

Village Exercise

Goals

- ▶ give participants' an experience of nonviolent action, specifically social defense;
- ▶ build the container through shared experiences;
- ▶ provide a group challenge.

What you need

- ▶ Lots of crayons/markers
- ▶ Some clothing change may be great (e.g. suit or tie)
- ▶ Two facilitators, at least

How it's done

Tell the group that this is their chance to create an ideal community. Divide into small groups (4 to 6 in size) and give each group large newsprint on the floor. Ask the group, "What would you like to see in an ideal community or village?" When people give examples, give them markers and encourage them to draw or represent their ideas on the paper at their feet. As ideas proliferate, give out markers to the various groups and encourage them to draw together. Announce they have ten minutes to draw. Give updates on the time.

After 10 minutes, ask groups to "take a tour": looking at the other communities and explaining their community to others. Then invite people to return to drawing for one more minute, to add anything more to the community. For this exercise to work well, it is important for each group to feel attached to their created community. At the end of one minute, take away markers.

Then, slide smoothly into a trainer role change, informing participants that you are the CEO of a multinational corporation. As you are telling them information about your corporation, circle the papers, until finally you step in and snatch some of the paper – for your factory, or plant, or mall or whatever. (You might even have a marker to mark up their community – e.g., to add a McDonald's.) Continue taking away paper in small amounts and continuing to talk about the advantages of development, etc. *It is imperative to time your paper snatching so that it is slow enough that groups are not devastated, and have motivation to organization.*

More activist groups will be able to tolerate faster snatching, "beginners" will need you to go *very* slowly. You do *not* want to create despair. Nor do you want to "win." Continue to take away paper until the group has organized sufficiently against you so that they have had an experience of nonviolent action. Of course, it is ideal if that is a successful experience, but if the group simply cannot mobilize itself, end the game, debrief on possible options, and try the game again.

Possible de-brief questions:

- ▶ How are you feeling? How did your feelings change during the campaign?
- ▶ What did you do that was effective in stopping the takeover of your communities?
- ▶ What stages did your community go through in preventing its demolition? (Support activists to get to strategy questions.)

*Tool adapted by Karen Ridd in Thailand, 1995
from a game led by Pom, Thai student and grassroots environmental activist, 1994*