



Explore Tactics

This is a critical step in using the New Tactics **Strategic Effectiveness Method**. After the steps of problem identification, envisioning the future and understanding the terrain have been addressed, it is time to prepare for action. Keep in mind the journey to the mountain top, it is necessary to establish intermediate goals that more closely identify what will be accomplished, and that embed a strategic vision (reaching the peak) of what is feasible to accomplish during a set period of time (a week, a month, a year, a decade, etc.).

This is where knowledge of tactics is important. Tactics will manifest themselves differently depending on the size, capability and resources of the organization. Tactics embody how one goes about making change, while a strategy involves decisions on which tactics to use and when, which targets deserve focus and which resources can be employed. Our knowledge of tactics also shapes the strategy we choose. In this way, tactical thinking is essential to effective human rights advocacy.

Objectives of Step Four:

- ✓ To determine an immediate goal to address the problem (as an initial step in the strategic path).
- ✓ To identify a target for this goal and a tactic(s) to implement in order to move the immediate goal forward.
- ✓ To explore, learn, share and exchange as many tactic ideas as possible.

Reminder of Terminology:

- ✓ A “tactic” is a specific action or combination of actions taken to affect a given situation. Tactics are how you move a strategy forward.
- ✓ The success of an individual tactic often depends on how it was used in conjunction with other tactics.
- ✓ A tactic is an action tool that is part of a **strategy**.

New Tactics in Human Rights Resources: Explore tactics ideas from around the world.

- Book of Tactic Examples – [New Tactics in Human Rights: A Resource for Practitioners](#)
- [Online Searchable Tactics Database](#) – over 200 examples

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Determine a Strategic Path – the Change Process

In order to determine a strategic path, the group will need to arrive at a consensus regarding SMART goals in addressing their problem (S-specific/strategic; M-measurable; A-achievable; R-relevant/ realistic; and T-time bound). Next, the group will select the target and tactic(s) most likely to move forward a SMART goal.

First: Identify a SMART goal.

New Tactics has a tool to assist a group in identifying their first goal on the journey of change called the **strategic path**.

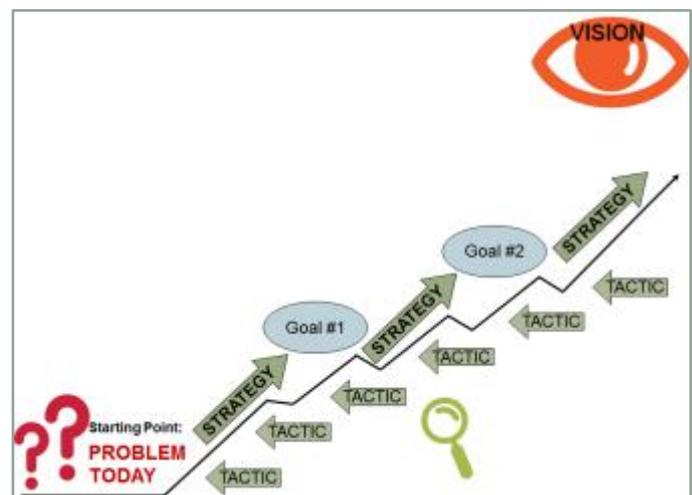
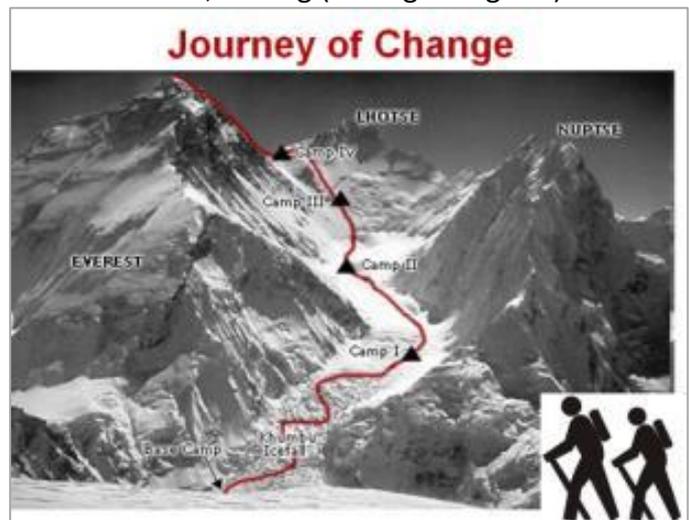
If we think back to step two, Create a Vision, we see a difference between vision and goals. In step two we defined our vision by creating a vision statement. In the creation of a **strategic path**, the group will work together to analyze the terrain, their resources, the potential targets on their spectrum of allies, and the variety of tactics that they explore in step four. Thinking critically about all of this information, the group will brainstorm together a list of potential first goals and will evaluate each one, finding (and agreeing on!) the **one** goal that will be the most effective first step for moving them closer to their **vision**.

If we return to the example of the mountain, remember that there are multiple camps along the way up the mountainside. In order to get from one point to another we need to plan, strategize, and implement well-chosen tactics that will help us move one step up the mountain towards our vision. However, in order to create that plan, we have to know where we are going.

This is where the **strategic path** can be very helpful. As a group, your organization needs to work together as a team, with everyone working toward the same goal. While the **strategic path** that will move you up the mountainside will have multiple goals along the way, it is impossible to foresee all of those goals from the start. However, if everyone does not agree on the most effective first goal for the group, it will be very difficult to start working effectively as a team.

SMART Goals

S	Specific / Strategic
M	Measurable
A	Achievable
R	Relevant / Realistic
T	Time bound



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In the exercise, “Experiential Exercise for Understanding a Strategic Path,” your group will learn why it is important to have specific goals that everyone agrees on when trying to work towards a common vision.

In the second exercise, “Exercise for Developing a Strategic Path,” your group will work together to brainstorm a list of potential first goals for their path, then will critically evaluate those goals and together decide which one is the best, and most strategic, choice for the group to work toward.

Second: Identify Targets and Tactics.

Now that the group has identified the first goal on their strategic path, it is time to re-evaluate the target they selected. Each time we identify a new goal in our activist efforts, it’s important to return to the view of the terrain and the spectrum of allies and opponents, in order to make sure that we are focusing on the target that will most likely help us reach our goal, and to ensure that we don’t overlook the target that has the most positive potential for our efforts! The strategic path is useful for not only identifying goals, but also effectively selecting targets that help us to reach those goals.

Not all tactics will work for all targets. It is important that once the group has identified the most appropriate and strategic target on which to focus, that they re-visit the options they see for their tactics. Tactics must be critically evaluated in an ongoing manner, for their appropriateness for the chosen target, for the group’s capacity in terms of resources, and for their effectiveness in achieving the identified goal. In Step Five, “Take Action”, your group will review their immediate goal, target and tactics in order to develop a plan of action.

It is very important to remember that tactical choices must be influenced by:

- ✓ A group’s capacities (resources, allies and support networks – national or international – legal limitations, etc.)
- ✓ Tolerance for risk (degree of danger)
- ✓ Analysis of the opponent (potential response to the tactic)
- ✓ Context in which the tactic will be used

This is also a time to consider not only the tactics but the overall strategic relevance of this target. Returning to Sun Tzu’s directive to “Know Yourself”, this is a time to consider the capacity and resources of the group to implement a plan of action toward the chosen target.

If more than one key relationship is identified as a target, you may first want to consider if the target is still too broad. For example, “media” may be chosen or a large government “institution.” As facilitator, in this step your job is to assist the group to be as specific as possible about their identified target in order to facilitate the choice of the most appropriate tactic.

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In **Figure 12**, Forum-Asia, an organization in Thailand, introduced an innovative computer-interactive police training program into police training institutions in Thailand and other countries in the region. However, they recognized the need to first identify what area of the police would be most open to building a collaborative partnership with a non-governmental organization on such an effort. The most logical place to target such an endeavor was certainly the police training institutions themselves. They identified one institution that had tremendous influence over the others as a good place to focus their energy. They also needed to be even more specific to identify not only the institution but also the protocol— especially with hierarchical institutions such as the police—to know “who” they needed to get permission from first. (This is an example of the Tactical Map’s RED arrow lines showing a “power over” relationship.) Forum-Asia was able to get good advice from their friendly police contacts to gain this critical information, along with the information regarding *how* to present their proposal to this person to maximize their success.

Breaking down the target also helps to identify any tactics that must follow a sequential timeline or flow to maximize your objective. In the example, Forum-Asia needed to engage their friendly police contacts in order to even begin the process of building a collaborative partnership with the police training institution.

FIGURE 12

Strategy: Introduce an innovative police training program into nationwide police training institutions

Immediate Goal (strategic path): The training program will be implemented in ONE police training institution.

Target(s):

Police

Police training institutions

Narrower Target:

A specific training institution with great influence

Tactic:

Build a collaborative partnership with one key institution

Refined Target:

Head officer (named) of the key institution

First step(s):

Engage known friendly police allies who have contact and access to the head officer to give advice, assist in promoting the police training program, and introduce NGO to head officer.

The Need for Tactical Flexibility

In order to understand the underlying method of this step, it is important to remember the six reasons New Tactics gives for why it is important to expand an organization’s “tool box” of tactics:

1. What we know how to do influences what we think is possible to do; tactics help determine strategy.
2. Different tactics are effective against different targets.
3. Different tactics appeal to different constituencies.
4. Tactical flexibility is the source of surprise.
5. Tactics teach participants and observers how to engage in the world.
6. Tactics are the training systems for engaging participants and allies in the organization’s work.

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1. Tactics Open Up New Possibilities



Woman testifying with supporter

What we know how to do influences what we think is possible to do; tactics help determine strategy. When our thinking about how we can act is narrowly defined, we restrict our views of what is possible to accomplish. Human history is full of examples where the same solution is tried over and over again without success, or where a new tactic overcomes an old one. The promotion and protection of human rights requires ongoing checks and counter-checks; adaptability is a key to success.

An Example: Tactics Determine Strategy (*A Mock Tribunal to Advance Change: The National Tribunal on Violence Against Women in Nigeria*)

BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights (BAOBAB) and Civil Resource Development and Documentation Center (CIRDDOC) in Nigeria were struggling to raise public awareness around violence against women. Few people in Nigeria believe that women suffer different forms of violence. There was little attention paid to this issue in the press, nor in the halls of government, nor in law enforcement.

The NGOs learned of the impact of other tribunals like the Vienna and Tokyo Tribunals and the attention they had attracted worldwide, and decided to try something new, and organize a national mock tribunal on violence against women. CIRDDOC experimented with a smaller mock tribunal in Amambra State South East Nigeria addressing the general topic of human rights violations. This event had been considered successful, attracting very good turnout of members of the public which raised further discussions on the issues of human rights violations in general and in connection to women in particular. The tactic of organizing mock tribunals seemed promising.

The subsequent Nigerian National Tribunal on Violence Against Women organized by the group attracted lots of media and public attention. After the tribunal, this problem moved visibly onto the public agenda, opening the way for more effective application of other tactics of public education and pressure. It was one important and catalytic event in a longer struggle for the promotion and protection of women's rights as human rights in Nigeria.

2. Tactics Affect Different Targets

Different tactics are effective against different targets. We must learn to tailor our tactics to our targets, finding those that will have the fullest possible impact. When tactics fail to affect our targets, we must innovate with new and more effective tactics.



Trokosi Temple Priests

Example: Tactics Affect Targets Differently (*Powerful Persuasion: Combating traditional practices that violate human rights*)

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The Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ) in Ghana decided to address the complex issue of Trokosi, a customary practice in some parts of the country where fetish priests kept women and young girls as slaves to atone for sins or crimes allegedly committed by their relatives. The Commission recognized that using legislation to outlaw such practices may not be effective and may, in some cases, result in the priests driving the customary practice further underground. The Commission chose instead to approach the priests from a different perspective. They engaged respected leaders—at local and national levels—in direct dialogue with perpetrators, victims, other community leaders and the community at large to facilitate understanding of the practice, while providing alternatives and avenues for abandoning the practice without losing status. Their understanding of their target resulted in an appropriate selection of tactics. Over 3,000 Trokosi women and children have so far been liberated as a result.

3. Tactics Build Constituencies

If the human rights community responds by offering only one or two tactics to engage the public, we will appeal only to the narrow constituency to whom those tactics make sense. In cultures that have experienced repression, people have learned to withdraw from public life. To engage constituencies in cultures such as these we need to offer tactics that appeal to different risk tolerances and different views of social change.



Amnesty International youth volunteers with mobile phones for sending SMS messages

Example: Building Constituencies (*Sending Out an SMS: A rapid-response mobile phone network engages a youth constituency to stop torture fast*)

Amnesty International (AI) - Netherlands realized that most of the members participating in their Urgent Actions were over the age of 30, but wanted to expand the number of young people involved in their actions. AI-Netherlands used the power of text-messaging technology to attract a new constituency, mainly young people, to become involved in its campaign against torture. As part of their efforts to engage this new group, they advertised their campaign at rock concerts and other venues where younger crowds gather.

4. Tactical Flexibility is the Source of Surprise

As we repeat the same tactics, our adversaries learn to counter them and contain their impact.



Otpor! youth demonstrating outside police stations

Creating surprise keeps the opponent off balance. Inflexibility leads to repetition in our thinking, as well as the opponent's. Flexibility promotes learning by both parties.

Example: Tactical Flexibility (*Protecting arrested demonstrators by protesting outside the police stations where they are being detained*)

Otpor!, a student movement in Serbia, used tactical flexibility to effectively combat state repression under the Milosevic regime.

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They called their approach "Plan B." When Serb authorities began arresting demonstrators, Otpor! would organize secondary demonstrations outside police stations where demonstrators were being held.

This allowed people to overcome their fear of participation and keep activists involved, especially at a crucial point in the struggle. It also helped turn one of the regime's strengths against it, thus switching the balance of power. People must be able to safely rise above the fear of speaking out if they are to participate, especially in an effort to overcome a repressive regime.

5. Tactics Teach Engagement

Tactics teach participants and observers how to engage in the world. As we practice, the muscles learn how to move, giving the brain the opportunity to plan subtle variations and improvements. As we practice, it gets easier.



Museum of Memory designated site

Example: Teaching Participants how to Engage in the World

(Coordinating efforts to preserve archival information among several organizations and creating a system for accessing it)

Around the world, people instinctively turn to places of memory to come to terms with the past and chart a course for the future. From makeshift roadside memorials to official commemorations, millions of people around the world gather at places of memory looking for healing, reconciliation, and insight on how to move forward. Memory is a critical language and terrain of human rights. It's here, through the process of preserving the past, where the evidence of human rights violations is maintained and made public, where the issues this evidence raises are debated, and where tactics for preventing it from happening again are developed. In short, these places can be critical tools for building a lasting culture of human rights. The International Coalition of Sites of Conscience is a network of historic sites around the world that use places of power to teach citizens how to engage with human rights issues. For example, coalition member Memoria Abierta plans to open a Museum of Memory in a former center for torture that will stimulate citizens "to make a commitment to solve the problems of our country."

6. Tactics are Training Systems

Tactics are the training systems for engaging participants and allies in the organization's work. Some tactics may be short-term and some longer-term. But as systems of acting, all of them require planning, coordination and direction. They create opportunities for many citizens to be involved, to learn and to become more committed to the work of the organization or campaign. Involvement on a tactical level is excellent training ground for younger or newer staff and volunteers.



CVT psychosocial workers practicing listening skills

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Example: Tactics as Training Systems (*Building local capacity for trauma-focused mental health services through an intensive training model*)

The Center for Victims of Torture (CVT), the creator of the New Tactics project, has instituted an intensive training and supervision model for refugees to develop local capacity for providing understanding and skills for mental health support to rebuild communities after massive human rights atrocities. CVT has instituted the training model in refugee camps in Guinea and Sierra Leone for refugees from Sierra Leone and Liberia. The method utilizes an intensive, hands-on training and on-going supervision model of refugees themselves. These refugee “mental health specialists” build their capacity, provide individual and group therapy for traumatized individuals and use their skills toward rebuilding their own communities and support systems. There are currently 122 “mental health specialists” involved in this on-going training and supervision model with thousands of refugees of all ages having received a wide variety of services.

The Need for Tactical Innovation

Tactical innovation is critical to the successful implementation of human rights around the globe. By expanding our thinking both tactically and strategically, the human rights community has the opportunity to be more effective. In summary:

- ✓ A narrow range of tactics leads to narrow constituencies; a broader range of tactics appeals to, and involves, broader constituencies.
- ✓ An over-reliance on any single tactic leads to its application in the wrong circumstances, and to missed opportunities to expand strategic targets; flexible tactical thinking creates the opportunity for refined strategic targeting.
- ✓ An overused tactic encourages the opponent to systematize a response and makes it easier for opponents to defend their position; tactical flexibility creates surprise and learning.

It is important that whatever tactic exploration processes are used, there is a focus on fostering a non-critical environment to encourage an open space for a free flow of ideas.

Through the Tactical Map and Spectrum of Allies exercises, the group will have identified a wide variety of key relationships—including people, government and non-government institutions and organizations, community and civil society groups, organizations and bodies – and a specific target for action. It is helpful and inspiring for your group to reflect upon their own accomplishments and share their knowledge of what is already being done—by themselves, their organizations and others—to address and impact the issue. Now is the time to consider the potential tactics that may move the identified target toward the objective and goal.

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