PPR Tools for Action Summer School

PPR Guide for Choosing Issues

It is very important that you choose the ‘right’ issues when deciding to start a campaign. PPR’s approach requires that people directly impacted by a problem select the issues themselves, but this selection is based on same broad ‘criteria’ that assist in building strong campaigns. Some of these include:

Based in international human rights standards
It is important that your issues are not seen to be arbitrary – that they are just ‘needs’ or ‘desires’ or ‘wish-lists’. Ensuring that whatever issue you choose is covered by international human rights standards shows that it is a ‘right’ that the state has an obligation to deal with. It also fulfils a strategic purpose in that it is easier to build international alliances and involve the UN, and other transnational rights organisations, if the issues you choose are ‘rights’.

Found in local law and policy
While the international human rights framework demonstrates that the state has an obligation to act, domestic law and policy can outline, in much greater detail, what public authorities should be doing. It can often provide specific actions, timelines and processes which should be taken to address a problem. This can be powerful to show how they are not doing this, or that standards are not sufficient and need improved.

Capable of being ‘measured’
This approach is about getting outcomes, not promises or commitments. In order to see if things are getting better or worse, you have to be able to measure the problem. The only people truly capable of determining if a problem is getting worse or being dealt with are people directly impacted by it. PPR works with groups to monitor issues through surveys, focus groups, checklists, photography, videos, etc. and see if the state’s actions are either violating or progressing people’s rights in relation to a specific issue.

Capable of immediate change
There can be nothing more disheartening than working on a campaign and not seeing any progress at all. When group identify issues they want to see addressed, PPR helps them to select a series of issues that are capable of achieving concrete change in people’s lives. This is not looking for an ‘easy’ or ‘false’ victory, but choosing an issue which would cost relatively little to get fixed but would have an immediate and positive impact on young people’s lives. This builds group confidence, attracts others to the campaign and the experience can help them address ‘bigger’ problems.

Addresses core causes
Poverty and inequality are the result of decision making processes – they are not accidents. Therefore, if the goal is to challenge poverty and inequality, then the decision making processes which produce them must be fundamentally changed. PPR supports groups to develop practical ways in which the need for addressing underlying causes can be built into every campaign.

Is inclusive
The campaign issues should be relevant to other people affected and help them to get involved. This does not mean that you need 100% of affected people involved in a campaign, but the issues have to resonate with people’s daily lived experiences.