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# Understanding and Applying the Strategic Principles of Consensus Organizing

3

**Purpose:** This chapter describes the strategic principles of consensus organizing, and provides concrete examples to illustrate each principle. Participants will apply the strategic principles to a case study of a consensus organizing intervention.

**Learning Objectives:**

- To identify and describe the strategic principles of consensus organizing and how they have been applied to real problems and issues.
- To analyze and apply consensus organizing principles to issues in low-income communities.

**Keywords:** strategic principles, self-determination, self-interest, mutual interest, contribution, pragmatic leadership, strategic partnerships

## THE STRATEGIC PRINCIPLES OF CONSENSUS ORGANIZING

Can you teach people how to be strategic? It's a question that trainers and teachers often ask as they approach a new training program or a classroom full of eager faces. Thinking strategically and pragmatically is the hallmark

of a good consensus organizer. Consensus organizing is based on several key strategic principles that are the fundamental beliefs and values that guide the implementation of the model and its activities. These principles also express the philosophy and the attitude behind the consensus organizing approach. As consensus organizers begin to enter a community, these principles are at the forefront of their minds as their organizing strategy takes shape. This chapter explains these principles and why they are important to consensus organizing.

Table 3.1 summarizes the five core strategic principles of consensus organizing (Consensus Organizing Institute, n.d.).

1. Solutions to local problems should come from affected communities.

Although successful neighborhood transformation always involves partnerships with external resource holders, the genesis of the solution happens at the neighborhood level. Residents of disenfranchised neighborhoods often have programs and initiatives "planned" for their communities. Consensus organizing argues that unless residents have real roles in determining their fate, these initiatives often fail. Self-determination matters in community organizing processes, especially consensus organizing.

2. Pragmatic leadership is present in communities, though not always recognized.

Good consensus organizers look at the world through a glass "half-full." They focus on the strengths of the people they meet and look beyond characteristics that others might judge as deficient. They understand something important about identifying leadership: There are many ways individuals can contribute. Pragmatic leadership is often discovered in neighborhoods through relationship building. A consensus organizer asks this simple question: What is this person doing right? There is always something if you look hard enough.

3. Self-interest can be harnessed as a motivation for improving the welfare of communities.

People often confuse self-interest with being selfish. It's not the same thing. Self-interest is a good thing—it motivates people to take action. A mother wants her unborn child to be healthy, so she gets prenatal care. A father wants a better-paying job to support his new baby, so he gets further education. Residents want their neighborhood to be crime-free, so they participate in a neighborhood watch. A consensus organizer uses self-interest as a tool to help improve conditions for families and neighborhoods. For example, a local employer's self-interest might be in finding employees, and a consensus organizer might be working in a neighborhood where people need jobs. A consensus organizing strategy that can "marry" these interests is what is meant by harnessing individual self-interest for the mutual gain of the community.

4. If a project achieves its short-term goals without positioning the participants to make even greater gains in the future, then an opportunity has been missed.

In consensus organizing, the process is more important than the product. The process of consensus organizing teaches people skills that can be used time and time again. Working with a consensus organizer, residents should learn more about problem solving, local power structures, conflict resolution, and neighborhood development. The consensus organizer's role is not meant to last forever. In fact, you will know that a consensus organizer is doing well when the neighborhood needs him or her less. A successful consensus organizing process gets something done while transmitting important lessons and knowledge.

5. Building relationships and strategically positioning leaders to make a program work requires time, care, and finesse.

Nothing about community organizing is simple. One of the challenges of working in distressed communities is that the "well" has likely been poisoned, meaning that someone has been in this neighborhood before you. Suspicion, mistrust, or even hostility may be encountered in initial community organizing work. Real relationships do not develop overnight. They are built over time and carefully tended. Consensus organizers must have good relationships with various factions in a neighborhood (and every neighborhood has these) if they are to build relationships between groups. A good consensus organizer is a broker of relationships and a bridge builder between people and organizations that at first may think they have nothing in common.

Each of the above strategic principles is described in more detail below, demonstrating how the principles can be applied in low-income communities.

## *Solutions to local problems should come from affected communities.*

Consensus organizers believe that solutions to local problems should come from affected communities because of past failures by outside experts and the sense of distrust these experiences create among residents. Consensus organizers argue that efforts to improve communities begin at a serious disadvantage if the strategies and specific objectives are identified and set by people outside of the community. Individuals in low-income communities are often suspicious of attempts by outsiders to decide what is best for them. In numerous instances, these suspicions have been validated and deepened by their experiences with outsiders. Well-intentioned outsiders often announce grand plans to improve communities, and give up because they are not able to reach their grandiose goals due to miscalculations of community needs, resources, and potential. Low-income communities are also often studied, with little or no benefit to the residents living there. These experiences have often left residents feeling betrayed. Outsiders often miss the subtle

**Table 3.1 Strategic Principles of Consensus Organizing**

| *Strategic Principle* | *Key Strategies* | *Example* |
|---|---|---|
| Solutions to local problems should come from affected communities. | • Strategies and objectives are set by the community.<br>• Incorporate community's existing social networks.<br>• Analyze and identify individual self-interests and mutual community interests and build relationships based on those interests. | Residents bring recent crime problems to the attention of the local police and ask for assistance in developing a crime watch program. The local police work with residents to develop a neighborhood watch. Relationships are built between residents and the police. |
| Pragmatic leadership is present in communities, though not always recognized. | • Identify trusted, respected, behind-the-scenes leaders.<br>• Position leaders to take responsibility for effort.<br>• Build leaders' skills and confidence to succeed. | An older woman to whom young mothers turn for parenting help.<br>A teacher who stays after school hours to help his students with their studies. |
| Self-interest can be harnessed as a motivation for improving the welfare of communities. | • Analyze and identify the interests of members of external power structure (e.g., government, philanthropy, corporate, social service).<br>• Position them to make genuine contributions aligned with their and the community's interests. | A local foundation director who has $1 million to improve housing in local distressed neighborhoods, but who does not have relationships with community-based organizations located in those neighborhoods. |
| If a project achieves its short-term goals without positioning the participants to make even greater gains in the future, then an opportunity has been missed. | • Position community leaders to take the lead on projects.<br>• Use short-term projects to build community's skills and relationships with power structure to lay the foundation for more comprehensive efforts. | A neighborhood cleanup that builds relationships among residents and between residents and the city can lead to new opportunities, such as improved code enforcement and the rehab of dilapidated housing in cleanup area. |
| Building relationships and strategically positioning leaders to make a program work requires time, care, and finesse. | • Understand and gain trust of leaders of the community and power structure.<br>• Break down stereotypes and misperceptions that community and power structure have of one another.<br>• Invest the time up front to position leaders of the community and power structure to develop genuine strategic partnerships. | Going to churches, agencies, and community organization meetings, and meeting residents one-on-one in their homes. Attending local housing symposiums, city council meetings, and chamber of commerce meetings, as well as meeting one-on-one with members of the external power structure. |

distinguishing features of a community, making the application of generic programs difficult and impractical. Furthermore, outsiders typically do not express ideas and plans in the same way as community residents and stakeholders, often resorting to jargon, missing nuances, and appearing to condescend (Consensus Organizing Institute, n.d.). In fact, Putnam (1993) argued that the most successful community-based organizations are those that are participatory and indigenous to local communities, not those implanted from the outside.

Furthermore, communities often have existing social networks, including networks of informal relationships and ways of exchanging information. Programs that develop solutions to community problems without engaging the community miss the opportunity to incorporate these relationships and structures into the problem solving process. When community leaders are put in a position to take responsibility for addressing issues and creating opportunities within the community, they often feel a sense of ownership of the process and its objectives. When residents see that neighbors they regard as leaders are wholeheartedly behind an idea, they are more likely to get behind the idea as well. When people receive information from individuals they trust, they are much more likely to believe and act on the information. The result can be widespread, energetic, and enthusiastic community support for the effort, with individuals in the community playing a role in making the effort a success (Consensus Organizing Institute, n.d.).

One of the first steps a consensus organizer takes is developing an understanding of the members of the target community by conducting a community analysis (this is explained in detail in Section III). Consensus organizers assess community members' self-interest and perceptions, and the existing relationships among residents that connect them to one another. Consensus organizers analyze the issues and interests that unite the community, and those that divide it. They also identify individuals with the widest sets of allegiances within the community to build connections and trusting relationships. How individuals in the community receive and exchange information is also analyzed. This process ultimately leads to the identification of existing and potential new leaders for the effort. Consensus organizers slowly and painstakingly build bonding social capital and relationships among these leaders in order to bring them together to plan and help carry out the community's agenda (Consensus Organizing Institute, n.d.).

### *Pragmatic leadership is present in communities, though not always recognized.*

Consensus organizers believe that dedicated, capable, and pragmatic leaders able to forge practical solutions to community problems exist in even the most disadvantaged communities. These are often individuals who are highly trusted and respected by their neighbors. Consensus organizers identify leaders who work behind the scenes, don't attract attention to themselves, and find it uncomfortable and unnatural to be in the spotlight. They are the

people on their blocks to whom others turn for information, advice, and support. Examples may include:

- an older woman to whom young mothers turn for parenting help;
- a man to whom teens look for advice about what courses to take in school in order to qualify for good jobs;
- a small business owner who could relocate her business to a wealthier area of the city, but recognizes the value of staying connected to the community and manages to prosper there; or
- a teacher who stays after school hours to help his students with their studies.

Consensus organizers position such community leaders to take responsibility for planning and guiding complex and sometimes technical reforms. For example, pragmatic, dedicated community leaders carefully brought together have been able to plan and guide the physical rehabilitation of neighborhoods, including the acquisition and development of property. They take on this responsibility despite having no prior experience or technical knowledge concerning real estate, affordable housing, planning, or architecture. Their energy, patience, pragmatism, and credibility with others in the community enable them to master the necessary processes and make the changes that their communities desire. Consensus organizers work with these leaders to increase the skills and confidence they need to achieve their goals (Consensus Organizing Institute, n.d.).

## *Self-interest can be harnessed as a motivation for improving the welfare of communities.*

As we saw in Chapter 1, consensus organizers use an approach called parallel organizing in which community organizers mobilize and bring together the interests within the community, as well as the political, economic, and social power structure from outside the community (Chaskin, Brown, Venkatesh, & Vidal, 2001; Eichler, 2007). Consensus organizers simultaneously identify the self-interests of community residents and stakeholders, and members of the external power structure. Consensus organizers look for ways in which the community's interests overlap with the interests of the power structure. Individuals and institutions from the external power structure are typically identified as relevant to community issues; however, they are often treated as either sources of charity or as actors who need to be coaxed or forced into helping communities. Conflicts can occur when the requests (or demands) are irrelevant to or inconsistent with the bottom-line interests and abilities of the power structure. Sometimes these external resources get a residual benefit from their involvement (such as the good publicity that can result from a contribution to charity) but even in those cases the role or contribution can be peripheral to their central agenda (Consensus Organizing Institute, n.d.).

Consensus organizers argue that the agendas of the power structure and resources external to the community often do intersect with the community's

desire to solve its problems. Consensus organizers analyze and identify the interests of members of the power structure and position them to be able to make genuine contributions to issues and potential solutions identified by residents. They engage those leaders who are sincerely committed to solving community problems, and who can make contributions that are in line with their self-interest (Consensus Organizing Institute, n.d.). Consensus organizers believe that they can engage the external power structure based on the combination of mutual benefits and economic gains, not just charity, goodwill, or public relations (Gittell & Vidal, 1998). The following are examples of individuals and institutions that could be engaged in the community problem solving process, and why:

- A local banker who needs to make loans to the community because of Community Reinvestment Act requirements, but also wants to work with a community-based organization to ensure that the investment improves the quality of life in the community. He also has a personal connection to the neighborhood because he and several generations of his family lived in the neighborhood for many years.
- A local foundation director whose board just approved $1 million in new funding to improve housing in distressed local neighborhoods, but who does not have any relationships with community-based organizations located in those neighborhoods. She has a personal interest in affordable housing because in her prior job she worked to advocate for and develop affordable housing in another low-income community.
- A local police chief who wants to institute community policing, but feels strongly about actively engaging residents in developing and implementing the program. He previously worked as a community-oriented police officer in another community, and still has fond memories of the friendships and relationships he built with residents.
- A social service agency whose employees want to expand their services and locate them in low-income communities because they feel they are not making enough of a difference in the lives of families and children. The agency has a long history in the community, beginning as a traditional settlement house, and the new director would like to reestablish the agency's historic roots in the community.

## *If a project achieves its short-term goals without positioning the participants to make even greater gains in the future, then an opportunity has been missed.*

Consensus organizers design programs aimed at expanding opportunities in communities and paving the way for the community to build upon each of its successes. While programs often achieve their short-term goals, there is typically less emphasis on laying the groundwork for removing other obstacles. For example, a social service agency might try to connect community residents with job opportunities through a community jobs fair that

brings together employers with vacancies and community residents looking for jobs. The event might be a success in connecting residents to jobs; however, the agency remains the point of contact for the employers, not the community. Furthermore, the next time community members want to do something to expand opportunities, they would have to rely on the social service agency or start from scratch (Consensus Organizing Institute, n.d.).

Consensus organizers build residents' skills and develop relationships among residents and members of the power structure that serve as vehicles for future efforts. For example, rather than using a jobs fair as its starting point in expanding community opportunities, a consensus organizer would start by developing a thorough understanding of the community, and identify and build trusting relationships with and among pragmatic community leaders. If those leaders thought that a jobs fair would be a useful first step in linking the community to opportunities, the organizer would help position the leaders to plan and carry out the jobs fair. The leaders would work together to learn about what a jobs fair entails, make plans, identify potential resources outside the community who could contribute to the success of the jobs fair, and contact the employers who might wish to operate booths at the fair. In the course of this effort, the leaders would solidify their relationships with one another, build relationships with external resources and employers, and develop skills in event planning and diplomacy. After the jobs fair, the leaders would be able to use their new skills and relationships to build more comprehensive efforts to expand opportunities (Consensus Organizing Institute, n.d.).

Consensus organizers make a deliberate effort to facilitate bridging social capital and ties between residents and the power structure that bring new ideas, resources, and opportunities (Gittell & Vidal, 1998). New relationships and community capacity are built through projects such as the jobs fair mentioned above, as well as neighborhood cleanups, crime watches, and arts and cultural activities that are designed to bring people together in new ways, to experience success, and to build momentum and confidence, and stronger ties over time (Gittell & Vidal, 1998). These new relationships and connections help to foster norms of trust and cooperation, and lead to broader efforts that benefit the entire community.

### *Building relationships and strategically positioning leaders to make a program work requires time, care, and finesse.*

Consensus organizers pave the way for collaboration by understanding and gaining the trust of each of the people whose participation would help make the program a success. Collaboration is complicated, and people often underestimate the attention, patience, and planning that are necessary to build productive relationships. Within low-income communities, stereotypes, suspicions, misperceptions, and old resentments may complicate the task of bringing leaders together to address community issues. The pragmatic, widely respected resident leader from one block may have questions about the motives of the leader from another block. The community's small business owners may have the impression that all the tenants in the public housing

complex are lazy and apathetic. The principal of the local school might wonder why only a few parents attend back-to-school-nights, while the parents believe that the principal does not value their input. Navigating this maze of perceptions and developing mutual trust and collaboration can be a daunting task (Consensus Organizing Institute, n.d.).

Forging relationships between community leaders and the members of the power structure can be even more difficult. Even though they may share some common interests, they may have widely differing perceptions of the key issues and trends in the community, and may express themselves in ways that are alien and even threatening to one another. They may start with stereotyped and unflattering views of each other. Corporate and government leaders may view the residents of low-income communities as alienated, apathetic, and incapable of assuming responsibility for serious programs aimed at addressing economic issues. Community leaders may view private and public sector leaders as motivated solely by the pursuit of profit or power, arrogant and imperious, unconcerned about the welfare of communities, and likely to betray communities at the first sign that their interests might be served by doing so (Consensus Organizing Institute, n.d.).

Within communities, consensus organizers analyze patterns of informal relationships, avenues of communication, support networks, personal and political allegiances, and sources of conflict. They identify and build personal relationships with respected, pragmatic community leaders, while gradually learning the nuances of their perspectives and personalities. Typically this information gathering and relationship building process requires an investment of several months. The payoff comes when the information and relationships lay the groundwork for developing and implementing a practical strategy for community collaboration. The strategy might, for example, bring together two or three community leaders with just the right mix of personalities to get along well, and enough combined credibility to leverage their cooperation to gradually involve other community leaders (Consensus Organizing Institute, n.d.).

Consensus organizers undertake a similar analytical and trust building process with members of the external power structure, including leaders of private and public sector institutions. While gradually building personal relationships with the leaders, consensus organizers seek to develop a detailed understanding of their activities, interests, concerns, personalities, and objectives. They also learn about the relationships and linkages that already exist among these leaders and their institutions. Based on this analysis, consensus organizers develop a strategy for positioning these public and private sector leaders relative to one another and relative to the leaders of low-income communities. Through this strategy they build productive (and often surprising) relationships that can be used as sustainable vehicles for linking communities with otherwise unreachable opportunities. When the relationships are effectively engineered and the participants are positioned strategically, each participant ends up playing a role that is consistent with his or her self-interests, and that he or she can play comfortably and well. Moreover, each successful effort becomes the foundation for even more successful and productive endeavors.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think solutions to local problems should come from affected communities? Have you ever worked or volunteered for an effort that did not use this approach? How well did it work? What happened? What would you do differently?
2. Why is identifying pragmatic leadership in neighborhoods important? How would you do it?
3. What do you think of when you hear the word "self-interest"? Is it positive, negative, or neutral? How and why do you think self-interest is important for community organizing?
4. Why do you think community improvement efforts often stop short of their longer-term goals? In other words, what prevents them from achieving these goals? How do you think you could use consensus organizing strategies to prevent this?
5. Why do think people don't take the time to build the kinds of relationships necessary for long-term community change? What are the obstacles? How might they be overcome?

## Case Study Exercise

**Instructions:** Read the following case study on the Mon Valley Initiative, which is located near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Break into small groups and answer the questions that follow. Afterwards, have a large group discussion about your answers.

### How the Strategic Principles of Consensus Organizing Were Applied in the Mon Valley

The Monongahela River Valley (Mon Valley for short) is a region encompassing a string of divided cities and towns located along the Monongahela River near Pittsburgh, which was devastated by the closing of local steel mills in the 1970s and 1980s (Eichler, 1995). Massive layoffs (approximately 120,000 jobs) led to widespread unemployment and consequent poverty, and anger and frustration were rampant (Eichler, 2007). Residents felt a great deal of frustration about the apparent paralysis that afflicted their elected officials, who didn't seem to be able to handle the situation. However, it was difficult for residents to see themselves as developing the solutions. In an attempt to stir community passions, conflict organizers tried to personalize the source of the communities' problems by demonizing the plant owners. One tactic they employed was to march into a plant owner's church during a Sunday morning service, disrupt the service, and point to the plant owner and publicly accuse him of having caused the communities' unemployment and poverty. Such tactics usually backfired by generating sympathy for the targets. In the

end, no widespread sense of resident empowerment, and no measurable improvement in the quality of life in the Mon Valley resulted from these efforts.

Despite these bleak circumstances, there were outside institutions willing to take the initiative and devote resources to improving conditions in the Mon Valley. The first crucial element for consensus organizing is the presence of an individual or institution with a vision or some idea for solving a problem. In the case of the Mon Valley, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development, a group of corporate and civic leaders in Pittsburgh, were disturbed about the deterioration of the communities in the Mon Valley (Beck & Eichler, 2000). They knew there was a problem that required a community development solution, but were unsure how to make it work. Robert Pease, the director of the Allegheny Conference, had an idea. He wanted to hire Mike Eichler, an experienced Pittsburgh organizer, to develop a plan. Eichler's plan focused on building new community-based organizations throughout the Mon Valley and forging productive partnerships between Mon Valley residents and Pittsburgh's corporate and philanthropic community. This idea was embraced by the Allegheny Conference and sold across the spectrum by local leaders. For consensus organizing to work, an idea or solution must be sold by a local player with some clout, and in this case, it was Robert Pease. In 1985, the Allegheny Conference on Community Development used funds from the Heinz Endowment to hire Mike Eichler to explore the possibility of implementing a community-based development effort in the Mon Valley (Eichler, 2007).

Eichler's most important task was to develop a strategy. Reconnaissance of the Mon Valley communities and downtown interests indicated that each bore a substantial distrust for the other. Residents were suspicious about the institutional partners' motives and depth of commitment. Would they really allow the residents to set their own agenda, or would they eventually seize control? Downtown interests were suspicious because of the recent conflict-oriented organizing efforts. Would hardened activists take control of the process and use the downtown interests' own resources to attack them? Eichler concluded that in order for the effort to have any chance of succeeding, he would have to persuade each side that the other had demonstrated a commitment inconsistent with the feared ulterior motives. In order to reassure community members, he would have to have resources available to deliver immediately, as well as a clear mandate that projects would be controlled locally. In order to reassure the corporate partners, he would have to make the organizing effort broadly inclusive, ensuring participation beyond that of self-designated community leaders and activists (Eichler, 2007).

Eichler's plan in the Mon Valley hinged on the engagement of the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) in the work of organizing residents and engaging the corporate community in a redevelopment effort (Beck & Eichler, 2000). LISC was new to the consensus organizing method of parallel organizing, which required organizing work inside the neighborhood with residents and outside the neighborhood with external resources holders. While LISC had supported CDCs throughout the country, they had never been involved with a full-scale effort to form a significant number of CDCs in

a local site. However, LISC embraced the plan and was a surprising partner to many involved in the Mon Valley effort. Thus, LISC came to the table with a new role as a major player that had not been previously active or engaged in the community. LISC contributed funding and staff to the effort, and instituted several quality control measures. Before LISC would release resources to community organizations, the organizations had to demonstrate a long-term commitment to the project by successfully recruiting members and sustaining activity over a period of time. These rigorous expectations appealed to the institutional partners, who were reassured that their investment would likely yield tangible, beneficial results. The group of residents who were attracted by the project's high standards tended to have a particular set of qualities that made them extremely valuable members of community organizations, including pragmatism, patience, and an unwavering dedication to promoting and sustaining the organizations they joined (Eichler, 2007).

LISC's involvement demonstrated evidence of leverage and support for the work of the CDCs. However, consensus organizing goes beyond lip service and places external players and neighborhood residents in the same room. In consensus organizing, positive action is demonstrated in both camps, thus breaking down the isolation and stereotypes that often keep people apart. In the Mon Valley, Robert Pease and other external players became actively involved with residents who volunteered for the CDCs, meeting with them in their communities and advocating with them for resources.

Consensus organizing projects must also demonstrate results on two levels (Eichler, 2007). First, there is a practical and tangible product of the organizing work that improves the community, such as new affordable housing. Second, enhanced capacity and leadership are facilitated among residents and external players so that the organizing work can continue. These elements are necessary to form the strategic partnerships and collaboration that define consensus organizing. In the Mon Valley, community organizations with a broad indigenous base of leaders were formed, which led to the formation of the Mon Valley Initiative (MVI), a coalition of 17 local organizations (Eichler, 1995). Several of the CDC board members ran and won elected political positions in their communities. The MVI has received national recognition for engaging community volunteers and building collaborative ventures with government and corporations in a region where collaboration had previously been thought impossible (Eichler, 1995). The community organizations focused on a variety of development projects, as determined by the interests of the local residents and available opportunities. Often in collaboration with institutional partners, the organizations successfully completed projects related to housing, and commercial and industrial development. According to the MVI (n.d.) Web site, the organization has created 252 units of affordable housing since 1988. In addition, since 1999, MVI has provided workforce development services to more than 5,674 Mon Valley job seekers, formally enrolling 1,226 participants and placing 628 into employment or skills training leading to employment through a network of over 225 regional employers. In addition, MVI has a community outreach team that provides a critical link

between CDC volunteers and MVI staff, helps to recruit new volunteers, and assists the CDCs with a variety of organizational issues. Today, the MVI continues to be an effective catalyst and forum for community involvement and leadership development in the Mon Valley.

## *Questions About the Mon Valley Case Study:*

1. Identify where you see the strategic principles of consensus organizing at work in the above case study:

(1) Solutions to local problems should come from affected communities.

(2) Pragmatic leadership is present in communities, though not always recognized.

(3) Building relationships and strategically positioning leaders to make a program work requires time, care, and finesse.

(4) Self-interest can be harnessed as a motivation for improving the welfare of communities.

(5) If a project achieves its short-term goals without positioning the participants to make even greater gains in the future, then an opportunity has been missed.

2. Overall, what did you learn about the strategic principles from this case study? What questions do you still have about the strategic principles? How difficult and/or easy would it be to implement these principles?

## Field Exercise

**Instructions:** For this field exercise, apply the strategic principles of consensus organizing to the issues you discovered in the field exercise you completed in Chapter 1. For that exercise, you could have interviewed a community resident to find out about the community and an issue or challenge they were facing, and/or read an article from your local paper about a problem in a poor neighborhood. Review the issues you discovered doing the field exercise in Chapter 1. If you did not complete one of the field exercises, complete it first before doing this exercise. You may also have to interview the resident you spoke to previously and/or search the newspaper for more current articles on the issue.

*Answer the Following Questions:*

1. Who is affected by the problem, issue, or challenge you discovered? Were they involved in developing solutions to the problem? If so, how were they involved? How would you involve them, based on the strategic principles of consensus organizing?

2. Do you think that pragmatic community leaders were engaged? If so, describe these leaders and what you think makes them pragmatic. How would you engage and/or develop pragmatic leadership based on the strategic principles? Who would you involve and why?