

Tearfund’s step by step guide to movement building

Organising is an intrinsic part of building a movement for change. It involves supporting and inspiring people to become deeply committed and active towards a common cause. It is about helping people move from being disempowered by problems to being empowered to be part of the solution. It tells a hopeful story, builds leadership in people, and demonstrates the power of collective action. Organising can be an extremely effective and relatively cheap way of catalysing change, however, it needs a commitment of time and support. Read the steps below and ask yourself if you have the capacity to do this.

1. Analyse your capacity and context

It is very important that you observe your context and consider your role within it. Listen to people in your institutions and community. Here are some questions you should be considering:

- Are there some key issues, both locally and nationally, related to environmentally and economically sustainable development that people feel powerless to do anything about?
- Is there an appetite for change and hard work?
- Are there existing movements on these issues which you can bring others into? If so, could your role be to bring the people in your community/church/age group into the movement?
- Or is there currently no real movement on the issues that need addressing, in which case are you committed to starting something new?
- Do you live in a place where movement building is dangerous and needs to be approached carefully? [This resource](#) should help you think through whether this applies in your context.
- Do you enjoy forming relationships and developing leaders? Does the role of organiser below, and the impact you could have, inspire you? If not, is there someone else who do this well with your support?

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Unorganized community	Organiser’s role	Organised community
Confused	Interpret	Understanding
Apathetic	Motivate	Active
Scared	Challenge	Confident
Divided	Unify	Working Together
Going Nowhere	Plan	Purpose

¹ taken from <http://organizingforpower.org>

2. Identify potential people to join the movement

Who are we looking to identify? Pray and ask God to show you the right people, they may not be the most obvious people, or those with the loudest voices. Here is a list of things to think about, and certain characteristics to look for:

- Those who are already active in some way, serving others.
- Those who potentially have a voice or influence amongst their constituency. Their constituency could be their church, community, college etc.
- Those who already may have an interest in issues of poverty, justice and the environment.
- People who turn up for things and get excited by the issue - BUT are also still there a year later.
- People who are well connected and pass on their ideas and activities in ways that are contagious and attractive.
- Often the main Church pastors are too busy running the church, so it may be better to target 'lay leaders' such as small group leaders, worship leaders, and youth leaders.

As the person organising these people, you also need to think of ways of meeting them where they are at; eg acknowledging that they may mostly have time to pray while they are doing the housework if they are a parent of small children. Or you could inspire them that just living differently in their family and community networks might be the leadership they can offer (rather than turning up for many more meetings or taking on a big responsibility - though we need people to do the latter too).

Tearfund partners and allies, youth leaders or church leaders may be able to help identify suitable candidates. These people can be invited to an initial event at which the issue in need of activism is laid out in a creative way, and a vision for a transformation can be discussed amongst attendees. The planners can lay out a proposed journey towards the creation of a group of effective activists on the issue. It will be important to emphasise that you are recruiting 'activists', not workshop attendees, and that there is an expectation of activity beyond attending training. Not everyone invited will want to take engagement further - which is fine - go where the energy is.

Example: In Jos, Nigeria, they held an evening of music and discussion, with an inspiring and thought-provoking speaker. The venue was a garden, and there was a focus on connecting with the hearts and minds of the attendees.

3. Biblical reflection and prayer on our mandate to seek justice

[Live Justly](#) is a series of ten in-depth scriptural and practical group studies on the biblical response to poverty, injustice and environmental destruction. Each session includes an accessible exploration of the theology related to a certain issue, encouragement to pray and a suggestion for group and individual work in response. It works best if the sessions are run weekly, providing an opportunity for the group to have ten weeks in which they build their relationships alongside their understanding and passion. During this time the group should start

to bond, and ideas may start to emerge as to action that the group wants to take. The facilitator should nurture an increasing sense of interdependence in the group, encouraging peer mentoring and exploring their own creative ideas on taking action.

4. Technical capacity building

As the *Live Justly* course progresses, it may become clear that although the attendees are becoming inspired and motivated to take action, they might need further technical input to give them confidence on the 'how to' of advocacy and movement building for large scale change.

We are developing input for a 3 day bootcamp covering movement building tools, including: problem and solution identification tools, power analysis, communications; alliance building; social media; research and campaigns. Some of this is drawn from [Tearfund's Advocacy Toolkit](#). Please get in touch with naomi.foxwood@tearfund.org if you would like to discuss a potential bootcamp.

5. Identify leaders and mentors

Movements often have collective leadership or co-leadership. Movements are supposed to empower people; to multiply leaders rather than to keep all the power in one person or institution. Leadership demands so many different skills that one person is unlikely to manifest all of them.

However, it's worth being intentional from the start about identifying and nurturing those with a particular capacity and desire to multiply the movement. Ask - who am I developing today? Don't come away from meetings with all the work - delegate! Ask different people to chair; feedback on how it goes; give people a chance to try things. Take people on a leadership journey - awaken the imagination in people so that they're inspired to step out.

How can you identify leaders? Leadership will look different in different people and contexts, but here are some questions to consider when trying to identify activist leaders:

- do they have natural ability to engage with others?
- do they have a sense of God-given purpose and a passion for the issues?
- do they 'walk the talk', ie. do their lifestyles reflect their commitment to the issues, and have they been faithful in attending the training to date?
- are they brave enough to be a bit disruptive?

6. Facilitate and nurture group cohesiveness and ability to act

Not everyone who started the journey with you will still be with you at this stage. This is natural, there will always be a core group of committed people, some on the fringes, and some who decide to put their energies elsewhere. It's good however to think about how to help the group stick together and remain engaged and active.

- One way is to start taking action. An exciting joint endeavour will keep people interested. Support the group in a process of building a strategy and a plan of action,

using what they have learnt from the boot camps. Make sure there are things they can start working on immediately.

- Ensure the group stays connected. WhatsApp and Facebook are great tools if people have access to the internet.
- Pray together regularly.
- Ask people what seems to be working well, and what helps them engage.

Example: In one church in London, UK, the environmental group coordinator meets every few months one-on-one with each member. She invites their ideas for activities to carry out. In this way, members feel accountable - not only to the coordinator, but also to the other members, whom they know are also fulfilling their commitments.

7. Build relationships, make connections

- Find out which other churches, NGOs and community groups are already acting on similar issues to you.
- Make connections and act as a bridge between groups who have not related closely to each other before.
- Build relationships between people from diverse groups through sharing your stories and why you are keen to bring about change in these areas.
- Get in contact with any existing Christian social movements on these issues in your area/region/country and build relationships with the leaders and groups involved.

8. Get stuck in! Demonstrate/model the change you would like to see.

The *Live Justly* course will have provided the vision, the boot camp will have provided the technical tools, and the strategy will have laid out activities ... so it's time to get started.

Some final thoughts:

- In your actions, demonstrate the values you would like to see grow around you. Tearfund values are to remain loving, inclusive, and respectfully assertive in advocacy.
- Take care of yourself so you can maintain the pace without burning out. Do you need a mentor to support you?

Be the change you would like to see!