

KENYANS FOR TAX JUSTICE MOVEMENT



@KenysForTaxJustice

United peoples power and non violent struggles from below for a just, fair and progressive tax systems

TRAINING TOOL FOR ACTIVISM
(Draft by Julius Okoth LIN FELLOW 2016)

WHAT IS ACTIVISM?

Activism:

Influencing outcomes including public policies and resource allocations decisions, within political, environmental, economic, social-cultural systems and institutions that directly affects peoples' lives

Activity one:

- Ask participants to write what affects people's lives within their contexts
- Ask participants to categories activism
- Ask participants to categorize different types of activism

Expected answers:

- **Contemporary colonialism**, in which international financial institutions like the world bank{WB} and International Monetary Fund{IMF}, and multinational corporations make decisions that overshadow the decisions made at the national level, thereby weakening national sovereignty and the ability of the governments to meet the needs of their people.
- **Break down of society-**
 1. when state uses non state agents to infiltrate and spy on groups,
 2. when the state is so strong that it goes unchecked
 3. When the state is too weak to protect people from harm or help improve their lives
 4. When any sense of mutual responsibility fails

The breakdown of society can have many sources:

- Bad laws
- Abusive behaviors by institutions
- Harassments and threats
- Second class citizenship
- Disrespect for a person's humanity
- Disrespect for a person's community's identity or expression
- Environmental degradation and pollution

Activity two:

Ask participants to make six groups:

Each group should be inclusive of gender

Each group should choose one of the six categories

- Bad laws
- Abusive behaviors by institutions
- Harassments and threats
- Second class citizenship
- Disrespect for a person's humanity
- Disrespect for a person's community's identity or expression
- Environmental degradation and pollution

Each group should dissect its category according to their own context, break it down to Specific problem like dichotomous key and write them on a flip chart.

Each and every group should be led by one person to make a presentation of their findings in front of other participants

Types of activism:

- Peace and human rights activism
- Children's rights
- Development
- Trade/WTO, trade rules and barriers, fair trade
- Gender
- Youth
- Health
- Debt cancellation
- Environment
- International Monetary fund/World Bank
- Disarmament
- Taxation
- Education
- Immigrant/Refugees
- Trade union rights
- Democracy and governance
- Land rights

Forms of activism:

- Ideological activism
- Mass activism
- Interest-group activism
- Bureaucratic activism

Activity three:

- Ask participants to describe or explain each form of activism
- Ask participants to describe or explain the strength and limitation of each form of activism

Ideological activism

This is a form of activism whereby group push to make their set of beliefs and values dominant, battling others in the street, in the halls of decision making bodies, and in electoral campaigns. This kind of activism requires total commitment and possible risk to security and life is required. This kind of activism can become narrow in perspective and can exclude people, focusing on “enemies” rather than building support among “unlikely allies”. Also, broad beliefs and values may not be translated into specific issues or policy battles

Activity four:

Ask participants to name and list ideological activism movements that they know locally, nationally, regionally or internationally.

Mass activism

Public actions-petitions, protests, demonstrations, sit-ins, non violent civil disobedience-by large groups of people to air major grievances, to confront power holders, and to find ways to engage different decision making systems. This form of activism requires mass participation and mobilization are essential elements. This form might influence specific situations but usually do not create comprehensive or systemic change. Also, some mass movement can be dominated by a single charismatic leader who may not encourage others to assume leadership roles. The result is a movement that that is unable to sustain itself over the long term.

Activity five:

Ask participants to name and list methods of mass public nonviolent actions

Interest groups activism

This is a form of activism whereby a group organizes around a specific set of issues and place demands on the system, through lobbying or other persuasion efforts. With this kind of form, decision makers only listen to those who are organized and skilled at presenting arguments and working within the system. This form of activism, often take money, meaning that people who are poor, near poor, or historically under represented- women, children, racial and ethnic minorities are often left out.

Activity six:

Ask participants to name and list different interest groups activism movement

Bureaucratic activism

This consists of researchers, economists and consultants from “think tanks” and universities try to influence bureaucrats and decision makers within the system. They are allowed access to present their findings and conclusions because they may be considered “experts”. Official decisions are vetted through slow deliberation processes and, when they are reached, are accepted as legitimate by many sectors of society. This form of activism put little value on public participation or the voices of the grass roots and community based organization that are not considered experts despite their direct experience with the issues being addressed. This form of activism rarely responds quickly to crises or opportunities.

Activity seven:

Ask participants to name and list different bureaucratic activism movement in the country.

Important!

In order to draw on the strength-and avoid limitations- from each form of activism, therefore activism must:

- Be people-and community-centered, drawing on their experiences to sharpen objectives and finding ways to amplify their knowledge and expertise so they are heard by decision makers.
- Build relationships with officials, experts and other parts of civil society to foster support for its goals.
- Use organized mass action to find ways to engage decision making systems, but not limit itself to mass action
- Translate protest into policy demands for specific institutional change, or move “from protest to politics” in the words Bayard Rustin, a leading strategist of the US Civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s

Vision of activism

Vision of activism is to embrace power relationships, people's participation in order to achieve fair, decent, just and equal relationship among mankind and between mankind and the earth

Activity eight:

Ask participants to differentiate between
“Relationship among mankind and between
mankind and earth”

- **Relationship among mankind-** it's about social inclusion, respect for human rights, social and economic rights and effective participation of all citizens without discrimination in democratic and development processes and in governance of public affairs.

- **Relationship between mankind and the Earth-** It is about protecting nature against human activities, that alters the composition of global atmosphere, emission attributed to industrialization, fossil fuel consumption, land use conversion, deforestation, soil degradation, water pollution and other human influence on environment

WHO IS AN ACTIVIST

The Activist

It starts like an itch. Something happens in our lives that causes us to question what we know. We open our eyes and seek the truth. The more we uncover, the hungrier we are for understanding. But the world isn't perfect, and there's a lot of pain and deception. We have the burning desire to do more. We read, a lot. We start protesting. Our family labels us as too negative, our friends start to pull away, our spouses reject us.

We are labeled as hippies, anarchists, angry kids, conspiracy theorists and terrorists. We are beaten by police and mocked by the news. Yet, we have become obsessed with spreading the truth. It becomes a very solitary journey.

- **An activist** is a person in the frontline, highlighting, challenging or supporting issues that has been ignored or submerged or is likely to be done, and it is or may directly or indirectly affects a person or people lives, either positively or negatively so that the duty bearers or those who holds power will or might listen and respond.

Objective of an activist:

- Demanding the state organs, institutions and individual to do something or stop them doing something for the sake of humanity and the earth
- Influence political, economic and social systems as well as institutions and public attitudes to enact , implement laws and public policies for the benefit of mankind and the earth
- To create change or transform society

Categories of activists

There are four categories or roles of social change activists who have different approaches to change

- Helpers
- Change Agents
- Rebels
- Advocates.

Each of these categories has its own relevance, which can shift through the different stages of a activism. All roles need to be present and work efficiently for the activism to succeed. In addition, each of the roles can be filled in an effective or ineffective way.

The rebel

The rebel is the kind of activist many people identify with social movements. Through nonviolent direct actions and publicly saying “no”, rebels put the problem on the political agenda. But they can be ineffective by identifying themselves as the lonely voice on society’s fringe and playing the militant radical. Rebels are important in Stages 3 and 4 in the movement process and after any trigger event, but they usually move over to other ripening movements in Stage 6 or later.

Reformers

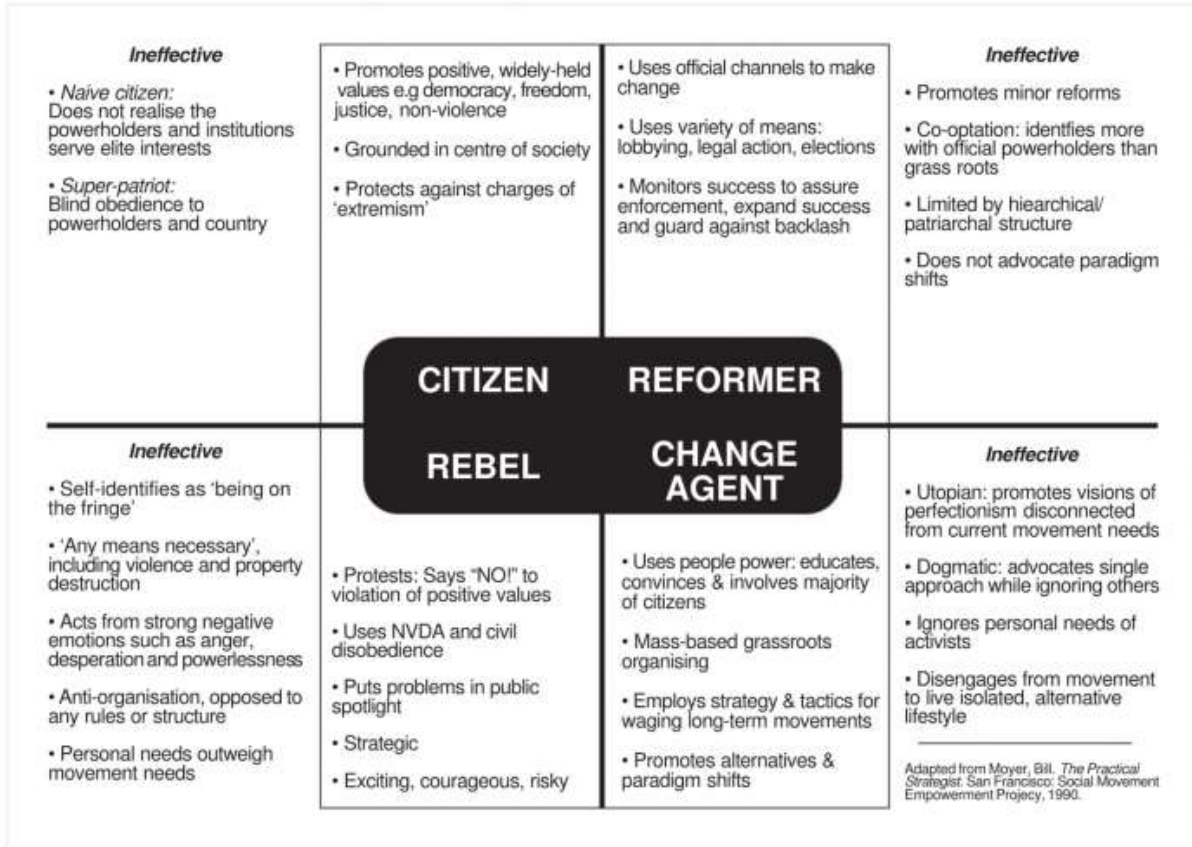
Reformers are often badly valued in movements, but they are the ones who prove the failure of existing channels or promote alternative solutions. However, they often tend to believe in the institutions or propose reforms too small to consolidate the movement's success. Citizens make sure the movement doesn't lose contact with its main constituency. They show that the movement acts at the centre of society (teachers, physicians, and farmers participating in the Gorleben protests), and protect it against oppression. They can be ineffective when they still believe in the power holders' claim to serve public interests.

The change agent

is the fourth and somehow key role in any movement. They promote education and convince the majority of society; they organize grassroots networks and promote long-term strategies. They too can be ineffective by promoting utopian visions or advocating only a single approach. They also tend to ignore personal issues and needs of activists. Many activists and groups identify primarily with only one or two of the four roles, because each involves different emotions and attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, sources of funding, political and, often, organizational arrangements.

Activists can be critical — or even hostile — to those playing other roles.

-Activists tend to consider the roles they play as the most important and politically correct one, while viewing other roles as naive, politically incorrect, ineffective, or, even, as the enemy. While there are certainly tensions between the different roles, recognizing that each has its own value within a social movement is important to achieve success.



Activity

Read a scenario. After reading ask the participants to be in small groups to identify 1. Helpers, 2. Advocates, 3. Change Agents, and 4. Rebels in the case study and: what is the value of the different roles? Relating to change and reporting back after each discussion

How do activist participate and engage:

- Resist and challenge the status quo, often using protest to find ways to engage governance institutions{when opportunities for protest exists}
- Raise critical issues-such as inequality-that otherwise would be avoided by those in power. In doing so, they begin to set a public agenda that reflects their goals and priorities
- Place issues and policy demands on political and policy-making systems-whether they are strong or decaying- because those systems are not responding to people's needs
- Ask others-individuals groups, and institutions- to act and do something that can help create positive change
- Initiate actions and innovate policy solutions
- Create space for public arguments and activism
- Actively engage members , supporters and affected constituencies developing their skills and understanding and strengthening future efforts

Qualities of an activist:

- Embraces power relationship, peoples participation and have a vision of a just and decent society
- Can be combative, coward or both, but guided by the spirit of unity, planning and strategic non violent discipline
- All the time respects and protects human rights and the environment
- Respects and preserves the dignity of all people regardless of differences
- Eradicates cruelty by protecting people from abuse, violence, and humiliation caused by communities and institutions-including the government, international financial institutions, and multinational corporations
- Provides public space for people to challenge unjust behaviors'
- Engages people in decision-making processes that affects their lives including:
 - Ratifying decisions, either formally or without protest, provided that opportunities for protest exist
 - Visioning and planning solutions to issues that affects their lives in basic ways, such as building a road, cleaning water ways, where to locate a large waste facility, repairing a school building, or modernizing a hospital for birth deliveries
 - Assessing and providing feedbacks on programs that are initiated, indicating which ones work and should be continued and replicated and which ones do not and should be altered.
- Protects people from risks and harassment when they participate and exercise their rights
- Fixes responsibility on society powerful institutions, both within and outside of government, to protect people from harm and help improve their lives

Activism action plan

Activism action plan is guided by three general principles

- Unity of purpose
- Intervention strategic planning
- Strategic non violent discipline

An Activist self evaluation

- Where does political space allow?
- Is the issue local, national, regional or international?
- Is the issue Micro or Macro?
- Is the issue one of the obvious rights? Or not yet recognized by all?
- What are the pillars of support on the issue?
- Who are our allies?
- What are our capacities, vulnerabilities and threats

Activity nine:

- Ask participants in different groups to sketch pillars of support
- Ask participants in different groups to sketch spectrum of allies

END

(Q&A)