

| Power, Political Participation, and Social Transformation | | | |
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| MECHANISMS & STRATEGIES | HIDDEN POWER | INVISIBLE POWER | VISIBLE POWER |
| <p>Mechanisms: Different Expressions and Forms of Power</p> <p>Participation in public decisionmaking seems relatively straight forward on the surface. It appears to be determined by the political context, clout, resources and expertise of different political actors. Yet invisible mechanisms of power shape the effectiveness of citizen participation. These mechanisms can foster powerlessness, marginalization or resistance.</p> <p>Different strategies are required to counter these mechanisms so that political participation can be more democratic and so people can exercise their rights and responsibilities. (See below)</p> | <p><i>Exclusion & delegitimization:</i> Certain groups are excluded from decision-making by society's and government's rules, practices, and institutions.</p> <p>They and their grievances are made invisible by intimidation, misinformation and co-optation. Leaders are labeled trouble-makers or unrepresentative; issues such as domestic violence are relegated to the realm of the private and therefore not subject to state action.</p> | <p><i>Socialization & control of information:</i> processes, practices, cultural norms and customs that shape people's understanding of their needs, roles, possibilities and actions in ways that deter effective action for change.</p> <p>Among marginal groups, socialization internalizes feelings of subordination, apathy, self-blame, powerlessness</p> <p>Crucial information is concealed or inaccessible.</p> | <p><i>Formal Institutions, officials & instruments:</i> Visible mechanisms that shape the formal ground rules of society.</p> <p>Formal institutions & officials: President, Prime Minister, legislature, courts, ministries, police, military, etc. United Nations, IMF, World Bank, multinational corporations etc.</p> <p>Instruments: Policies, laws, constitutions, regulations, conventions, implementing mechanisms etc.</p> |
| <p>Strategies: Principal advocacy strategies to counter powerlessness and exclusion</p> <p>Effective advocacy for social transformation requires alliances and comprehensive action plans that address each of the different forms of both visible and invisible power.</p> <p>(The arrows reflect the relationships between the different forms of power and the different types of strategies.)</p> | <p>- Building active constituencies around common concerns</p> <p>- Strengthening organizations, coalitions, social movements, and accountable leaders and structures</p> <p>- Mobilizing and demonstrating clout through direct action</p> <p>- Participatory research and dissemination of information that legitimizes the issues of excluded groups</p> | <p>- Education for self-esteem, confidence, citizenship, working collaboratively, political awareness and analysis around concrete problems</p> <p>- Activities that reinforce the above such as sharing stories, speaking out and connecting with others, affirming resistance, linking concrete daily problems to rights</p> <p>- Investigation, action research and dissemination of concealed information</p> | <p>- Lobbying & monitoring by public interest groups & expert lobbyists</p> <p>- Negotiation & litigation</p> <p>- Public education & media</p> <p>- Policy research</p> <p>- Shadow reports</p> <p>- Marches & demonstrations</p> <p>- Voting & running for office</p> |

The Political Empowerment Process



Adapted from Margaret Schuler, Empowerment and the Law: Strategies of Third World Women, OEF International, 1987.

The Women's Empowerment Framework

| Levels of Empowerment | Description |
|-----------------------|--|
| Control | Women and men have equal control over production and the distribution of benefits |
| Participation | Women and men participate equally in decision-making in all programs and policies |
| Conscientization | Women and men believe that gender roles can be changed and equity is possible |
| Access | Women gain access to resources such as land, labor, credit, training, public services, legal rights on an equal basis with men |
| Welfare | Women's and men's material needs, such as food, income and health care, are met |

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