

S E S S I O N 1 0

How Do We Mobilize for Action?

Session Objectives

- To examine the steps of a campaign's mobilization strategy.
- To discuss what components are essential for any organizational plan or action to be accomplished including identifying a vision, setting goals, articulating a strategy, accumulating the required resources and personnel, implementing the activities in an inclusive and participatory manner, and developing indicators for evaluating effectiveness.
- To explore the role of communication technology—telephones, fax machines, computers, and the Internet, among others—in local, national, or international mobilization efforts.

Suggestions for Facilitation

Read aloud the following story about the international campaign to ban landmines. Discuss among the group the steps taken by the campaign participants to mobilize worldwide support for the international Mine Ban Treaty. The questions that come after may help guide the group discussion.

Some participants may feel more strongly about the topic than others and wish to engage in a primary discussion that will then lead to a larger group discussion. Try to employ the fishbowl facilitation method to draw out a more direct and in-depth conversation (see Appendix B for further details).



The International Campaign to Ban Landmines

The first seeds of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) were sown during the late 1980s and early 1990s through the disparate efforts of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from landmine-producing countries. In the past 50 years, landmines—also called anti-personnel mines—caused more deaths and injuries

than nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons combined. Recognizing the impending humanitarian crisis of tens of millions of landmines contaminating dozens of countries around the world, a handful of NGOs joined forces to address the issue. To truly eliminate the problem, they agreed that the weapons themselves would have to be eliminated. Their united efforts focused on the passage of national, regional, and international measures to ban landmines. They began by building a worldwide coalition of local, regional, and international NGOs to participate in the campaign's efforts.

The ICBL campaign's chief organizational strength was its flexibility. It was a loosely structured coalition of organizations with different perspectives and expertise. In order to avoid creating a bureaucracy that dictates to organizations their responsibilities, the ICBL members felt that greater results would be achieved if each NGO determined the direction of its own activities. In this way, NGOs could implement those aspects of the effort that were most consistent with their mandate and institutional structure. Organizations that worked on national issues pressed for a national response to landmines while organizations that worked on international issues focused their efforts on global initiatives.

What started with only a few members soon grew into a campaign with over 1,200 organizations from 80 countries participating. National, regional, and international meetings quickly multiplied the number of organizations committing their time, personnel, and resources to the campaign. For so many organizations and individuals worldwide to function effectively, clear and consistent communication was critical. Modern information and communication technologies played an important role in making the mobilization effort possible. So successful

were the regular bulletins, updates, exchange of facts and statistics, and mass petitions of the ICBL that soon governments relied on the campaign for information that was more accurate and often arrived sooner than information through traditional government channels.

Initially, the ICBL campaign depended extensively on the use of telephone, fax machines, and regular mailings. Jody Williams, Nobel Peace Prize recipient for her work to ban landmines, described the campaign's use of fax in the early years: "The fax machine was relatively new, it was 'exciting.' Information arriving almost instantaneously by fax was perceived to be more important—and thus more deserving of immediate response—than regular mail." Depending heavily on fax and telephone was very expensive but effective. When the campaign began to expand to mine-affected countries in the South, its members turned to email which, although still expensive and difficult to access in many parts of the world, had many cost and time advantages over fax correspondence.

Typically, NGOs and governments react to each other as adversaries. For this reason, part of the campaign's mobilization strategy deliberately involved developing positive relationships with governments. The Campaign called on governments to play a unifying and productive role through a pro-ban bloc that promoted their own national interests. By 1996, the ICBL campaign had garnered the support of a number of governments as well as thousands of humanitarian, children's, peace, veterans, medical, development, arms control, religious, environmental, and women's NGOs. That year the Canadian government offered to host a meeting in Ottawa to create a governmental plan of action at the highest levels to implement the ban. The Canadian government worked closely with members of the ICBL, issuing an unprecedented challenge to other governments to negotiate a simple, unambiguous international ban treaty within one year.

The negotiations that ensued were unique because of the degree to which governments relied on the ICBL's members for information and technical expertise. As a result, middle-sized and smaller powers held their ground in support of a treaty that was perceived as threatening to the autonomy of some larger states. In December 1997, 121 governments returned to Ottawa to sign the international Mine Ban Treaty. Lloyd Axworthy, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs, described the campaign to ban landmines in his closing speech as "an ongoing commitment to partnership and cooperation that will enable us to succeed in meeting our goal." On March 1, 1999, the Mine Ban Treaty became binding international law.²³

²³ The information on the International Campaign to Ban Landmines is from an article by Jody Williams, "The International Campaign to Ban Landmines: A Model for Disarmament Initiatives?" appearing on <http://www.nobel.se/peace/articles/williams/> and from the World Council of Churches website at <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/international/landmines/mines-e.html>.

Questions for Discussion

- What was the ICBL's primary goal? Why did the members of the campaign frame their goal in this way?
- How would you describe the campaign's structure? What were the advantages of this structure? Can you identify any disadvantages?
- Why was communication so important to the campaign?
- How were the campaign's participants able to facilitate communication among so many people, organizations, and governments worldwide?
- What made the ICBL so successful and a possible model for other campaigns?
- What are key components to any mobilization plan?

Exercise: Mobilizing for Relief

Allow approximately 30-40 minutes for this exercise.

Earthquake's Devastation Leaves Millions Without Homes, Safe Drinking Water, or Access to Medicine

On January 13, 2001 an earthquake of the magnitude of 7.6 on the Richter Scale struck off the El Salvadoran coastline, 65 miles southwest of San Miguel, followed by nearly 200 landslides and more than 1,950 aftershocks. The earthquake caused over 800 deaths and over 4,500 injuries. Around 92,000 homes were destroyed and another 130,000 damaged. More than 1,200 schools were destroyed or damaged, along with 30,000 farm properties. The affected population was over 1.1 million.²⁴

Scenario: A group of four women in your community meet informally almost every week to share stories about their families, seek advice, and offer each other support and friendship. One afternoon, one of the women brings an article from the local newspaper about the earthquake in El Salvador. She has a close relative who survived a devastating earthquake in another country and therefore takes a keen interest in the events unfolding in El Salvador. She reads the news to the others who agree that it must be a particularly devastating situation for mothers who must care for their children under such conditions. One woman in the group suggests that they do something to help the mothers affected by the quake. She is supported by the other women who immediately begin to plan their strategy.

1. The workshop group breaks into teams of four. Each team will, like the women in the scenario above, plan a course of action to help the mothers who are dealing with the consequences of the earthquake in El Salvador.
2. Among the questions each team should address are the following:
 - How do you want to help the mothers? What kind of support would you like to offer? What will be your campaign?

²⁴ This is a true event. See <http://www.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/americas/01/15/quake.04>.

- Will your campaign be local, national, regional, or international?
 - What will be your method for raising, developing, or creating support?
What will be your activities?
 - Would it be effective to appeal to other women to help the mothers?
Why or why not? Would men be just as responsive?
 - Can your team take advantage of communication technologies or the media, such as through newspaper articles or educational programs on the radio or television, to generate more support?
 - What potential support networks can you think of that could help you achieve your goals?
 - How will you monitor whether you are achieving your goals?
What indicators would you use?
 - How will you divide the responsibilities among yourselves to carry out the activities?
3. Team members should draft a task list for themselves, outlining the steps they will take over the course of the next few weeks to implement their plan.
 4. When all the teams have completed their action plans, the workshop group will reconvene. A volunteer from each team will briefly describe her team's mobilization strategy.

Questions for Discussion

- What was your team's process of decision-making?
- What was the most difficult part of developing your mobilization strategy?
- Would it have been easier or more difficult to decide what specific steps need to be taken if there were more people on the team?
- How did you decide to divide responsibilities? Did drafting a list of tasks help clarify each team member's role? Was it helpful in other ways? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Do your team's activities seem realistic? Why or why not?
- After hearing the activities of the other teams, is there anything you would add to improve your team's own?

Observations

- Did this exercise help you to imagine planning your own campaign or project around a different issue? Why or why not?
- If you could imagine starting your own campaign, what would it be and how would you carry it out?

Teamwork is the nature of learning organizations.

Teamwork involves respect for others, appreciation of diversity, and generosity at the individual level, as well as the ability to resolve conflict, bring people together in decision-making and decision-implementation, and build teams at the organization level.

“The Building Blocks of Leadership”