



West Group Regional Training Workshop Report



Participants of the West Group Regional Training Workshop

**November 16– 23, 2003
Venice, Italy**

**Co-sponsored by:
The Center for Victims of Torture - USA
The Danish Institute for Human Rights – Denmark**

Hosted by:
European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratization Program (EMA)

New Tactics in Human Rights Project, The Center for Victims of Torture,
717 East River Road, Minneapolis, MN 55455
Phone: +1-612-436-4800 Fax: +1-612-436-2600 Website: www.newtactics.org

I. OVERVIEW

The New Tactics West Group Regional Training Workshop gathered together twelve human rights practitioners from eight different countries to train each other on effective tactical innovations that advance human rights and discuss ways to combine their tactics to build more effective strategies to further human rights.

The West Group workshop was conducted in partnership with the Danish Institute for Human Rights at the European Master's Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation (EMA), in Venice, Italy, Nov. 16-23, 2003. This was the third workshop in a series of five. The first workshop took place in Romania in April 2002 for Central and Eastern Europe, the countries of the former Soviet Union and Turkey. The second workshop, for African nations, took place in May 2003 in South Africa. Additional Regional Training Workshops will be held in Latin America and Asia.

The New Tactics Project is a cutting-edge global initiative that brings together tactical and strategic knowledge that is very much needed for peace, justice and human rights groups the world over.

—Philippe Duhamel, Canada
West Group Regional Training Workshop participant

In preparation for the Latin America workshop, Erika Bocanegra, a representative from the [Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos](#) in Peru, attended the West Group Regional Training Workshop to observe the training model and process as well as share tactical experiences cross-regionally. CVT is partnering with the Coordinadora for the workshop in mid-2004.

New Tactics expands what you know; enabling you to diversify not only your tactics but your strategies and increase your effectiveness.

The Regional Training Workshops are an integral part of building the New Tactics in Human Rights Project. The in-depth training conducted at the workshops is constructing the foundation for the international education and training sessions that will occur at the International Symposium in Ankara, Turkey in September 2004. The relationships built at the workshops are already strengthening networks and creating new opportunities for collaboration within the geographic regions as the people and the organizations they work with are harnessing their power and combining their tactics to further advance human rights in their communities. As we conduct more Regional Training Workshops, further develop our on-line tools and communities, and gather experienced tactical trainers from the regional trainings at the Symposium, we expect that these geographic networks and collaborations will grow and new international collaborations will be created around various thematic areas such as children's rights, legal tactics, working with businesses and others.

New Tactics staff believe that Sun Tzu's wisdom, written over 2,000 years ago, is as relevant today as it was then, to have effective strategies and tactics you must know thyself, know thy adversary and know the terrain on which the battle will be fought. You cannot develop a strategy or an alliance with someone unless you know what they do and what you can each contribute. The regional workshops are just one way we help human rights practitioners understand their own capacities, so they can create strategic alliances, assess the strength and capacity of their adversaries and determine the terrain that will afford them the greatest advantage for advancing human rights.

Participants of the West Group workshop were nominated by human rights organizations, various foundations that fund human rights work, and other actors; we received more than 200 nominations. We interview people to ensure there is an identifiable tactic, evaluate their effectiveness at sharing their tactic

in relation to their strategic goals and their willingness to teach their tactic to others and contemplate their work in a different light.

In recruiting the West Group workshop participants, many people were interested in attending and sharing their information, but did not feel they had six days to devote to the workshop. Nor that they would learn new innovative things that would dramatically impact their work. Some of the twelve who participated in the workshop also shared initial skepticism, but their closing evaluations made clear that the six days were invaluable and that the exchange of ideas and discussions were key to the workshop's success.

“I started the workshop thinking that only a few of the tactics would work for us, but after six presentations I see bits and pieces of each tactic that make sense for us to use.”

—Paul Mageean, Northern Ireland

West Group participants came from a broad range of disciplines, including social activism, law, history, politics and business.

Over the six days, participants trained one another on tactical innovations that they have used successfully in their countries. They **discussed ways to use these innovations to build stronger, more effective strategies** to further human rights. Participants continued the process of creating training materials after the workshop, so that their tactics can be shared more widely.

The workshop illustrated that tactical training experiences can be powerful in helping advocates share their work, learn new ideas, conceptualize their work differently, and feel inspired to create new possibilities. The analytical framework used at the workshop—**discussing human rights work in terms of tactics and strategy**—proved helpful for advocates. Together they learned how to go beyond traditional perspectives, contexts and thinking.



Maria Hirtenlehner, Austria

Maria Hirtenlehner, International Centre for Cultures and Languages, Austria: “This was a wonderful experience. . . This gave us new energy, new ideas to integrate a much larger field and go out of my borders. This was great.”

Anneke Bosman, Amnesty International—Netherlands Chapter: “I’ve been to many meetings and this is the best human rights meeting I’ve been to in my 20 years of human rights work... It really exceeded all my expectations. It’s easy for me to transfer this (tactical) aspect to Amnesty International and our colleagues.”

Paul Mageean, Committee on the Administration of Justice, Northern Ireland: “It was a brilliant time to sit back and reflect about what people are doing, what we can use, what we can do better. For example, the fact-finding tactic brought it right back to basics and needing to think about that again. It was very useful. The quality of the speakers was exceptional. Every single person was interesting, clear and expert at what they were speaking about and doing.”

Coaching

To help participants prepare and to ensure that their presentation focused on the tactical innovation being highlighted, rather than a broader description of all of their work, each participant worked with a CVT training coach to assist in the development of their tactic training presentation. While practitioners were very experienced in carrying out their tactics, training others in how to use their tactics was often a very new experience. Even those who have had extensive experience in providing trainings on a wide variety of issues

or topics found it helpful to work with someone who did not intimately know the tactic to help break down the steps of implementing it in order to make it understandable to others.

The training coach, Nancy Pearson, was in regular contact with the presenters. Participants submitted draft materials and training presentations along with their ideas for the transferability of their tactic to other issues, contexts, countries and regions of the world. Ms. Pearson provided comments and ideas to help clarify points and fill gaps in the materials and the training presentations and helped the participant create an interactive exercise that would be used during the training to help illustrate the tactic. This process considerably advanced participants’ understanding of the framework and concepts of the New Tactics project for strategic and tactical thinking even before arriving at the workshop.

Tactical Notebooks

Participants are asked to work with a notebook coach to create a tactical notebook highlighting their tactical innovations, the steps involved in implementing these innovations, and most importantly discuss the transferability of their tactic including ways and situations in which their tactic could help others in their work. These 20 page booklets are meant to inspire creativity and offer information on how a particular tactic can be carried out. The notebooks will be produced in print and available at no charge on the New Tactics website this spring.

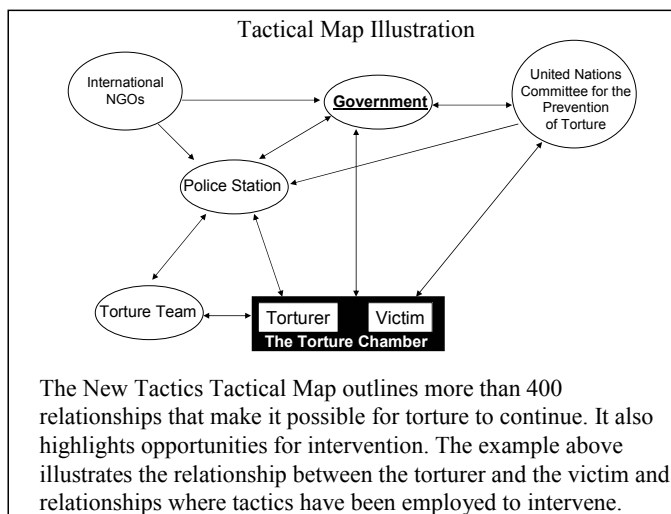
II. REGIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP PROCESS

The workshop opened with a welcome and an overview presentation of the project from Douglas A. Johnson, executive director of the Center for Victims of Torture and founder of the New Tactics Working Group.

He referred to the project in terms as ‘old wine, new bottles’. He encouraged participants to articulate their work (what is creative, innovative) not describe the problem, or the particular human rights situation but to describe in concrete terms what they are *doing* about the problem. Johnson encouraged participants to use a theory of causality that showed what they are doing about a human rights situation and how their work was advancing human rights. “We need to think about strategy and tactics—not just what the problems are and what we can do about them. We need to focus on more than just activities,” said Johnson.

Other key points from his presentation included:

- Sun Tzu, more than 2,000 years ago: Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.
- Strategy defines what’s important to do...Tactics embody how to do it.
- Examples given from a tactical mapping process to examine the continuing use of torture—one of the most documented and monitored human rights violations—in order to highlight the many different relationships and constituencies involved in maintaining torture where a variety of tactics could be employed. (See illustration)



- Our assumption is we can learn from each other’s movements and we can apply that knowledge in our own struggles. Strategies are highly particular. Tactics are more mobile and more flexible. They are very concrete actions taken to effect a situation.
- Tactics help define strategy. What we know how to do effects what we think is possible to do.

Tactic Training Presentations

Each training session had three components: an overview of the tactic, a question-and-answer period and an experiential or interactive portion to explore the use of the tactic further.

*“An excellent learning experience in terms of focusing on what you want from participants **beforehand**. The project as a whole—I can think of many networks which need to somehow get their people to the Symposium, or get the materials. The whole package.”*
—Jo Render, USA

Presenters were given two hours. The first 40 minutes was for the overview of the tactic, its context, the steps to implement the tactic, any obstacles or opposition encountered, the impact and results of the tactic and initial ideas for transferring the tactic to a different context, concern or issue. This was followed by a time for the other participants to raise questions, give comments or add their own ideas and perceptions of the tactic presented; and then a group exercise to engage the group in using the tactic.

Session One:

**Liam Mahony: Using protective international accompaniment
Peace Brigades International, USA**

Since the mid-1980s, human rights groups and other activist organizations being targeted with repressive abuses have been calling on international NGOs to provide them with direct accompaniment by international field workers. These field workers – usually volunteers – spend twenty-four hours a day with threatened activists at the premises of threatened organizations, in threatened communities or witnessing public events organized by threatened groups. The international presence serves as a deterrent against the use of violence. In order to ensure this deterrence, these international accompaniment organizations are part of transnational networks poised and ready to mobilize political pressure against perpetrators should their volunteers witness any attacks or should their clients be further threatened.

“We’re not there to work on their movement, but to protect it and give them the complete empowerment to run their own movement without our interfering . . . Accompaniment is not about doing something, but being somewhere.”

Session Two:

**Paul Mageean, Using international mechanisms to apply pressure on a national government to institute policy and legal changes
Committee for Administration of Justice (CAJ), Northern Ireland**

CAJ has succeeded in raising the issue of human rights abuses in Northern Ireland at the international level and by doing so, improving the human rights conditions in Northern Ireland. This was accomplished through the use in particular of one of the UN mechanisms—the Committee Against Torture. In order to use international mechanisms such as this effectively, a number of other tactics were used including written submissions to the Committee, lobbying in Geneva and monitoring the impact that the recommendations of the various Committee reports have had on Northern Ireland in terms of actually improving the human rights situation on the ground.



Paul Mageean, Northern Ireland

“We didn’t come to conclusions ourselves, but gave them all the evidence and documentation they needed to come to conclusions themselves.”

Session Three:

Sandra Coliver, Using civil suits to hold human rights abusers accountable

Center for Justice and Accountability, (CJA), USA

The Center for Justice and Accountability (CJA) works with refugee communities, human rights organizations and torture treatment centers throughout the United States to help survivors of egregious human rights violations to hold their persecutors accountable. CJA works to deter torture and other severe human rights abuses around the world by helping survivors hold their persecutors accountable. CJA represents survivors in civil suits, using the Alien Tort Claims Act of 1789 and the Torture Victim Protection Act of 1991 that give U.S. citizens and non-citizens alike the right to sue human rights abusers who live in or visit the U.S. CJA has used both these acts to bring civil suits against human rights abusers aiming to stop the U.S. from being a safe haven for human rights abusers and help survivors to break the silence that has enabled abusers to live in impunity.

Many countries in Europe and Latin America have laws similar to the ATCA. The strength of this tactic depends on building coalitions among diverse groups of activists, refugees, lawyers and people who know how to use the media. “These lawsuits are a great way to attract press attention...which in turn can be used to influence public opinion, public policy and enforcement.”

Session Four:

Anneke Bosman, Using text-messaging to build issue awareness, new constituencies and mobilization for action

Amnesty International, Netherlands

Amnesty International—Netherlands recognized the power and potential use of text-messaging technology (SMS) in order to generate new AI members, build awareness on the campaign against torture and engage new people (especially targeting young people) in quickly responding to cases of torture through Urgent Action appeals. The initial result was 520 new members gained directly from SMS participation with over 5,000 additional people becoming active in the SMS urgent action campaign.

“Text messaging is a quick, simple response, yes. . . . But they are thinking about human rights and torture every time. This brings them into a discussion they weren’t a part of before.”



Anneke Bosman, Netherlands

Session Five:

Philippe Duhamel, Using “dilemma demonstrations” to demand government transparency, Operation SaAMI, Canada

The Canadian government faced a real dilemma when hundreds of its citizens showed up at the Ottawa headquarters of the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) holding “Search & Rescue Warrants” for the draft documents for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Behind the success of the campaign was a strategy that included a number of tactics including the usual petition, letter writing, legal demonstration, etc. with the twist of an unequivocal ultimatum, civil disobedience training on the premises of the Canadian parliament, and the drama of the Search & Seizure Operation, a type of non-violent direct action. Operation SaAMI’s dilemma demonstration tactic is one part of an overall strategy that pressures the government to examine its values and the requests of its citizens.

“The difference is about building alliances. Finding the crack in the discourse that lets you put a wedge in and break the system. . . Don’t let your opponent define the terrain. Find the dilemma for the government and use it.”

Session Six:

Maria Hirtenlehner, Using cross-cultural exchange (tandems) between police officers and immigrants to build understanding and empathy

International Centre for Cultures and Languages, Austria

Originally, this idea of “tandem” was created for language learning. It has proven to be effective for building understanding and empathy among police officers for migrant populations. It came about after a number of violent incidents with the police and migrant communities in which several migrants died. The techniques the police used were not taught or a part of their training, but were common practice. The problem was clearly not with the laws—but somewhere else. In Tandem, police officers are paired directly with a person from another country who now lives in their community. They work and learn together using a mutually chosen project over a nine-month period. This pairing process is combined with regular meetings and group discussions in conjunction with a broader police course. Now in its fifth year, the course, with this “tandem” feature, has gained respect and interest. Recently, the Ministry of the Interior received 80 applications from higher level police officers requesting to be chosen for approximately 20 available positions in the course.

“We start the discussion by saying that police are the biggest human rights organization. It is their job to protect human rights. They always look surprised by this.”

Session Seven:

Reed Addis, Using a human rights compliance assessment tool to engage business in evaluating their human rights responsibility and the implications of operating in foreign countries

Danish Institute for Human Rights, Denmark

“A lot of tactics push civil society actors. Our tactic seeks to pull them.”

The Danish Institute for Human Rights has developed a Human Rights Compliance Assessment (HRCA) tool—based on environment impact assessment and international conventions and laws—to aid businesses in assessing their human rights obligations in states where they operate or plan to locate. With this tool, they are assisted in understanding human rights standards and implementation in the countries where they operate, as well as the possible implications and liability issues for their company.

“There is a sense that international standards are for governments not for businesses. Whether the company is or is not using this tool, NGO’s can use it to question companies and push the dialogue.”

Session Eight:

Uli Mueller, Using a human rights (“right to food”) framework to influence investment decisions and investment operations of financial institutions

FIAN, Germany

FIAN (Food First Information and Action Network) documents violations of the right to work and feed oneself and intervenes when that right is violated—such as unjust evictions from lands, denied access to fishing-grounds or other productive resources and when wages are below the minimum wage. A particularly creative area of FIAN’s work involves using a rights-based framework and documentation to pressure financial institutions to be accountable and responsible for investment decisions or investment operations that are denying people access to their human rights.



Uli Mueller, Germany

“We asked them (the financial organization) to use their influence to do things differently, and they said they couldn’t because they didn’t have the power to influence the system. So we said, get out. And they said, no we can’t get out, because then there is no chance to influence the system. So we decided to work together.”

Session Nine:

**Jo Render, Building corporate capacity to create constructive relationships based on a respect for Indigenous peoples’ rights
First Peoples Worldwide, USA**

“I’ve already received many ideas to incorporate into our training efforts. It also provided me with opportunities to reflect on what I’ve learned this far and receive ideas on possible solutions to current challenges.”

—Jo Render. USA

Based on shared experiences from Indigenous peoples and extractive companies (oil, gas, mining and logging), First Peoples Worldwide and Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) have collaborated to build company capacity to create constructive relationships with Indigenous communities. This tactic works to improve company understanding of effectively integrating communities into decision-making processes at an operational level, in order to achieve prior informed consent.

“One of the most difficult hurdles to overcome is the typical company attitude toward building community capacity for effective negotiations. The stereotypical business approach is that they don’t want the other side of the table well educated and well prepared, so that the company can get the best deal they can.... Companies are learning that the Indigenous rights movement will negate this approach—their deal will be toast. We need to redefine success. Not as the best deal for business, but free, prior and informed consent. And you can’t think of consent as a one off deal. It’s a process.”

Session Ten:

**Jennifer Prestholdt, Adapting traditional human rights fact-finding methodology to emerging human rights issues
Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights (MAHR), USA**

MAHR uses traditional human rights monitoring methods to document human rights abuses, but has made a practice of adapting the methodology in recognition of emerging human rights issues.

MAHR has identified and developed practical and sustainable strategies for adapting human rights monitoring methods to address domestic violence (in Eastern Europe and the U.S.), child survival (in Mexico, Uganda and the U.S.) and transitional justice (in Peru).

“It seems to me that this is a good opportunity to do capacity building beyond the human rights community, involving the professionals that do training and the thinking. Helping us to organize in our own organizations.”

–Jennifer Prestholdt

“Transitional justice is the next phase of human rights work. By putting an external monitoring factor in there it will help ensure that transitional justice is complete.”

Session Eleven:

**Tamara Muruetagoiena, Using social mediation to build pressure toward conflict resolution
Elkarri, Basque region, Spain**

Elkarri utilizes a form of dialogue called ‘social mediation’ to build civil society participation to put pressure on the groups in conflict to move toward peaceful resolution. Local forums are developed to engage community members from different backgrounds and traditions to come together to discuss the conflict. One of the most important themes of discussion is what the political parties can do to resolve

the conflict. Through the forums, they also develop initiatives to pressure responses from the political parties in the Basque region and throughout Spain to promote political action to develop peaceful solutions.

“We knew nine months before the peace conference that there wasn’t going to be an agreement. But we had created a monster. Public awareness was heightened and people were interested and wanted to work towards peace, to be involved.”

Session Twelve:

Liz Sevckenko, Identifying and utilizing historical sites to address current human rights issues and concerns Tenement Museum, International Coalition of Historical Sites of Conscience, USA

The Tenement Museum is one among many using historical sites of conscience around the world as a tool to create dialogues for democracy and bring diverse and divided people together to create spaces for re-building futures by remembering the lessons from the past. Using the site of an 1863 tenement building, the Tenement Museum provides a unique way to gain a new perspective on the present. The Tenement Museum went on to create the International Coalition of Historical Sites of Conscience in order to encourage the exploration and active use of identified places of significance in local, regional and national memory. This work also bridges the gap between past and present in order to continue the advancement of human rights.



Liz Sevckenko, USA

“[We] wanted to transform this evidence into a site of conscience. It had to be more than just putting this evidence up on a wall. We made a commitment to share and engage the public in dialogue—which became dialogues for democracy.”

Transferability Sessions

New Tactics works to encourage people to see tactics in a different light, making it possible for them to think about using another tactic or to apply and adapt aspects of tactics to other issues, situations or contexts. With this in mind we had three conversations throughout the week on the transferability of the tactics presented.

The objectives of these sessions included the following:

- 1) Embrace our commonalities while incorporating our diversity. Overcome the barriers that are raised when people think that their own issues or contexts are too different to be relevant to others or too different to use tactics that have been successful in other contexts or with other issues.
- 2) Build skills and practical expertise in viewing tactics from a variety of vantage points, analyze whether and how a tactic could be adapted and used to further their human rights work in other contexts.
- 3) Prepare for post-workshop plans and activities to strengthen networks and build linkages among the participants that could result in ongoing contacts, meetings,

“I find myself in the middle of work, but still I found some time [after the workshop] to look for literature on nonviolent action and to talk to DEG [one of the largest European institutions for long-term project and company financing] about the Human Rights Compliance Assessment—so the workshop really served its purpose.”

—Uli Mueller, Germany

trainings, collaborations and visits between participants who share similar tactics, issues, positions and concerns.

Even though each participant presented an in-depth look at one tactic with ideas for transferring it, these additional transferability sessions provided an opportunity to look at tactics from a broader standpoint. Participants could bring back these ideas and skills to their own organizations in order to build their capacity to be a resource for organizations in their home country on adapting and implementing new tactics.

The transferability sessions grouped certain tactics together for discussion purposes in order to facilitate thinking and discussion. Some participants expressed frustration with the sessions and felt that sometimes people were reaching to try and transfer a particular tactic to their work. Not all tactics work in all areas. The goal is to get people to think outside of the box and outside of their own experience and to challenge their thinking. Below are some of the issues raised and explored during the transferability sessions.

- Role of embarrassment in the first three tactics presented as an obvious link-- using information learned in cases, using accompaniment, educating others about a situation, etc. We extracted various themes, such as the need of most people and bodies to avoid embarrassment, and encouraged thinking about how to maximize the impact of the work.
- Important for lawyers to be savvy enough to know that the only way to win is not in the court room. Establishing case law and creating precedent is a key to future success.
- One of the objectives of international justice is to motivate officials to prosecute their own violations. We need to build the jurisprudence and case law and the public support.
- Three levels of transferring tactics were identified: in the same kind of situation but different geography, in a different situation, but the exact same tactic of accompaniment or partnering etc; or using the parts of a tactic to transfer principles and philosophies; and the combination of different approaches that you could use. Expanding and combining tactics.
- We need to think about our own personalities and the personalities of our organizations to think about what tactics make sense and what is reasonable. We need to think about creating the political space for things to happen. Seeing and creating a wider variety of tactics for the constituency they bring to an issue.
- Nonviolence is a fundamental part of the New Tactics project and our accompanying strategy and methodology. We are challenging those involved in human rights work to open your minds and not pick from our menu but to create your own with a wide variety of ingredients.
- “As activists it’s easy to organize around activities. It’s harder to work together to form statements, ideas on mission, goals, definitions of what reparations are etc. It takes time to define what we want, why we are working together – an attempt to organize ourselves and not try to save the world. We need to focus- it’s difficult, but possible.”
- Erika Bocanegra, Peru
- There was also discussion around the language of human rights, particularly as we seek to bring more people into the



Erica Bocanegra
[Coordinadora Nacional de Derechos Humanos, Peru](#)
New Tactics Partner Organization

New Tactics project who do not traditionally think of themselves as human rights activists or practitioners. For example, many US companies do not think in terms of human rights, but rather legal liabilities and in Italy the conversations are centered on ethics. As we focus on civil, cultural, economic, labor rights and others, we need to keep in mind that there are often different vocabularies and norms in order to pursue robust dialogue among all.

- Creating strategic alliances is fundamental; relationships of push & pull tactics.
- There is a growing debate about accountability and different national and international legislative norms. It is a challenge to see how to further this debate to bring new solutions to accountability. In considering the different push and pull tactics that involved businesses that were presented during the week, Philippe Duhamel asked the group, “Our (West Group Regional Training Workshop participants) work can create the conditions to further some of that work. It is a challenge to get beyond specific companies and doing voluntary actions when we want to see some accountability. Are there jump stations for some of these avenues- particularly in the European Union, between EU companies? Can we help level the playing field for companies with legislation rather than do multiple voluntary actions?”



Philippe Duhamel, Canada

III. CONCLUSIONS

At the end of the weeklong workshop the West Group participants had a shared knowledge and understanding of the New Tactics project and in depth knowledge of eleven additional tactics as well as having developed new relationships across sectors and countries.

Workshop participants were also excited to talk to their colleagues and networks about the experience and the New Tactics project to help others think about how they could use new tactics to do their work and accomplish their goals quicker and more effectively.

During the coming months the West Group participants will be writing their tactical notebooks. These will be made available worldwide. Many will be involved in fine tuning their training materials and making additional preparations for their presentations at the New Tactics Symposium in Turkey in September 2004.

“I’ll tell my colleagues at home that Amnesty, internationally, can learn from this!”

–Anneke Bosman,

Each Regional Training Workshop has been instrumental in building a strong base of tactical trainers. These experienced trainers will have an opportunity to further hone their skills and materials as they join the trainers from previous workshops and participants from around the world at the International Symposium to exchange skills, experiences and exploration of areas of cooperation and collaboration to build new tactics and strategies for advancing human rights.

“Partnership building- most don’t do it well, and don’t get training around it. One of the most exciting parts of this [New Tactics] project is that you’re building the space to learn how to work together.” – Jo Render, USA

“I’m leaving this week with a very keen sense that something big is happening, this is a cutting edge, pioneering work. I’m blown away! The people who started this were visionaries and knew what is needed in the world today. A lot of people are talking about what’s wrong or what’s desperate in the world. But this, being able to share this across borders is amazing.” Philippe Duhamel, Canada