greatest extent feasible, by their knowledge and needs.

There's a fine line here. The fact that people are community members doesn't mean that they necessarily have good answers to all their problems, or to the issues facing them. It does mean, however, that they generally have the best perspective on what their lives are like in relation to those problems and issues, and on what actually happens in the community. If you want the community to run the effort completely - and community-run efforts can be extremely effective - you may have to sponsor or provide some training for those participating. This depends greatly on the community, but if the one in question includes many low-income residents, or many immigrants whose language or culture is significantly different from that of the general population, you may find that a lot of people need some support in order to participate fully.

Once people become relatively sophisticated about what is possible and about dealing with the various systems - political, financial, social and otherwise - they're more likely to be able to find their own solutions. A community that's already had experience in this area is probably ready to undertake an effort on its own, and might need only financial and/or political support. One that's never had the experience, or even been offered the opportunity, will need much more.

It's absolutely crucial to be respectful and to treat community members as partners, but that doesn't mean sacrificing best practices or your past experience, any more than it means ignoring the community. It's a delicate balance, but if you can strike it properly, both you and the community will be pleased with the process and the results.

You may be working through one or more local organizations, or through a government or other agency that has a presence in the community. Your credibility may depend on that of the organization or agency, so choose carefully. If the only consideration is political, you may end up with a process that has no concern for community participation, or even active opposition. (Chicago's Mayor Richard Daley got around the community participation

requirement in the Model Cities Program by appointing a "community representative" board of political hacks that answered only to him.)

The bottom line is that people have to believe you're serious about including them, and you have to be serious about it. If you promise community involvement and don't follow through, or provide only token participation, whatever trust-building you've done will probably evaporate, and you'll have start over again. Once again, for a full discussion of the levels of community participation, what they imply, and how and when they might be used.

### **1.7.How-to steps for policymakers to involve the community:**

The steps below refer to policymakers as "you." The "you" here might be the policymaker herself, or whoever has initiated the social planning process. The actual people doing the "organizing" might be employees of a public agency, the staff of a community-based organization funded to help develop local policy on a particular issue, local officials, etc.

- **Make contact with agencies, organizations, and individuals that know the community well, and use their knowledge and credibility to ease your way in.** They can help you to avoid making the kinds of tactical errors that your lack of familiarity with the community can easily lead to. They can also introduce you to the people whose opinions matter to those whom you want to involve, as well as to potential participants.
  - The same caution applies here as applies for all community organizers: make sure you're getting all sides of the story and making contact with all the people you need to. Community leaders, for instance, may not want, at least initially, to work with gang leaders on ending youth violence, but if the gang leaders aren't involved, it's unlikely that the effort will go anywhere. Spread your network wide, and use all your contacts to make sure you're reaching everyone, not just those that your initial contacts want you to.
- **Make your goals and process clear in small meetings that lead up to a larger one.** Meet both with formal groups - clubs, fraternal organizations, sports teams, faith-based groups, participants in health and human service programs, unions and other workers' groups, classes - and with families and groups of friends in people's living

rooms or similar informal settings. Take a trusted community member with you, or make sure one is hosting or attending the meeting, to vouch for you.

- **Hold a community meeting to explain your purpose and start recruiting community members to participate in assessment and planning.** Encourage as many of the people you've talked to as possible to attend, and plan to ask for a commitment from people who are willing to be involved in the process. It might make sense for a someone local to convene and run the meeting - a respected community leader or community member, or a particularly good facilitator.
  - The meeting should explain clearly the issue or problem that needs to be addressed, and the participatory process by which you intend to address it. The audience should have an opportunity to ask questions, and should be asked for their thoughts on the issue, on what kinds of outcomes they'd like to see, and on how the process might take place. This is the time to recruit members of the planning group, and to ask people to pull in others they know. Ideally, you've already gotten a train of support through the smaller meetings. With this large meeting, the goal is to get the community at large on board and agree to be involved.
- **Schedule the next community meeting, and start the planning process.** You should continue to hold community meetings at regular intervals to inform those who aren't directly involved in the planning about what's happening. At the same time, a planning group, representing all the sectors and groups that will be affected by the policies they come up with, should begin to meet to hash out logistics (meeting times and places, a timeline), procedures (how decisions are made, how and by whom the process will be coordinated), and define their task. Part of the groups' job at the beginning is to determine what kind of support it needs. Will members need training? Are there things that they should know (best practices, for instance, or the results of research on the issue)?
  - The composition of the planning group is important. It should be truly representative of all stakeholders, and that may mean you or members of the group have to recruit or persuade others to join. People opposed to the process should be included, even though that may seem like a bad idea. If the group

establishes proper ground rules at the beginning, it should be possible to conduct productive discussion, and for those with opposing ideas to feel that the process is fair and inclusive, even if their ideas are not adopted.

- **Provide whatever training or support is necessary.** Depending on the people involved, you may want to pair less-educated or low-income folks with mentors from health or human service agencies, or simply to provide training in meeting skills, strategic planning, conflict resolution, and/or other areas to everyone, to avoid singling out any individual or group. Training and support serve at least two purposes: to make sure all involved have the intellectual and social tools they need for the task at hand; and to ensure the continued involvement of all the groups affected, not just those who are educated and used to participating in meetings and social processes.
  - Depending upon the scope of the change you're concerned with and the level of community involvement you're aiming for, you may not need to go through all these steps. In some cases, just keeping the community informed - through regular meetings, the media, an e-mail list - may be enough. In others, one or two public meetings with the opportunity for community input may be all you need. If you're hoping for full participation, however, taking the steps above makes sense.

### **1.8. Effective involvement of communities in social planning and policy change**

When the initiative comes from policymakers, the situation is somewhat different, since the issue of community participation may not be on the planner's agenda. So in good measure, it's up to community leaders and activists to raise the issue and make sure the community becomes part of the process. If policymakers resist the idea, and can't be swayed by logic or argument, then it may be time to switch to social action mode. It's generally far more productive, however, if policymakers and the community can work as partners, rather than as adversaries.

### **1.9. How-to steps for community leaders and activists to ensure community involvement:**

- **Get to know and maintain contact with policymakers from the beginning, so that when issues of policy arise, you'll have an open communication line.** Congresspersons, state legislators, city councilors, county commissioners, mayors

aldermen, selectmen, members of municipal boards - all are concerned with what citizens think, and all are accessible at least some of the time. If you make the effort, you can meet them and get to know them well enough so that they'll recognize you in a crowd, return your phone calls, and be willing to discuss issues with you. When they initiate a policy change process, you'll be able to approach them about making it participatory, and be heard.

- **Try to anticipate the community's policy needs, and approach policymakers before they have decided to act.** As a community member, you're apt to know more about the community than a policymaker, and to know what's needed and when. If you initiate the conversation about policy change, you may have a much better chance of initiating a participatory planning process as well.
- **Equip yourself with as much information as possible, both about the benefits of a participatory process and about the issue itself.** Read the research and literature about social change policy and inclusive, participatory process. Learn what other communities have done, search the web for best practices, etc. The more knowledge you have, the more convincing you can be.
- **Mobilize the community.** Preach the gospel of participatory process to your fellow citizens, so that they'll stand with you in demanding to be involved in any policy decisions that affect them. If it's obvious that the community wants to be involved, it is ready to put in the necessary work, and will support the implementation of the resulting policy, it will be hard for policymakers to resist.

### 1.10. Summary

Social planning can be an effective means of community organization and development, and of policy change, if it's entered into in a spirit of partnership with the community. If, as either a policymaker or a community builder, you can make it a truly inclusive and participatory process, chances are that it will have long-lasting, positive results for both policymakers and the community.

## References (Chapter 1)

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## **Chapter2. Social Action**

Sometimes, the best way to inspire change is to confront decision makers in a concerted action. This is called social action, and can range from organizing a letter-writing campaign to assembling tens of thousands of people in the state or national capital to protest government actions. This section looks at organizing communities to engage in social action - why and how to do it, when it's appropriate, and what it might accomplish.

### **2.1.Definition**

Social action is the practice of taking action – usually as part of an organized group or community – to create positive change. Sometimes social action can lead to profound social change, as in the case of the Civil Rights Movement; sometimes social action seeks more limited and specific changes – the preservation of an open space, for example, or better pay for a specific group of workers.

Social action, by its nature, is often practiced by those who either traditionally have little power in society – the poor, minorities, or people with disabilities, for example – but it may also be used by any group that feels its concerns are being ignored. By working together, members of these groups can exercise power collectively because of their numbers, using the media, their votes, boycotts, and other types of social, political, and economic pressure to convince those in power to rethink their positions.

A few of the numerous reasons that a group might engage in social action:

- To include in policy considerations, the interests of those who have traditionally been ignored in these discussions, most often low-income and minority communities.
- To institute fairer policies and eliminate discrimination.
- To right past wrongs, as in providing apologies and restitution to Japanese-Americans who were unfairly – and unconstitutionally – interned in concentration camps in the American West during World War II.
- To prevent harm to the community. This might mean challenging the siting of an industrial facility because of pollution concerns, for instance.



- To gain particular benefits to the community, or a part of the community, sometimes on quite a small scale.
- To preserve something of historical or social value.
- To include in policy deliberations those who have been previously shut out, as in, for example, involving minority citizens on a police review board.

These are only a small number of the nearly endless possible reasons for engaging in social action. Just as there are many reasons you might take action, there are many different kinds of action you might take, ranging from explaining your situation to policy makers to confronting force with civil disobedience. Some examples:

- Organizing a group to write letters, make phone calls, or send e-mails to policy makers, particularly legislators, in order to make both your position and the extent of your constituency known.
- Persuading the media to cover events or to publish stories that highlight particular issues or embarrass politicians and others in power who refuse to do what's right. You might also plan events particularly to attract the media.
- Putting together or backing a slate of candidates for public office. This may entail anything from stuffing envelopes to going door to door discussing the issues to driving voters to the polls.
- Attending, as a group (or packing or disrupting, depending on your philosophy and the circumstances), a public meeting at which an issue of interest to your community is being discussed.
- Performing street theater. Street theater, as its name implies, is theater performed in public that is meant to ridicule the opposition and/or to convey a profound message in a way that is easily understood and entertaining. It goes back at least to ancient Greece, continued through the Middle Ages in morality plays and puppet shows, and has been used in modern times, particularly since the mid-Twentieth Century, for political protest.

The Bread and Puppet Theater, now based in Vermont, was known particularly during the Vietnam War for its political street productions featuring huge puppets and its custom of sharing bread with the audience.

- Organizing demonstrations, rallies and marches. The “classic” social actions, these often involve signs, speeches, entertainment, and/or elements of street theater.
- Picketing or organizing a strike. These are, of course, time-honored labor tactics, usually applied to a particular plant or corporation or industry. There is also the possibility of a general strike – a situation where everyone in a group, a community, or even a whole country, refuses to work for a day, a few days, or indefinitely until those in power accede to demands.
- Organizing a boycott. Named after Charles Boycott, a British land agent in Ireland who was ostracized (i.e., no Irish would deal or communicate with him) for his policies, a boycott consists of refusing to deal or trade with a company (or a city, state, or country) that the boycotters believe is doing something morally wrong.
- Organizing a sit-in. Often an act of civil disobedience, this involves a group occupying a space – perhaps the office of an official who made or represents a policy the group is protesting, perhaps a courtyard or a particular building or a park – in order to make a moral point, to assert their right to use the space, or to force the owners of the space (or public officials) to negotiate or meet their demands. The act becomes civil disobedience if the group is trespassing on the space they occupy.

**Civil disobedience** is a particular kind of action in which the group engaged intentionally breaks the law as an act of conscience. They might do so because they are protesting the law itself, or because they want to make the strongest statement possible about an issue. Civil disobedience is only effective as a strategy if those who practice it are willing to accept the consequences of their actions, and face arrest, trial, and possible punishment. Otherwise, they are simply lawbreakers, and their protest loses its moral force.

Social action is probably what most people think of when they hear the term “community organizing.” It is the type of organizing that Saul Alinsky, Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King, and other well-known 20th Century organizers primarily engaged in. It is meant to empower people who have been shut out of the political or social system, and help them gain control of their lives and destinies. For this reason, the “Iron Rule” of community organizing is never to do for people what they can do for themselves.

The father of modern community organizing was Saul Alinsky, who, in the late 1930's, drew together a neighborhood of mutually hostile Eastern European slaughterhouse workers in Chicago into the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council. Alinsky used existing organizations – unions, churches, and fraternal organizations – to create a political power base for workers who had been abused and exploited. The results were better working conditions and pay, neighborhood improvement, self-respect, and an organization that still exists.

Citizens for New York City, a resource for NYC neighborhoods has several tip sheets on various aspects of neighborhood organizing.

Alinsky's type of organizing is based on building political power and using it to confront authority – generally through employing social action – and, if necessary, force those in power to negotiate. This kind of organizing is still widely used and still effective, especially in situations where power has long been in the same hands. The larger organization that Alinsky founded to carry his work around the country, the Industrial Areas Foundation, explains its strategy on its website:

*"The IAF is non-ideological and strictly non-partisan, but proudly, publicly, and persistently political. The IAF builds a political base within society's rich and complex third sector - the sector of voluntary institutions that includes religious congregations, labor locals, homeowner groups, recovery groups, parents associations, settlement houses, immigrant societies, schools, seminaries, orders of men and women religious, and others. And then the leaders use that base to compete at times, to confront at times, and to cooperate at times with leaders in the public and private sectors."*

This is probably as good an explanation as any of what social action is meant to do.

## **2.2. Why should you engage in social action?**

Social action can sometimes be confrontational and combative. It can even be dangerous at times, as evidenced in the many bloody beatings at the hands of mobs and police experienced by Civil Rights marchers and organizers in the 1960's, and in the violence deployed against striking farm workers in California in the 1960's and '70's. If you choose to practice civil disobedience,

you could possibly get arrested, and have to pay a fine, or go to jail. Even in the mildest of circumstances – sending letters to the Editor, for instance – you might make your neighbors angry, or be seen as an extremist. So why would you choose to use these methods?

There are several reasons why social action is often the appropriate choice:

- **It can empower and energize populations that have traditionally been powerless, or haven't understood their potential for exercising power.** The experience of participating in an action – especially if it's successful – can be uplifting for people who've never thought they could influence the course of events. It can change the way they look at themselves, and give them a different perspective on what's possible. And it can prepare and sustain them for along struggle to achieve far-reaching goals.

This can be true even for people who may not have been part of the original action. Witnessing what people like themselves can accomplish may inspire others either to join the current effort, or to join – or even start – similar efforts in the future.

- **It can unify communities.** Collective action brings people together in the way that many collaborative activities do. It creates a spirit of shared effort and shared passion, and binds individuals into a community of shared purpose.
- **It can demonstrate to the larger community that the organized group is a force to be reckoned with.** People have to respect and deal with its needs and interests, even if they don't agree with them.
- **It may be the only thing that will move a stubborn opponent.** The targets of social action may have been in power for a long time, or may believe that things were simply meant to be the way they are. It may take a long campaign of action to convince them that they have to address your concerns.

Arkansas Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) worked for years in Little Rock and across Arkansas to organize previously hostile groups – low- and moderate-income blacks and whites, who didn't at first realize that their interests were similar – and to gain and consolidate enough power to achieve increasingly significant victories. The power structure was not only uninterested in the needs of the poor, but much of the state was, in the 1970's, still the

unreconstructed South, with its segregationist attitudes intact. ACORN used the law, reinforced by social action, to make its points and work for economic justice. No amount of polite talking would have convinced the Little Rock power structure of the time that they should change their attitudes.

- **It may be seen as morally necessary.** Social action can be hard and unpopular. People generally engage in it because they believe their cause is right, and may see it as their moral duty to do something about it.

When the writer and naturalist Henry David Thoreau was jailed for refusing to pay a tax to support the Mexican War, his friend Ralph Waldo Emerson, the philosopher, asked him “Why are you in there?” Thoreau replied with his own question: “Why are you not in here?” He clearly saw his action as a moral issue.

- **It can motivate people to take other kinds of positive action.** Once people realize that they can influence what happens in their world, they become willing to take on other kinds of tasks – starting cooperatives, rehabilitating derelict housing, cleaning up neighborhoods. They begin to understand that they have the resources to solve many of their own problems, and they develop the motivation and skills to use those resources.
- **It can be the beginning of a process that ends in a more unified larger community.** Once a group has established its strength and made clear that it can't be pushed, there is a possibility of accommodation and eventual collaboration with those who were once its opponents.
- **It can lead to long-term positive social change.** Social action, like other forms of community organizing, generally has long-term as well as short-term goals. While the purpose of a particular action might be narrowly defined, the long-term goals of most organizing are greater equity and social and economic justice. A well-managed social action campaign that maintains its momentum over the long haul can result in a truly democratic society, where everyone's voice counts. Once again, the prime example in our time was the Civil Rights movement, which, through action that demonstrated its moral force, moved the whole country to demand an end to segregation and racism.

In another example from ACORN, the association's initial actions were aimed at obtaining the furniture and clothing for welfare recipients that they were entitled to under Arkansas law. As ACORN grew stronger and added more groups to its membership, it advocated for the rights of working-class homeowners, and stopped the construction of a power plant that would have devastated farming in its area. At this point, it has expanded to 75 cities in the U.S. and other countries, and works for affordable housing, fair lending, living-wage jobs, and better schools, among other causes. From modest beginnings, the effort has grown to encompass all aspects of economic and social justice.

Just as there are many reasons to engage in social action, there may be many reasons not to. In general, it makes sense to use the least aggressive method possible to achieve your goals. If you can get most of what you're after by collaboration and compromise, you can retain a positive relationship with the opposition, and they'll be more likely to be willing to negotiate the next time. Therefore, social action should only be used when it's necessary. Some times when social action would be unwise:

- When you can get what you want by lower-key means – negotiation, acceptable trade-offs, persuasion, compromise, etc.
- When you don't have the strength to mount a convincing social action. If you don't have a large enough group to exert any power, for instance, you still have organizing work to do before you're ready to take action.
- When you're operating on rumor rather than fact. Make sure you know that you're taking action about something real, rather than gossip or fourth-hand reports. You can discredit your whole effort by failing to check your facts.
- When an action, even if successful, could have disastrous social or political consequences. In some instances, you could gain your immediate demand at the cost of creating a backlash that drives your cause back beyond where you started. Social action may still be warranted here – the Civil Rights Movement certainly could be described in these terms, especially at the beginning – but you should be aware of its consequences, both to your cause and to the individuals and groups involved.

### 2.3. When should you engage in social action?

- **When negotiation and reason don't produce satisfactory results.** Sometimes, being reasonable just doesn't work. For whatever reason – fear, anger, the impulse to protect privileges, prejudice, political philosophy – your opponent won't listen or respond to your concerns, or won't go far enough to truly address the issue.
- **When time is short.** The chainsaws are already running to devastate that patch of old-growth forest; the wrecking ball is swinging toward the wall of that historic building; legislators are about to cut food stamps to pay for disaster relief. In these cases and many like them, action may be the only quick way to draw attention to the short-sightedness or injustice of what's about to happen.

The implication here is that time may be short because what's about to happen can't be reversed once it's done. You might be able to change a law, or to challenge it in court; but you can't bring back an old-growth forest or a historic building.

- **When the time is right.** The issue may be gaining recognition in the media or public opinion, or public opinion may be changing in your favor. You may have a window of opportunity here. An action at the right time can solidify support, and really put your effort over the top.
- **When you have the resources to make action possible.** Just having the resources—enough people, money, media contacts, etc. – is hardly an excuse for engaging in action, but it's a necessary foundation for doing so.
- **When you want to make a dramatic statement that will focus public attention.** Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the bus to a white man, but that wasn't what eventually integrated public transportation in Montgomery, Alabama. It was the year-long bus boycott carried out by black citizens of the city that led to an end to segregated buses. The boycott caught the attention of the nation, and affected business in Birmingham. Ultimately, the case was decided in federal court and black citizens won: public transportation in Montgomery was integrated, and the boycott ended.
- **When you want to energize and empower the community, and develop community leadership.** Social action gets people moving. It makes them feel strong, and makes them

less likely to submit meekly to the rules and demands of those in power. It gives people responsibility for their own lives and actions, and brings out their leadership potential.

- **When you want to catch the attention of the public – and the media – and galvanize public opinion in your favor about an issue or about your organization or community.** In the barrage of news reports and disasters that assaults the public consciousness every day, it's easy for your message, or even your existence, to get lost. Social action can make people aware of your cause and your community.

Until the grape boycott organized by Cesar Chavez and the United Farm workers Union (UFW) in 1967, few people were aware of the plight of migrant workers. Chavez's action not only made headlines, but also recruited millions of Americans to the UFW's cause, and forced the grape growers and the state of California to recognize the union and negotiate better pay and working conditions for farm workers.

#### **2.4. Who should engage in social action?**

Social action is most effective when those who engage in it are those whose interests are at stake. This is a case where the Iron Rule definitely applies. Not only should those who engage in action stand to be affected by it, but they should be the ones who decide that action is necessary. They should understand what the possible consequences of the action are – from compromising their cause to political backlash to physical danger – and should make the decision as to whether the risks are worth the potential benefits.

There are really two constituencies to organize here. Alinsky approached already-existing organizations in the community – unions, fraternal and service organizations, churches – and enlisted their members through them. But in the efforts of Cesar Chavez and others to organize farm workers and gain concessions from growers, organizing usually had to concentrate on individuals.

Migrant workers had no organizations to draw on until the union brought them together. Because they had no permanent homes and because workers often split and went in different directions, depending on where the work was, they had little opportunity to form long-lasting groups. The growers quickly fired anyone who engaged in anything that looked like union organizing;



churches couldn't travel from Arizona to Oregon to California with the workers. As a result, organizers had to approach workers as individuals and small groups in order to form an organization that could plan and coordinate the actions that eventually improved conditions.

The answer to who should be involved in social action, then, is both organizations and institutions that include and represent the community in question, and individuals who can form groups where there are none.

## **2.5. How do you engage in social action?**

Social action is different from locality development...but not entirely. Both start with the most important parts of community organizing – getting to know the community and its individual members, making personal contacts, and establishing trust both with and among community members. The steps to getting the community involved are discussed in detail in Section 2 of this chapter, Locality Development. We'll review them briefly here, and add some details that are specific to organizing for social action.

Once the community is involved and a structure for action has been created – and it's been determined from that process that social action is what's needed in this situation – planning is the next step. Plans then have to be turned into action, and your strategy carried out. Finally, you have to follow up, evaluate what you've done, and decide what your next step will be.

### **2.5.1. *Preparing for social action***

- **Get to know the community.** Learn community history, passions, relationships, and culture. Get acquainted with as many individuals as possible – have conversations not just about politics or social issues, but about families, sports, relationships, and your own histories. In other words, make friends as you would in any other circumstances.
- **Identify the issues that are likely to lead the community to social action.** The assumption behind organizing is that this is a community that has traditionally felt powerless. What is important enough to move people to act?

The answer to this question, if it is to lead to anything, must come from the community itself. In meetings with individuals and groups, especially those in which community members discuss issues with one another, the major community concerns should surface. It is sometimes an organizer's job to frame these concerns in terms that resonate with community members. Just as often, however, they're already clear to nearly everyone, and the organizer's task is to help people understand that they can take action.

- **Identify and contact key individuals and groups.** Starting with trusted and respected individuals and groups gives you automatic access to much of the community. If the priest or another key individual vouches for you, or if you're working with a well-known and well-respected community-based organization or institution, you have credibility. In addition, these individuals and groups can help you avoid making damaging mistakes by informing you about relationships within the community, past failures and successes relating to organizing and the issues at hand, and other factors that might affect your effort.

As we discussed earlier in this section, whether you concentrate on individuals or groups may depend on the situation of the community you're approaching. Where groups exist – churches, unions, community-based health and human service organizations, fraternal and service organizations, etc. – most organizers would try to use them as a base, since they already have members and structure. Where there are no or few functioning groups, key individuals are much more important, both in gaining access to others in the community, and in bringing people together.

Even where there are many groups in the community, your first contacts will usually be with individuals. How those individuals – clergy persons, organization directors, business owners – view you may well determine whether their organizations will join the effort. Thus, establishing relationships with key individuals is often the first step toward successful community organizing.

- **Recruit community members to the effort.** This is the heart of any community organizing campaign. It involves personal contact, in the form of door-to-door

canvassing, meetings in people's houses, public meetings, conversations in bars and laundromats, etc. There is no substitute for face-to-face communication, for honesty about your purposes and goals, for personal openness and lack of pretension, and for treating people with respect. It's difficult to build trust from a distance.

You also can't build trust based on false premises. Be whoever you are – don't try to pretend you've grown up working class, for instance, if you haven't. What many would-be organizers often don't understand is that you don't have to pretend. Be comfortable with yourself and others will be comfortable with you, regardless of who you are, as long as it's clear that you respect them for who they are. Be willing to learn, and others will be willing to teach. Never talk down to anyone, but don't hesitate to use what you know in the service of your effort and the people you're working with.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the courtier Polonius is often mocked for his pomposity by both characters in the play and audiences. If you pay careful attention, however, you realize he is both honorable and wise. In his advice to his son, he speaks lines that are remarkably relevant to anyone who wants to engage in community organizing: "This above all: to thine own self be true,/ And it must follow, as the night the day,/ Thou canst not then be false to any man."

Recruiting community members may take some time. Gaining the trust of a community, especially of a community that has been abused or ignored or treated with contempt by outsiders, is not an overnight task. Organizing often proceeds one individual or household at a time. You make a friend, who then introduces you to his friends, who then...

This may take a while, but it will eventually snowball, if you're doing your job well, and if the people you recruit truly feel that the effort belongs to them. For this reason, it's extremely important not to approach a community with a plan for what the community should do, but to wait for direction to come from the people themselves.

Saul Alinsky, in organizing the Back of the Yards Neighborhood Council (BYNC) in Chicago in 1939, partnered with Joe Meegan, the respected manager of a local park. As individuals and organizations were recruited, it was clear that the people would make the decisions about what

direction the organization would take and what it would do. The motto of the BYNC was (and still is), “We the people will work out our own destiny.”

- **Build a communication system.** As you recruit individuals and groups and start to plan and carry out a social action strategy, it becomes crucial that people be able to contact one another, and that news can be spread quickly and efficiently to everyone. Having a way to make that happen – whether by phone, e-mail, or personal contact – will make your work possible.
- **Encourage leadership from the community from the beginning.** Some of the key individuals you contact may not be identified as “community leaders,” but maybe trusted individuals whom people listen to. They are already leaders, with or without the title. In addition, many others have the potential for leadership, or exercise leadership in certain situations or with certain groups. The sooner you can identify and start to mentor and encourage these real or potential leaders, the sooner the community will begin to “work out its own destiny.”
- **Create a structure to help the community accomplish its goals.** Once the number of individuals and groups committed to the effort reaches a critical mass, it’s time to pull them together into an organization or other structure that will make it possible for them to hash out differences and plan and implement a unified social action strategy.

The other great advantage of an organization or other structure is that it provides coordination and a focal point for whatever the community does. If there are negotiations with those in power, for instance, the organization can represent the whole community, rather than each of several groups negotiating separately. This allows the community to speak with one voice, and gives it a great deal more clout than if it were divided into a number of interest groups.

### 2.5.2. *Planning for social action*

Sometimes, social action arises from circumstance. The Czech opposition had for decades been hoping and planning for the spontaneous demonstrations of the “Velvet Revolution” of 1989 that led to the downfall of the Communist government. Leaders were available, and there were plans

for a transition to non-Communist government, but there had been no planning for the huge demonstrations. They were a public reaction to the brutal repression of a student demonstration and to the demise of the Communist stranglehold in much of the Eastern Bloc.

On the other hand, when Wade Rathke arrived in Little Rock to start what became ACORN, he had no illusions about a spontaneous movement arising. He spent time recruiting organizations and individuals, identifying the important issues, forging alliances among groups that had previously been mutually hostile – particularly across racial lines – and planning with the community the ways in which they would approach the goals they had identified as most important and most reachable.

Whether it takes place over a long or a short period, planning is an important part of a social action campaign. Once you've laid the groundwork, and the community has organized, it's time to strategize.

- **Develop a strategic plan for social action.** A social action campaign is just that. It's likely that the community's ultimate goals are long-term, and focus on permanent changes that will lead to social and economic justice. Goals that significant can't be achieved quickly, or with only limited action. You'll need a long-term strategy, as well as a strategy and action plan for reaching each of the interim goals that lead to the final outcome.

We recommend the VMOSA process – develop a shared Vision; establish the Mission of your organization or initiative, based on the community vision; choose Objectives that reflect your vision and mission; formulate a Strategy for reaching those objectives; and devise Actions that will implement your strategy. Each element of this process should be carried out with the participation of – and, ideally, under the leadership of – the community, so that all of the plan is theirs. Organizers can play an important role as consultants and facilitators here, using their experience and expertise to help community members envision both short- and long-term goals, as well as what kinds of strategies and actions they might employ to reach those goals.

Some community organizers and community-building organizations limit their work to training organizers from within the community. The Highlander Center trained many of the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement, and continues to bring together and train activists from all over the country. The Direct Action and Research Training Center (DART), based in Miami, and the Chicago-based National Training and Information Center (NTIC) both provide training and technical assistance to community leaders and others interested in organizing within their own communities. Many other organizations, including the Industrial Areas Foundation, PICO National Network (formerly the Pacific Institute for Community Organizations), Chicago-based Midwest Academy, and ACORN provide community organization training in addition to their community-building work.

- **Decide what kinds of actions will work best in your community, and what kinds of actions the community is and is not willing to take part in.** There is a broad range of possible actions that a community can take. At one end are those actions that simply announce that the community exists as a unified force – letter-writing, calls or visits to officials relating to a legislative issue, etc. These actions require coordination and timing, but don't ask anyone to subject themselves to any risk or public exposure. At the other end are acts of civil disobedience that may subject people to arrest and/or place them in physical danger.

As a community, it's important to know what you're willing to do at any given time. This will depend on:

- What is likely to be effective. Acts of violence against property are highly symbolic, but seldom convince the opposition of anything, and often split your own group, so that their effectiveness in most communities is questionable.
- What community members see as ethical or moral. The whole concept of nonviolent resistance, used by Gandhi and emulated by Martin Luther King and his colleagues in the American Civil Rights Movement, is based on the premise that violence against others is simply wrong, and would rob their movement of any moral force if they used it.

- What they will accept and are ready for. This is related to the bullets both above and below, but has more to do with the social and cultural norms of the community. Some groups may have strong taboos against confrontation or against individuals standing out from the group, for example, and social action strategies may have to work around or counter these. People have to be psychologically ready to do whatever is planned.
- What kinds of risks they are willing to take. This may change as time goes on (see directly below), but communities may differ in what they're willing to risk. Some will be willing to expose themselves personally and politically; others, at least at first, may not. It is sometimes important to push people beyond their comfort zones...but not too far. You may be dealing with a community that has suffered the consequences of public protest before, and those consequences may have been severe. Even if circumstances are different now, the community has to start at a level of risk that seems reasonable to it.
- What has already been tried. A community unwilling to engage in civil disobedience at the beginning of a campaign may feel differently after its milder efforts have been ignored. A community that's staged a successful social action effort and reached its immediate goal may be willing to up the ante the next time. Circumstances and people change, which is why it's important to revisit this question from time to time.
- **Prepare contingency plans based on the level to which you're willing to escalate.** Sometimes a social action effort works on the first try. Sometimes it takes several tries, a change in procedure, an increase in intensity, or some other factor to bring success. Sometimes the effort doesn't work well, or at all: that's when you need to have a Plan B.

Your contingency plans can encompass almost anything. One possibility, for instance, is to simply let that particular issue drop and switch your efforts to something more winnable, in order to build strength and morale. Another is to change tactics – going at the issue from another angle, or aiming your action at a different target. Still another is to threaten the next level of action – either subtly or directly – and offer to negotiate before

you “are forced” to carry it out. A fourth is to ratchet up your level of action without warning, with the purpose of attracting the notice of the media, putting your opponents in a more difficult position, and/or demonstrating the extent of your strength and support.

Escalation is not the most desirable outcome here. If you can accomplish your goals by switching tactics or some other strategy, that’s by far the better outcome. You should have contingency plans that cover a lot of different possibilities, so you’ll not be surprised, and so you’ll have some choices as to how to react when things don’t go as you’d hoped. Those contingency plans should encompass escalation as well, however. You may not need it, but if you do, you should know exactly what it will look like.

The community should be clear about what level of action it’s willing to take. Will you go all the way to civil disobedience? Are there other, equally drastic measures that you’re willing to risk? What are the probable and possible consequences of your plans, both for the individuals and groups involved, and for your effort? Do you have the resources and the will to carry a difficult process – a lawsuit, for example – to the end?

Whatever your answers to these questions, it’s necessary to plan for as many possibilities as you can. Never assume that just because you’re engaged in an action, it will accomplish your goals. You have to know what your next step is if it doesn’t.

### 2.5.3. *Carrying out a social action strategy*

Social action doesn’t always mean gathering the troops and marching on City Hall with fire in your eyes. It certainly can, and there are many times when that’s appropriate. But it can also mean testifying at a legislative hearing, going door to door to talk to voters about an upcoming election, filing a lawsuit, meeting with a representative of a regulatory body to demand proper enforcement of already-existing rules, or paying a visit to your Congressman with a group of fellow citizens.

The key difference between social action and simple democratic participation is the display of power that comes from the presence or the support of a large group of like-minded people. Calling the White House as an individual to protest the American invasion of Iraqis democratic



participation. Calling for the same purpose as part of a coordinated effort to bombard the Administration with hundreds of thousands of phone calls is social action.

**Examples of social action abound.** Read practically any newspaper for a week, and you'll probably see at least one. At the current writing, for example (Fall, 2005), just one organization, ACORN, has recently:

- Mobilized voters – through door to door canvassing, voter registration, and participation at rallies, along with many elected officials – to defeat a number of California ballot initiatives.
- Flooded the board meeting in Cleveland of the National Paint and Coatings Association with 400 ACORN members to demand – successfully – that the industry organization discuss with them the paint industry's responsibility for lead paint poisoning and its obligation to victims.
- Co-sponsored a rally in New York City attended by over 1,000 home childcare workers to highlight low wages and lack of support. (ACORN helped unionize home child care workers in New York state last year.)
- Held numerous actions of various kinds around the country to try to convince Congress to change a budget bill that would cut programs for the poor in order to help pay for disaster relief.
- Taken part in actions and court deliberations that led to the postponement of a permit renewal for a smelter in El Paso, Texas, that emits heavy metals into the air.

Eventually – usually sooner rather than later – you must go from planning to execution. Even in the simplest and least risky of actions, however – sending letters to legislators, for instance – people often need training or other kinds of help. The more complicated and potentially risky the action, the more support those engaged in it are likely to need.

*Most of the steps below refer to carrying out an individual action. Remember, however, that carrying out a social action strategy is not the same as engaging in an individual action: it is*

*often a long-term commitment to action of various kinds, usually with the goal of changing the distribution of power toward greater equity.*

- **Choose the time, place, target(s), and nature of your action based on its purpose, and on how it fits into your overall strategy.** If you want to convince legislators to listen to you, or to act in a certain way, it makes no sense to demonstrate at the State House when they're not in session, or at a place where they're not likely to be aware of what you're doing. If you want a bill passed, your action should aim at legislators; if you want a corporation to change its policies, your action should target the offices, or the officers, of that corporation. Think carefully about what you want to accomplish, and who actually has the power to make it happen.

By the same token, consider what kind of action will be most effective for the purpose at hand, and for your long-term strategy. In general, it makes sense to use the lowest-key action possible, saving the more drastic – demonstrations, marches, chaining yourself to the CEO's front gate – for when you really need them. If you can accomplish your goal in a way that doesn't involve confrontation and accusations, that both makes your opponents more willing to deal with you in the future, and leaves you with many more options if they won't. If you start by firing your biggest guns, you'll have nothing left in your arsenal if the first blast doesn't accomplish its purpose. Furthermore, if your opponents and the general public get used to hearing those big guns, they'll stop paying attention to them.

- **Provide the training and other support necessary to carry out a successful action before you engage in it.** There are a number of different kinds of support that you may be able to provide:
  - *Training.* If people are writing letters or making phone calls, especially if they're doing it for the first time, they may need a sample letter or script to use as a model. Participants should be briefed as fully as possible on the nature and extent of the action, on what their roles are, on exactly where they're expected to be and when, etc. If people are testifying before a legislative committee or a court, they should have a chance to practice what they're going to say, and to be briefed on

what to expect, who will be there, how much time they have, etc. If there's to be civil disobedience practiced, it's extremely important that participants receive training in non-violent protest, in how to behave and what to expect if they're arrested. They should understand their range of choices – to engage in civil disobedience, to support those who are engaged in civil disobedience, merely to be present, etc. The more participants know about the action beforehand, the more effective it's likely to be.

- *Logistics.* If you're planning a march or a picket line, participants will need signs. People may need rides to a public meeting, or to polling places. For some actions, costumes or clothing imprinted with appropriate slogans may have to be supplied. Participants may need maps or other information. For a media session or rally, you may need photos or pictures, sound equipment, newsprint, computers, a movie screen – the list of possibilities is nearly endless. Anticipating and supplying what organizers and participants need is an important part of organizing an action.

Don't forget basic necessities. If a group is meeting with officials at City Hall or the State House, what will they do for lunch? Particularly if it's a warm day, you may have to provide drinking water. Restroom facilities – portable or otherwise – might be needed. An adequate number of trash cans available during a rally will make clean-up after it much easier. The more of these kinds of things you can anticipate, the smoother your action will go.

- *Coordination and support.* People function better if they know someone's in charge. Having people designated to provide directions, instructions, information, etc. at an action will both make everything go more smoothly and give participants the sense of security that comes from good organization.

This kind of coordination and support are especially important if there's a threat of violence, real or imagined. Because violence can discredit not only your action, but your whole organization and its cause, it's important that there be crowd control (as informal and low-key as possible), and that any move toward violence can be stopped before it gains momentum.

- **Plan the action in detail, then follow your plan.** Just as with the overall strategy, the planning of an action should be participatory, involving people affected by the issue, representatives of member and/or affiliated organizations, etc. The more stake participants have in a social action strategy – which includes the planning of individual actions – the more likely it is to continue over the long term and to be successful.

The planning of an event should cover every possibility you and everyone else involved can think of. It's much easier to stave off trouble before it happens than to deal with it when it does – and it will, if you don't plan properly.

So what happens when you've planned carefully, and the absolutely unexpected happens: the legislative hearing you'd lined up testimony for is canceled; your main speaker is injured in a traffic accident on the way to the rally; the leader of your opposition has a heart attack on the morning of the day you'd planned to confront him?

One answer is, of course, that you should have foreseen the possibility of all of these events, and planned accordingly... and perhaps you did. But it's simply not realistic to assume that anyone, no matter how clever, can think of everything that could happen. The best you can do is to make general contingency plans for when things go wrong, and to have a backup for everything. A speaker who's ready to go on if she's needed, an alternate route, an indoor space in case of bad weather – these and other contingency plans can save your bacon when the unexpected happens. Just as with the data on your computer, back up everything. You won't be sorry.

- **Organize for action.** This means activating your communication network, going door to door, calling meetings, and doing whatever else it takes to get the right people to the right place at the right time. Whether you want 20 people to write letters to the Editor, or 2,000 people in front of City Hall at 2:00 on Monday, they need to be contacted and coordinated. Here's why you have an organization and connections with community organizations and institutions and key individuals.
- **Carry out the action.** All the planning and philosophizing in the world won't get you anything unless you translate them to action. Now's the opportunity – do it!

- **Follow up and evaluate.** You're not done when the action itself ends. You still have a number of things to do:

Take care of the logistics: Make sure people who need them have rides home, deliver that petition to the appropriate office, tally up the number of phone calls made, etc.

If you've staged a large rally or demonstration, someone has to pick up after the crowd, so that your message isn't lost in complaining over the mess that your action left. There has to be an orderly and reasonable way for a crowd to disperse and get home when the action is over.

If you have follow-up activities planned (a State House rally can turn into visits to legislators, for instance), see to it that they take place, and that everyone knows what they're supposed to do and where they're supposed to go. At the end of that activity, you still have to get people home in an organized fashion, pickup the trash, etc.

If you're very clear about avoiding violence or vandalism – and in most cases you should be – the marshals or coordinators have to stay on the job until everyone involved in the action has left the scene and is actually on the way home, rather than wandering around in small or not-so-small groups. Especially if there are opponents of your issue or point of view in the area, you'll want to do everything you can to make sure that any encounters stay reasonably civil, and that high spirits don't turn into rash behavior.

When everything's actually all over – the next day or the next week – the planners should meet to evaluate how things went. Did everything go according to plan? Did the people with responsibilities do a good job? Who was especially competent (or incompetent)? What was most effective? Least effective? What was media coverage like? How would you stage such an action in the future? Overall, did this type of action seem to work toward the purpose you set for it? If not, what might have worked better? Use your evaluation to adjust your next action – or your overall strategy, if necessary – to make it more effective.

As you know if you've used the Community Tool Box before, we consider evaluation to be an integral and extremely important part of any health or community development activity. If you

evaluate honestly, you'll have tremendously valuable information about what you're doing, information that will allow you to change and improve your work. Don't ignore the opportunity, but use it consistently to hugely increase your chances of mounting a successful campaign.

- **Finally, plan your next move based on how what you just did fits into your overall strategy.** You're in this for the long haul; everything you do should fit into your long-term plan, and move you forward. Social action strategies are seldom complete in themselves. They help establish gains that ultimately add up to significant change over time, but there's always more to accomplish. The Civil Rights Movement drastically changed the lives of black people in the U.S. for the better, but there's still a long way to go after more than 50 years. Community organizing and social action (if necessary) can't stop until a community – or a society – is truly just and equitable. >That means that successful organizers simply keep at it – forever.

## Summary

Community organizing, as practiced by Saul Alinsky, Martin Luther King, Jr., Cesar Chavez, and their colleagues and inheritors, leads to the assumption of the power that the unity of a large number of previously powerless people brings. This is social action, and it can take forms ranging from letters to the Editor to serious civil disobedience.

Social action often means refusing to follow the rules laid down by those in power, and exercising instead the right to protest and contest unfair or ill-conceived policies and decisions. It is meant to empower communities that have been abused, neglected, or treated unfairly by authority or the society as a whole, and to give them a voice and some authority of their own. By drawing attention to inequity and injustice, and by using unified action to confront – or cooperate with – policy makers and the society as a whole, a social action strategy can bring about significant social change.

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## Chapter3. Developing an Action Plan

Developing an action plan can help change-makers turn their visions into reality, and increase efficiency and accountability within an organization. An action plan describes the way your organization will meet its objectives through detailed action steps that describe how and when these steps will be taken. This section provides a guide for developing and utilizing your group's action plan.

### 3.1. Definition

In some ways, an action plan is a "heroic" act: it helps us turn our dreams into a reality. An action plan is a way to make sure your organization's vision is made concrete. It describes the way your group will use its strategies to meet its objectives. An action plan consists of a number of action steps or changes to be brought about in your community.

Each action step or change to be sought should include the following information:

- **What** actions or changes will occur
- **Who** will carry out these changes
- **By when** they will take place, and for how long
- **What resources** (i.e., money, staff) are needed to carry out these changes
- **Communication** (who should know what?)

### 3.2. Criteria for a good action plan

The action plan for your initiative should meet several criteria.

Is the action plan:

- *Complete?* Does it list all the action steps or changes to be sought in all relevant parts of the community (e.g., schools, business, government, faith community)?
- *Clear?* Is it apparent who will do what by when?
- *Current?* Does the action plan reflect the current work? Does it anticipate newly emerging opportunities and barriers?



### **3.3. Why should you develop an action plan?**

There is an inspirational adage that says, "People don't plan to fail. Instead they fail to plan." Because you certainly don't want to fail, it makes sense to take all of the steps necessary to ensure success, including developing an action plan.

There are lots of good reasons to work out the details of your organization's work in an action plan, including:

- To lend credibility to your organization. An action plan shows members of the community (including grantmakers) that your organization is well ordered and dedicated to getting things done.
- To be sure you don't overlook any of the details
- To understand what is and isn't possible for your organization to do
- For efficiency: to save time, energy, and resources in the long run
- For accountability: To increase the chances that people will do what needs to be done

### **3.4. When should you create an action plan?**

Ideally, an action plan should be developed within the first six months to one year of the start of an organization. It is developed after you have determined the vision, mission, objectives, and strategies of your group. If you develop an action plan when you are ready to start getting things done, it will give you a blueprint for running your organization or initiative.

Remember, though, that an action plan is always a work in progress. It is not something you can write, lock in your file drawers, and forget about. Keep it visible. Display it prominently. As your organization changes and grows, you will want to continually (usually monthly) revise your action plan to fit the changing needs of your group and community.

### **3.5.How to write an action plan?**

#### **a) Determine what people and sectors of the community should be changed and involved in finding solutions**

If you have been using the **VMOSA** (Vision, Mission, Objectives, Strategies, Action Plans) model, you might have already done this, when you were deciding upon your group's objectives. Again, try to be inclusive. Most of the health and development issues that community partnerships deal with are community-wide, and thus need a community-wide solution. Possible sectors include the media, the business community, religious organizations, schools, youth organizations, social service organizations, health organizations, and others.

Some members of the community you might consider asking to join the action planning group include:

- Influential people from all the parts of the community affected by your initiative (e.g., from churches and synagogues, the school system, law enforcement, etc.)
- People who are directly involved in the problem (e.g., local high school students and their parents might be involved in planning a coalition trying to reduce teen substance abuse)
- Members of grassroots organizations
- Members of the various ethnic and cultural groups in your community
- People you know who are interested in the problem or issue
- Newcomers or young people in the community who are not yet involved

Let's consider some of the people who were involved with the planning group for the fictional Reducing the Risks (**RTR**) Coalition that hopes to reduce the rate of teen pregnancy. Some of the members of this planning group included teachers at the local high school, local teenagers and their parents, members of the clergy, counselors and school nurses, staff of the county health department, and members of youth organizations, service agencies, and other organizations that focus on youth issues.

**b) Convene a planning group in your community to design your action plan**

This might be the same group of people who worked with you to decide your group's strategies and objectives. If you are organizing a new group of people, try to make your planning committee as diverse and inclusive as possible. Your group should look like the people most affected by the problem or issue.

Once everyone is present, go over your organization's:

- Vision
- Mission
- Objectives
- Strategies
- Targets and agents of change (e.g., youth, parents and guardians, clergy)
- Proposed changes for each sector of the community (e.g., schools, faith community, service organizations, health organizations, government)

**c) Develop an action plan composed of action steps that address all proposed changes**

The plan should be complete, clear, and current. Additionally, the action plan should include information and ideas you have already gathered while brainstorming about your objectives and your strategies. What are the steps you must take to carry out your objectives while still fulfilling your vision and mission? Now it's time for all of the VMOSA components to come together. While the plan might address general goals you want to see accomplished, the action steps will help you determine the specific actions you will take to help make your vision a reality. Here are some guidelines to follow to write action steps.

Members of the community initiative will want to determine:

- *What* action or change will occur
- *Who* will carry it out
- *When* it will take place, and for how long
- *What resources* (i.e., money, staff) are needed to carry out the change

- *Communication* (who should know what)

### **Example: RTR Coalition's Action Step (a sample)**

One community change sought by this coalition to prevent teen pregnancy was to increase publicity about contraception and unwanted pregnancy at the local high school.

- **What** action or change will occur: Hanging posters, displays, and other information about contraception and the facts about unwanted pregnancy in the hallways of the local high school. The posters and other information will become a permanent part of the high school. Posters and information will be regularly changed as new materials become available.
- **Who** will carry it out: A sub-committee comprised of parents and guardians, teachers, students, and coalition members will be responsible for maintaining the displays. The coalition as a whole will work towards finding funding to purchase the materials. Maria and Alex of the schools action group will be responsible for researching and ordering the materials.
- **By when** will it take place, and for how long: The coalition will try to have posters hanging and displays visible within six weeks of deciding on the action step (2/19/2013).
- **What resources** are needed to carry out the step: The coalition will approach the school district to request funding for the project. Otherwise, the group will seek funding from other sources such as foundations and local businesses to finance the program.
- **Communication** about the action step. The school principal and leadership of the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) should be given information about this planned change.

Things to note about this portion of the **RTR** action plan:

- It appears *complete*. Although this step seems fully developed, we would need to review the entire action plan to see whether all community and system changes that should be sought are included.

- It is *clear*. We know who will do what by when.
- It seems *current*. We would need to know more about other current work (and new opportunities and barriers) to judge whether this portion of the action plan is up-to-date.

**d) Review your completed action plan carefully to check for completeness**

Make sure that each proposed change will help accomplish your group's mission. Also, be sure that the action plan taken as a whole will help you complete your mission; that is, make sure you aren't leaving anything out.

**e) Follow through**

One hard part (figuring out what to do) is finished. Now take your plan and run with it! Remember the 80-20 rule: successful efforts are 80% follow through on planned actions and 20% planning for success.

**f) Keep everyone informed about what's going on**

Communicate to everyone involved how his or her input was incorporated. No one likes to feel like her wit and wisdom has been ignored.

**g) Keep track of what (and how well) you've done**

Always keep track of what the group has actually done. If the community change (a new program or policy) took significant time or resources, it's also a good idea to evaluate what you have done, either formally or informally.

Keep several questions in mind for both yourself and others:

- Are we doing what we said we'd do?
- Are we doing it well?
- Is what we are doing advancing the mission?

You can address these questions informally (ask yourself, chat with friends and other people), as well as formally, through surveys and other evaluation methods.

#### **h) Celebrate a job well done!**

Celebrate your accomplishments; you and those you work with deserve it. Celebration helps keep everyone excited and interested in the work they are doing.

### **3.6. After you've written your action plan: Getting members to do what they said they would**

Every community organization has undoubtedly had this happen: you plan and you assign tasks to get everything you've planned to do accomplished. Everyone agrees (maybe they even offer) to do certain tasks, and you all leave with a great feeling of accomplishment. The problem? At the next meeting, nothing has been done. Besides tearing out your hair, what can you do?

Fortunately, there are several things you can try. It's particularly tricky in the case of volunteers, because you don't want to lean too hard on someone who is donating their time and energy to begin with. Still, you can make it easier for members to get things done (and harder to avoid work) without acting like the mean neighbor down the street. Some of these gentle reminders include:

- Regular phone calls from staff members or dedicated volunteers asking others how they are doing with their tasks. This should be a supportive call, not a "are you doing what you're supposed to" call. The person calling can offer emotional support "how are you doing?" as well as see if the group member needs any other assistance. A friendly call such as this can be seen as helpful, give the member the sense that he is a very important part of the group, and serve as a great reminder to do what he said he would do.
- Distributing the action plan in writing to all members, with names attached to specific tasks. (Additionally, this can be a great time to ask for feedback before the plan becomes "official.")
- Making sure timelines (with due dates) are complete, clear and current.
- At regular group meetings, such as committee meetings or board meetings, ask members to report on accomplishing the tasks they have set out to do. Consider making this a regular part of the meeting.

- Celebrate the accomplishment of tasks. It's important that getting something done actually means something, and is recognized by the group as a whole.

Follow up on the action plan regularly. You are asking members to be accountable, and to get things done on a regular basis. If they have agreed, you should help them fulfill their commitment as best you can.

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**Draft Action Plan Template (1)**  
**September 21, 2016**  
**NCERA-197 Agricultural Safety and Health Research and Extension**

Objective	Action/Activity	Target dates	Status
1. Develop and support action groups for each of 12 priority areas. These action groups would then.	Began effort at May 10, 2006 mtg.	10/01/05 – 9/30/10	Ongoing
1.1 Identity current & present research & outreach efforts supporting 12 areas 1.2 Identify current and potential resources including funding and expertise for 12 areas.	Jepsen subcommittee to develop web-based reporting system that includes factors for accomplishing 1.1 and 1.2.	Develop draft 10/31/06; final report form 11/30/06; distribute to committee with return deadline of 1/31/07; posted on web 2/28/07	
1.3 Define needs and opportunities for 12 priority areas 1.4 Develop and refine research questions and outreach activities for 12 areas.	1. Identify team members and chair (3-5) 2. Summarize research within past five years (3-5 pages): a. Introduction/Problem Statement (1/2 page) b. Literature Review (1-3 pages) c. Summary and Conclusions (list, 1/2 page) d. Research Questions To Be Answered <i>or</i> Outreach Issues to be Resolved (list, 1/2 page)  Development of action plans for promoting research and/or outreach activities. May include technical sessions at conferences, journal state-of-the-art articles, specialty conferences, new resources or programs, identification of RFAs that include priority areas, etc.	10/16/06  12/31/06  3/1/07	
2. Develop assessment to measure effectiveness & impact off the national agenda document.	To be measured by: a. Documenting actions and accomplishments of Objective 1 b. Inclusion of priority areas in USDA RFAs c. Inclusion of priority areas in NIOSH National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) d. others ??	12/31/06 – 9/30/10 3/1/07 – 9/30/10  TBD	
3. Develop a supportive environment for exchange of ideas, partnering, and involvement of stakeholders.	Documented by activities and accomplishments from Objectives 1 and 2.	10/01/05 – 9/30/10	Ongoing



# Action Plan Template(2)

Use this Action Plan Template to identify specific steps you need to take in order to achieve the goals and objectives outlined in your business plan. This tool can also be used to create the action plan that will accompany your marketing plan.

*Tip: Make each action step as simple and specific as possible, breaking down complex actions into single steps.*

Goal:

<b>Action Step</b> <i>What needs to be done?</i>	<b>Responsible Person</b> <i>Who should take action to complete this step?</i>	<b>Deadline</b> <i>When should this step be completed?</i>	<b>Necessary Resources</b> <i>What do you need in order to complete this step?</i>	<b>Potential Challenges</b> <i>Are there any potential challenges that may impede completion? How will you overcome them?</i>	<b>Result</b> <i>Was this step successfully completed? Were any new steps identified in the process?</i>

## SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR ACTION PLAN (3)

Year \_\_\_\_\_

Our action plan is in two parts

- 1 Main Targets that measure our success in reaching our School's Travel Plan objectives
- 2 Actions and Initiatives planned to help us work towards our objectives

### 1 **Main Targets** (A summary of the Objectives and Targets from the STP itself)

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Progress</b>
<p>Summary of objectives</p> <p>Summarise the objectives from within your plan here</p>	<p>Summary of Targets</p> <p>It is important that each objective has a <b>Specific, Measurable, Achievable and Realistic</b> target. Completing this section is a useful way of checking that you have set measurable targets for each objective</p>	<p>Target Date for completion</p> <p>It is important that each objective is <b>Timebound</b>.</p>	<p>Space to make notes on progress, barriers that led to a target not being achieved and any new approaches identified as a result</p>

## Action Plan (4)

### Actions and Initiatives

(It is a good idea to create an action plan table for EACH of your STP objectives. You may prefer to use a similar format to your schools' development/improvement plan, but if so it is important you ensure that all the information shown in red, as a minimum, is included)

**OBJECTIVE:** E.g. Increase the proportion of children walking to school

**TARGET:** E.g. Increase the proportion of children walking to school from 50% to 60% by summer term 2006

<b>Proposed Action</b>	<b>Milestone Tasks</b> <i>(Key tasks that need to be carried out to implement actions)</i>	<b>Responsible Person</b>	<b>Partners to consult / engage</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Success Indicator</b> <i>(How you can measure / demonstrate that an action is complete)</i>	<b>Progress</b> <i>(Details of progress to date, useful information, barriers encountered etc)</i>
<i>For example....</i>	<i>For example....</i>	<i>For example....</i>	<i>For example</i>	<i>For example..</i>	<i>For example.....</i>	<i>For example....</i>
Set up Walking Bus	Contact Road Safety Unit for advice and Support Identify possible routes Recruit volunteers Pilot route Launch Bus	Mrs Smith	HCC Road Safety Unit	December '05 Feb '06 March '06 March '06 April '06	One Walking Bus established serving the school each morning. At least 10 children using the walking bus daily	Meeting held with RSU January '06
Participate in Walk to School Week	Structure Walk to School week into schools curriculum Obtain walk to school week resources	The Head	HCC Travel Plan Team	May / October annually	All children invited to participate in W2SW	Registration form sent to HCC for October'06 W2SW
Provide covered waiting shelter for parents	Source appropriate funding (grant) Identify suitable site Install shelter Monitor usage	School Travel Plan Coordinator / Premises Manager	Local businesses for sponsorship	March 31 <sup>st</sup> '06  September	Parent waiting shelter installed on school property. Annual parent travel survey demonstrates it is used.	STP submitted to HCC 31 <sup>st</sup> March, advice received that school will be receiving capital grant award