

# MYTH – REALITY – WIDELY–HELD VALUE

## A TOOL TO DESIGN CAMPAIGNS

We are using this exercise to help our "village" groupings (issue-based clusters) use values that are widely held within society to design a messaging strategy for our campaign. Planned duration: 75 minutes.

### PURPOSE/USES

- To provide a basis for effective messaging of social change efforts.
- To help frame a campaign strategy using the leverage offered by existing values (or higher principles) that are widely held within society at large (or by the key sectors we seek to influence).
- To reach beyond a seemingly desperate reality concealed under false mainstream ideas, by mustering the power of the mainstream's own value system.
- To help design slogans, public statements, press work, etc. so that they "speak" to those who would otherwise feel unmoved by the usual movement language.

### MATERIAL

- One prepared flip chart (posted sideways or "landscape") with the words "Myth - Reality - Value" as column headings across the top.
- Paper and pen for everyone.
- More flip chart paper and felt pens

### STEPS

#### 1. Explanation 10 min

- Explain in your own words the purpose of the exercise.
- Explain the basis for the tool
  - The **Myth** is an idea or assumption (sometimes reinforced by the media or powerful groups) that serves to hide or rationalize an unacceptable situation.
    - ✓ Give an example or two from the sheet (or provide your own).
  - The **Reality** is quite different from the Myth. While the reality is often quite obvious for those living under the weight of it, the Myth hides that reality to the rest of the population or the mainstream. That Reality is often quite outrageous, and that is why we want to change it.
    - ✓ Give an example or two from the sheet (or provide your own).
  - That is where the **Widely-held Value** comes in. We need to anchor our message in deep-seated values already held by the mainstream or the sectors of population we want to affect. Careful: we are not talking about the ideas, language or jargon held mainly by activists here, but about a value held and understood by our aunts, our uncles, our neighbours, our average person. When this value is understood clearly, without further explanation by almost everybody, we can use the value like a lever. The widely-held value provides us with powerful leverage.
    - ✓ Alternatively, there may be a higher principle that we can call upon. Is there a higher principle we can ask people to "rise up to" so that change becomes desirable for them?
    - ✓ Give an example or two from the sheet (or provide your own).

- Explain that each Myth should have one Reality and then one Value. Do not mix all myths together, then look at all realities, then list a bunch of values. The tool is to be used systematically, one Myth-Reality-Value at a time.

## 2. Individual work 15 min

- Announce that we will now work individually on the Myth Reality Value campaign design tool.
- Ask everyone to think about a specific issue that they are perhaps working on, but preferably under the overall "banner issue" of the village.
  - Give an example or two, if you can, of a specific issue under the village banner issue.
    - ✓ For example, if you are in the "March 8 Village" on women's rights, you may want to tackle the Myth around Rape ("Women who dress 'sexy' ask for it") or the Dowry ("Women are not killed because of it").
- Tell participants they have about 10 minutes to work on their own campaign design tool. Ask them to write the issue they have selected and to reproduce the Flip Chart with the headings Myth Reality Value.
  - Make sure they have access to pen and paper.
  - Roam while people are at work, and try to answer questions if there are any.

## 3. Small groups of three 20 min

- Next, ask participants to form groups of three or four to share their work and insights (for about 10 minutes).
- Tell them that after sharing amongst themselves, they should choose one of the specific issues to present back to the whole group.
- Tell them they are free to refine the Myth Reality Value grid that will present to the group. Ask them to choose someone from the group to act as the presenter.
- Provide each small group with a sheet of flip chart paper and ask that the retained example be transcribed on flip chart, to share with the group.

## 4. Whole group report back and discussion 30 min

- Once the time is up (or you if the small groups look like they have exhausted their discussion), ask the groups to come back for the final report back.
- Ask each group to come forward and present their chosen Myth Reality Value flip chart.
- Allow for some discussion, keeping track of time to make sure all groups have time to share.
- If you want (and have extra time), ask participants how they think the tool can be useful to them back home.

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*This tool comes from the late Bill Moyer, a long-time US activist who worked with Martin Luther King's Civil Rights Movement, the Anti-Nuclear movement and many other social movements in the US. The exercise was adapted by Philippe Duhamel for the New Tactics Project's Asia Regional Training Workshop in Thailand (2005), using information from George Lakey (Training for Change). You might want to bring back this exercise to help your organization design its campaigns for change, to help it refine framing and messaging through the leverage offered by widely-held values.*