

# SESSION 4:

## Identifying Our Political Issue and Developing Our Message

(Approx. 3 hours in total)

### Session Objectives:

- To identify the issue or issues on which we want to take action
- To examine our issue's impact on gender
- To create an effective message for our issue that supports gender equality

Prepare the meeting space by posting the following quote where everyone can read it:

*“If you don't like the way the world is, you change it. You have an obligation to change it. You just do it one step at a time.”*

– Marian Wright Edelman<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Marian Wright Edelman serves on Women's Learning Partnership's Board of Directors and is the founder and president of the Children's Defense Fund. She is the first African-American woman to be admitted to the Mississippi Bar. Her involvement in the civil rights movement began when she became director of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund office in Jackson, Mississippi, in the mid-1960s. In 1968, Ms. Edelman served as counsel for the Poor People's March that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., began organizing before his death.

## 4.1

### Exercise: What do I want in my world in 20 years?

(Approx. 20 min.)

#### Circle Activity

Ask everyone to relax, sit in a comfortable position, close their eyes, and breathe deeply and comfortably.

In this relaxed position, ask participants to think about what they want to see in their world in 20 years. Ask participants to stay in this position and reflect for a few minutes. Inform participants that they will be sharing their thoughts with the group.

After a couple of minutes, ask participants to open their eyes. Begin the process yourself by saying, “In 20 years I would like...” Then list between one and five positive changes for society, your community, and/or your family that you would like to see.

The person next to you should then continue by saying, “And I would like to see...” and then list between one and five positive changes important to her for society, her community, and/or her family. Continue with the next woman in the circle and the one after that until everyone has spoken.



#### Questions for Group Discussion

- How did that feel? Are you ready to get involved or does it feel overwhelming?
- Which changes seem doable? Which seem impossible?
- Which issues do you want to address the most? Which issues do you want to address first?

## 4.2

### Exercise: Framing Our Issue (I)

(Approx. 45 min.)

Ask the participants to brainstorm the political issues and goals that most concern them. Write down on the chalkboard what participants say. For this exercise, it would be very helpful to assign two note-takers, one to take notes on the board and the other to record the group's discussion on paper for later use in other workshop sessions.

Divide the group into teams of three or four. Ask each team to draft one sentence (it must be just one, single sentence) that expresses a political goal, shared by the team members, that they all wish to address throughout the course of the workshop. This may take some time. Check in with the teams in 20 minutes, but teams may need longer.

#### *Examples:*

*Our aim is to support, through our writing, coalition-building, and campaign participation, female candidates at all levels of office whose political agenda advances the rights of women.*

*We want the newly proposed legislation aimed at improving the property rights of widows to pass in Parliament.*

Reconvene the group and ask a volunteer from each team to read aloud their political goal. Record these goals on the chalkboard and ask a volunteer to record them on a separate sheet of paper for future use.



#### Questions for Group Discussion

- Why was each particular goal chosen?
- Are many of the goals what you would consider “woman’s issues?”
- Do the goals help all of society? Who benefits? Who doesn’t?