

The Ladder

SPECIFIC ISSUE/S: Any kind of issue

PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES: To develop a review process for a subordinate group trying to shift power in its relationship with a dominant group

LENGTH: 30 minutes

GROUP SIZE: Any

GROUP CHARACTERISTICS: Any kind of group

FACILITATOR KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS NEEDED: Medium level of knowledge: the facilitator would need to know more than the participants; basic facilitation skills are sufficient

RESOURCES NEEDED: The ladder handout

INSTRUCTIONS: Explain the diagram first.

The left hand side shows the hierarchy of actions of the dominant group. The right hand side shows the subordinate group's relative positions. If both groups identify their actions as being on the same level then there is equilibrium.

The aim of the subordinate group is to be one step up from the level of the dominant group. If the dominant group members are placating then you (as subordinate group members) should be trying to persuade them to negotiate. If they are willing to negotiate then you should be saying that it is time to take more control. If they are willing to delegate then you should be saying that you don't want to be delegated to but that you want the right to make the decisions. And so on.

Optional preliminary task:

Discuss and clarify the meaning of the terms used in the model.

Tasks:

Identify your context and issue. In a generic group or movement this will probably be the same issue; for example, how are we doing in our campaign to ... stop mining/asset sales etc ?

Make groups of 4 or 5; if the group is not a generic one then participants should break into groups according to context: organisation membership, gender etc.

In these groups discuss and record your responses to these questions:

1. What is the dominant group (in relation to you) doing? Where are they on the hierarchy of actions? Are they manipulating us, patronising us, informing us? etc.
2. Where are we as the subordinate group?
3. What are the implications of our position for our strategy?

[For example, if you think the dominant group is consulting with you and you are making submissions then at least there is a balance. But if you want more power, when they are willing to consult then you should be saying, 'No, we want to be autonomous'.

If the dominant group is offering to consult then don't request information ... at least make a submission, or preferably, insist that 'we want to be doing things ourselves'.]

Bring the participants back together and share responses. Allow time for discussion of contrasting interpretations and analyses.

FACILITATION TIPS: See also the 'Thinking about relationships' activity and the 'Power pole' activity

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