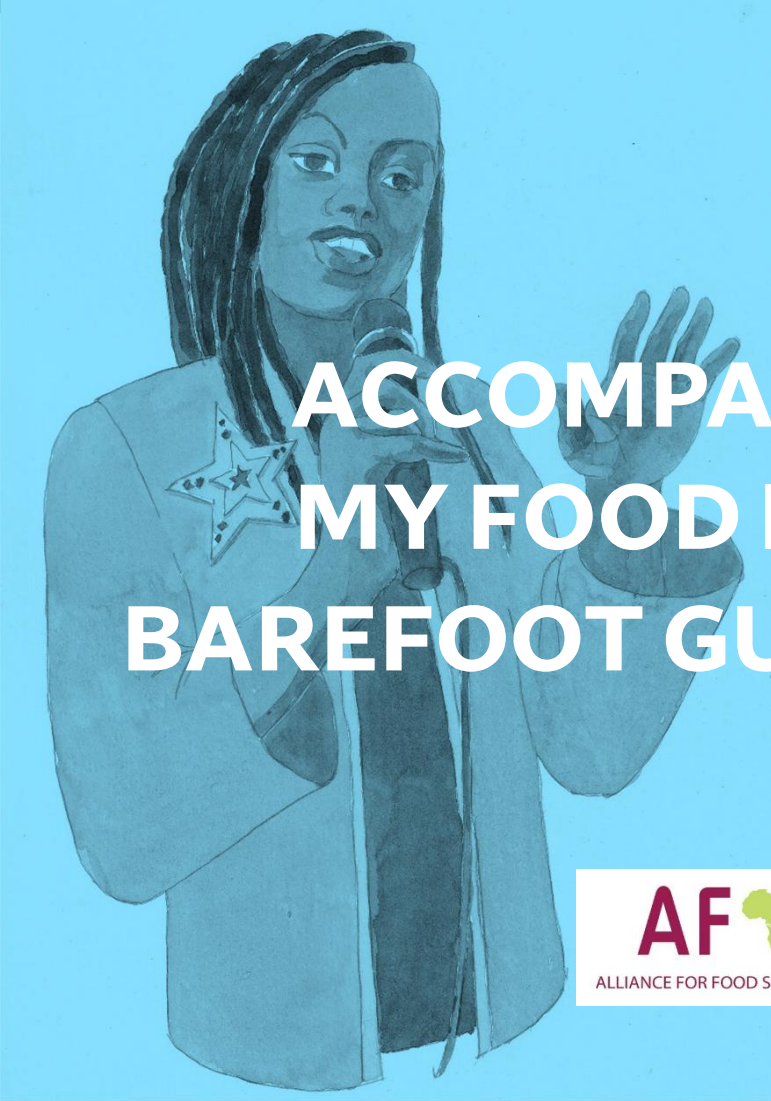




MY FOOD IS AFRICAN TOOLS FOR CITIZEN ACTION



ACCOMPANYING THE MY FOOD IS AFRICAN BAREFOOT GUIDE VOLUME II



MY FOOD IS AFRICAN Volume II

TOOLS FOR CITIZEN ACTION

HOW CITIZENS ARE RECLAIMING AFRICAN FOOD SYSTEMS

The stories in *My Food is African Volume 2* show citizens organising campaigns, building coalitions, and challenging corporate food systems across Africa. These tools help you do the same work.

Each tool addresses a specific challenge organisers face. How do you understand your local food system before trying to change it? How do you tell stories that inspire action rather than just inform? How do you design campaigns that learn and adapt? How do you mobilise resources without complete dependence on external donors?

We developed these tools by working with food sovereignty movements in multiple African countries. They reflect what actually works in practice, including the messy parts where plans meet reality and need adjusting.

You can use these tools at any scale. A village cooperative mapping its local food system. A regional network visioning its food future. A national movement designing grassroots campaigns. The principles remain constant even as contexts differ.

These are working tools, not rigid prescriptions. Adapt them to your situation. Skip steps that don't fit. Add elements your context requires. The goal is practical usefulness, not perfect adherence to instructions.

Start where your organising challenges are most pressing.

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MAPPING YOUR FOOD SYSTEM

A Tool for Seeing the Invisible

Every food system is like a river with many tributaries. We see the surface, the market stalls and dinner tables, but beneath flows an intricate network of relationships, power, and possibility. This mapping tool helps you trace these hidden currents, revealing where the system nourishes and where it fails, where power concentrates and where change might begin.

1 Why Map the System?

Before we can change what we cannot see, we must make it visible. Mapping transforms abstract concepts into tangible geography, revealing:

- **The actors:** who holds knowledge, who holds power, who holds possibility
- **The flows:** where food travels, where money moves, where value leaks away
- **The barriers:** what blocks nourishment from reaching those who need it
- **The leverage points:** where small shifts might cascade into transformation

Think of this as collaborative cartography. You are not documenting what is fixed, but sketching what is alive, naming what wants to change.

2 When to Use This Tool

- At the beginning of a campaign to understand the terrain you will cross
- During community gatherings to build shared understanding
- To identify potential allies and reveal hidden opponents
- To compare maps across regions, discovering patterns in how food systems fracture or flourish

3 What You Need

Materials: Large paper (flipchart sheets joined together) or whiteboard; coloured markers

People: Those who know the system from different angles. The more voices, the richer the map.

Time: Allow 2-3 hours. Rushing means missing the connections that matter most.

4 The Mapping Journey

Phase 1: Preparation and Setting the Scene (15 minutes)

Why this matters: Shared language creates shared seeing. When everyone understands what a food system includes, you begin from common ground.

Introduce the concept: Invite the group to define a "food system" together. Listen for definitions that include everything involved in growing, processing, distributing, selling, eating, and disposing of food. This is the whole living web.



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Define the geography: Clearly decide which territory you are mapping. Write it at the top of your paper.

Create a colour legend: Green for activities, black for actors, red for barriers, blue for opportunities. Colour becomes language.

Phase 2: Mapping the System (60-90 minutes)

Why this matters: Following one food from seed to plate reveals the whole system. Like pulling a single thread, you unravel the entire tapestry.

Step 1: Choose a food and trace its journey

Select a staple food and trace its path from seed to plate to waste. For each stage, mark activities in green and actors in black:

Inputs and production: Planting, weeding. Smallholder farmers, seed suppliers, agricultural shops.

Harvesting and processing: Harvesting, milling, fermenting. Farmers, local processors, women's groups.

Distribution and marketing: Transporting, selling. Traders, marketing boards, vendors, lorry drivers.

Consumption and disposal: Cooking at home, serving in schools. Families, schools, street food vendors.

Step 2: Identify the barriers

Why this matters: Naming obstacles is the first act of resistance. What we can name, we can challenge.

For each stage, ask: "What makes this difficult?" Write barriers in red. Examples: scarce open-pollinated seed, poor roads, low prices for farmers, lack of storage, youth preferring processed foods.

Step 3: Map the actors and their influence

Why this matters: Power is not evenly distributed. Mapping influence reveals who must be persuaded, who might stand with you, and who benefits from things staying unchanged.

Examine all actors. Discuss: Who holds decision-making power? Who are potential allies? Who might resist change? Draw lines between actors showing relationships if helpful.

Step 4: Find the leverage points

Why this matters: Some points, when pressed, can shift the whole structure. Finding these is finding where your energy will multiply.

Ask: "Where could a small change create large ripples? What are our strengths?" Write opportunities in blue. Examples: a strong women's group that could begin processing, a policy supporting school meals from local farmers, growing consumer interest in traditional foods.



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Phase 3: Analysis and Action Planning (30 minutes)

Why this matters: A map that leads nowhere is just decoration. The purpose of seeing clearly is to act wisely.

Prioritise collectively: Give each participant 5-6 ticks to place on the blue opportunities or red barriers most important to address now. This reveals where shared energy lies.

Discuss the results: Which received the most votes? Why? What does this reveal about what the community recognises as urgent?

Generate initial action ideas: For the top 2-3 priorities, brainstorm one small, concrete step.

Start where you can start.

5 Adapting for National-Level Work

The principles remain constant, but the scale shifts. Instead of tracing one food through one locality, you map major commodity chains across a nation. Actors become ministries, corporations, parliamentary committees. Barriers become trade laws, macroeconomic forces, infrastructure gaps. Leverage points become strategic national interventions: advocating for food sovereignty policy, challenging harmful trade agreements, integrating food literacy into curricula.

National mapping demands different participants: civil society leaders, policymakers, researchers, producer organisation representatives. But the core practice endures: making visible what shapes our food systems, so we can reshape them towards justice and nourishment.

~

The map is not the territory, but it is a beginning.



TELLING FOOD SOVEREIGNTY STORIES

Reports inform, but stories inspire and enable deep understanding. Policy documents don't move people like farmer testimonies, chef success stories, or children describing school gardens. This tool helps you collect and tell stories that bring food sovereignty alive.

1 The Elements of Effective Stories:

Specific People and Places

Not "farmers improved soil health" but "Maria Ochieng in Kisumu restored her one-acre farm's degraded soil using compost and cover crops. Three years later, her yields doubled and she's training neighbours."

Concrete Details

What did Maria's farm look like before? What did she try? What failed? What worked? What does her soil look like now? What specific crops does she grow? How much does she earn?

Details make stories real and credible.

Challenges and Solutions

Don't present perfect success stories. Show the obstacles people faced and how they overcame them. This helps others to learn from their own challenges, to see themselves in the story and believe change is possible despite difficulties.

Multiple Perspectives

Collect stories from farmers, vendors, chefs, youth, women, elders, policymakers, consumers. Different stories reach different audiences.

Cultural Resonance

Frame stories using values your audience holds. Ubuntu principles for communities valuing solidarity. Economic returns for business-minded audiences. Climate resilience for environmentally conscious groups. Health outcomes for parents and medical professionals.



2 Collecting Stories:

- Interview people doing interesting work
- Record in their own words
- Photograph or film when possible
- Get permission to share
- Protect people's safety if work is controversial

3 Telling Stories:

- Choose stories matching your audience and purpose
- Keep them concise (2-3 minutes spoken, 300-500 words written)
- Lead with the most compelling detail
- Show change, transformation, before and after
- End with what's possible

Use stories in presentations, social media, reports, videos, radio programs, and advocacy meetings. Stories make abstract concepts tangible and emotionally resonant.



VISIONING OUR FOOD FUTURE

1 The Purpose of this Tool

Change begins with imagination. Communities, organisations, and movements need shared vision of where they're going. What kind of food and food systems do we need and want? This tool helps groups envision their food future collectively, creating motivation and direction for the work ahead.

2 When It Is Useful

Use this tool at the beginning of campaigns when groups need shared direction before deciding tactics. When organisations feel stuck responding to problems without clear sense of what they're building toward. When coalitions form and different groups need to align around common vision. When movements have won initial victories and need to articulate next phase. This tool works at any scale—from a single farmer cooperative to a national movement.

3 What It Helps You See or Do

Visioning helps groups see possibilities they couldn't see individually and reveals what people actually want, not just what they oppose. It exposes assumptions and disagreements before they derail action. Looking backward before looking forward builds confidence by showing change already happened. The tool connects vision to action by identifying pathways and commitments.

4 Step by Step

➤ Step 1: Look Back (10 Years)

Before looking forward, look backward to see how much has already changed:

- What did our food system look like in 2035?
- What has improved since then?
- What victories did we win?
- What did we learn from failures?

Looking back shows that change is possible because it already happened. This builds confidence for envisioning further transformation.

➤ Step 2: Assess Present (Today - 2045)

Ground yourselves in current reality:

- What's working well in our food system now?
- What problems persist?
- What resources do we have?
- Who are our allies?



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- What barriers do we face?

Honest assessment prevents wishful thinking while identifying leverage points for change.

➤ Step 3: Look Forward (10 Years - to 2055)

Now imagine your food system ten years from now:

- What do you see driving into your city?
- What's happening in markets?
- What are children eating in schools?
- What's grown on farms?
- What policies exist?
- Who controls resources?
- What does daily life look like?

Be specific. Not "food is better" but "Nakawa Market has covered stalls, cold storage, and vendor cooperative managing operations." Not "youth involved" but "Youth Urban Farmers Collective runs 500 rooftop gardens employing 200 young people."

➤ Step 4: Identify Pathways

How do you get from present to that future?

- What changes first? Second? Third?
- Who needs to act?
- What resources are required?
- What obstacles need overcoming?
- What are the milestones marking progress?

This connects vision to strategy.

➤ Step 5: Commit to Actions

What will your group do in the next year to move toward that vision?

- Be specific and realistic
- Identify who does what by when
- Set measures for assessing progress

Use this tool with community groups, farmer organisations, youth collectives, policy networks, or entire regions. It works at any scale.

5 What You Will Likely Have at the End

You'll have shared picture of desired future that your group created together. You'll have documented how much your food system already changed, building confidence that transformation is possible. You'll have honest assessment of current reality. You'll have specific, concrete vision of future food system ten years ahead. You'll have identified pathways from present to future. You'll have concrete commitments for the year ahead. You'll have built group cohesion and created reference point for making decisions.



6 A Note of Caution

Visioning can become empty exercise if not connected to real organising capacity. The process takes significant time—at least half a day, better a full day. Power dynamics shape whose vision dominates, so facilitation must ensure all voices are heard. Visioning can generate unrealistic expectations if pathways and resource requirements get glossed over. Groups may discover deep disagreements about what future they want—better to surface these during visioning than let them derail campaigns later. The vision will need updating as circumstances change. Only undertake visioning if you're committed to working toward what you envision together.

7 Reflection Questions

- ❖ What future for your food system can you imagine that seems impossible now but might be achievable in ten years?
- ❖ If you look back ten years, what changed that you wouldn't have predicted? What aspects of current reality provide foundation to build on?
- ❖ Who needs to be in the room for this visioning?
- ❖ What would happen to your organising if everyone could see the same picture of where you're heading?
- ❖ If your vision became reality, who would benefit most and who might lose power—and are you prepared for that opposition?



IDENTIFYING POLICY SPACES AND OPPORTUNITIES

1 The Purpose of this Tool

Policy change requires knowing where decisions are made and when opportunities exist. This tool helps you identify strategic entry points for influence.

2 Mapping Decision-Making

a) National Level

- Which ministries handle relevant issues (agriculture, health, education, environment, trade)?
- What policies and laws govern food systems?
- Who are sympathetic officials?
- What parliamentary committees oversee these areas?
- When are budget cycles?
- What regional and international commitments exist?

b) Regional Level

- - What regional economic communities matter (EAC, ECOWAS, SADC)?
- - What regional policies affect food systems?
- - Which regional officials are allies?

c) Continental Level

- - What AU frameworks and declarations are relevant?
- - When are major summits and meetings?
- - What civil society mechanisms exist?

d) Local Level

- - What do district and municipal authorities control?
- - What local policies affect markets, land, agriculture?
- - Who are sympathetic local officials?

3 Finding Windows of Opportunity:

- - Policy review cycles: When are existing policies up for revision?
- - Budget processes: When are budgets formulated, debated, approved?
- - Elections: When are elections creating political openness to new ideas?
- - Crises: When do disasters or scandals create urgency for change?
- - International moments: When do global events focus attention on food issues?

Timing matters. Advocacy during a policy review window has more impact than advocacy between reviews.



4 Strategic Entry Points:

- - Pilot programs: Propose testing new approaches in limited contexts
- - Budget advocacy: Push for increased funding for food sovereignty programs
- - Procurement rules: Advocate for local sourcing requirements
- - Land law reform: Engage in tenure policy debates
- - Pesticide regulation: Advocate for bans on hazardous chemicals
- - Seed law reform: Push for protecting farmer seed systems
- - School feeding policy: Advocate for local, nutritious food
- - Market infrastructure: Push for investment in territorial markets

Match your advocacy to the opportunities available.

Use this tool when planning advocacy strategies or coordinating with other organisations.



DESIGNING YOUR GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN

Food sovereignty campaigns need both discipline and adaptability. Clear goals guide action, but flexibility lets you learn from what actually happens and adjust accordingly. The best campaigns treat plans as working hypotheses, not fixed scripts. This tool helps you design campaigns that are both rigorous and realistic.

1 Steps to follow (and adapt)

STEP 1: UNDERSTAND YOUR CONTEXT

Before planning what you will do, understand what you are working with. What are people already doing around food? What existing groups, events, or relationships could your campaign build on? Who holds influence, both formal leaders and informal ones that people actually listen to? What recent attempts at change succeeded or failed, and why? What are the opportunities at either the local or national level, where change in policies and practices is most feasible?

Spend time listening before deciding. Talk with farmers, elders, youth, vendors, teachers. Not to sell your idea but to understand their reality. What do they care about? What constraints do they face? What would make their lives better?

List three to five things about your context that should shape your approach, including both opportunities and constraints.

STEP 2: DEFINE YOUR PURPOSE AND EARLY GOALS

Why does this campaign matter? Be specific about the problem and who experiences it. Your purpose should guide decisions but allow different paths. For example, "young people reclaiming pride in traditional foods" is a purpose. "Train 50 youth in traditional cooking by December" is one possible goal serving that purpose.

Start with a goal you can achieve in three to six months. By what date will who do what resulting in what outcome? Make it specific, measurable, achievable, and relevant. But hold it lightly. You will learn whether the timeline makes sense and whether you chose the right target.

Write your initial goal, then note one or two assumptions you are making that could turn out wrong.

STEP 3: CHOOSE STARTING TACTICS

Based on the stories you have read, what approaches fit your context? Media tactics like radio programs. Cultural tactics like food festivals. Educational tactics like school programs. Organising tactics like building coalitions. Economic tactics like supporting local food businesses.



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Choose two to four tactics to start with. Pick tactics that fit your resources, reach your target audience, can be sustained, and build on existing structures.

For each tactic, note what you expect it will achieve and what you will watch for to know if that expectation is valid. For example, "We expect a school garden will increase interest in traditional crops. We will watch whether students participate beyond the first weeks and whether they talk about it at home."

STEP 4: BUILD YOUR CORE TEAM

You need three to five people genuinely committed to leading this work. Choose people for their commitment and reliability, not just enthusiasm or credentials.

Also identify champions with credibility who can publicly support the campaign and potential partners. But focus early energy on getting the core team working well. Agree on how you will make decisions, meet, handle disagreements, and share responsibilities.

Many campaigns fail not because strategy was wrong but because the team could not work through challenges together.

List your core team and why you chose each person. Note how you will make decisions and how often you will meet.

STEP 5: PLAN YOUR FIRST THREE MONTHS

What will you do in the first three months to build momentum and start learning? Be specific about activities, who leads each one, resources needed, and timing.

Build in learning points. Meet regularly to reflect on what is happening. What is working or not? After two months or so, check whether you are reaching intended people and achieving hoped results. After three months, do a substantial reflection to decide what to continue, adjust, or stop.

These check-ins are not optional. They keep you connected to reality rather than pushing ahead with a plan that might not be working.

Create a simple three-month timeline showing activities and learning check-ins.

STEP 6: CRAFT YOUR CORE MESSAGES

What two to three things do you want people to remember and repeat? Keep messages simple, positive, and connected to what your audience cares about. Use stories, not jargon.

Decide who should deliver messages for credibility. Farmers convincing farmers. Youth reaching youth. Different messengers for different audiences.

Your messages will evolve as you learn what resonates. Start with your best understanding and adjust.

List two to three core messages and who should deliver them.



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STEP 7: SET UP LEARNING SYSTEMS

How will you know what is actually happening? Identify three to five simple indicators. Attendance. Media coverage. Behaviour changes. Participant feedback. Keep it simple.

More important than numbers is interpreting what you learn. Weekly, your core team should ask what is working and why, what is not working and why, what surprises you, and what you might do differently. Do not skip these sessions when busy. They keep you strategic rather than reactive.

Keep simple documentation. Photos, attendance lists, participant comments, reflection notes. This helps you learn, report to supporters, and remember your thinking.

Decide how you will monitor progress and when you will reflect.

STEP 8: PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Your plan reflects current understanding, but campaigns unfold in living communities where things rarely go as planned. Officials change. Resources appear or disappear. Unexpected allies emerge. Some activities fall flat while others take off.

Stay alert. Talk with people who will tell you the truth. Notice who shows up, what generates energy, what feels forced. Many campaigns fail because organisers only talk to each other and assume their plans are working.

When something unexpected happens, distinguish between developments that move you closer to your purpose even if they diverge from your plan, and developments that match your plan but do not serve your purpose. Embrace the first. Question the second.

Every two to three months, step back and ask deeper questions. What assumptions were wrong? What is working unexpectedly? What does this tell us about our community and approach? What might we need to change even though it is uncomfortable?

But distinguish adaptation from mission drift. Your core values around food sovereignty, your commitment to certain communities, your fundamental principles should remain steady. Specific activities, timeline, even some goals can evolve as you learn.

Note what is negotiable in your campaign and what is not.

STEP 9: LOOK AHEAD WHILE STAYING GROUNDED

If your initial three months go well, what would the next nine months look like? How would you sustain engagement, deepen impact, and build lasting structures? Looking ahead helps you make strategic choices now about relationships and foundations.

But do not plan too far ahead. After three months of learning, you will revisit and likely revise longer-term plans.

Think about sustainability from the start. How will this continue beyond initial funding? Consider economic incentives, institutional changes, developing new leadership, and building structures that can persist.



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Sketch what months four through twelve might include. Note that this is provisional.

STEP 10: SUMMARISE YOUR DESIGN

Campaign name. Issue and why it matters. Initial goal for first three to six months. Starting tactics. First three-month plan. Core team. Resources needed. Key messages. How you will monitor and learn. What is negotiable and what is not. Provisional longer-term direction.

2 WORKING WITH PLANS

Your structure gives you something to organise around and learn from. But successful campaigns treat plans as hypotheses to test, not scripts to follow. They balance determination about purpose with flexibility about tactics.

Start with what you can do now. Learn from experience. Build on what exists. Respect people's agency. Stay connected with other campaigns. Face challenges honestly.

Think of your campaign less like implementing a blueprint and more like cultivating a garden. You prepare soil, plant seeds, provide care. But you cannot control exactly how things grow. You respond to conditions, learn which approaches thrive, adjust your practices. The result, if you are attentive and adaptive, is abundant but not exactly what you initially envisioned.

Your job is not to force a predetermined outcome but to work skilfully with conditions you find, staying true to your purpose while remaining open to how that purpose gets achieved.

The stories in the Barefoot Guide show this is possible. This tool gives you a framework. Now it is your turn. What campaign will you organise?



MOBILISING RESOURCES FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY WORK

1 Why This Tool?

Movements need resources: money, people, skills, equipment, space. This tool helps you think creatively about mobilising what you need without complete dependence on external donors.

2 Resource Categories:

a) Financial Resources

- - Membership fees: Small contributions from many members create stable funding
- - Enterprise income: Cooperatives, training services, product sales
- - Local fundraising: Community events, solidarity markets
- - Grant funding: Donors, foundations, government programs
- - Crowdfunding: Online campaigns for specific needs

Diversify funding sources. Dependence on single donor makes movements vulnerable.

b) Human Resources

- - Volunteer time: People contributing skills and labour
- - In-kind contributions: Farmers hosting field days, venues donated for meetings
- - Skill sharing: Members training each other
- - Intern programs: Students gaining experience while contributing

Value people's time and skills as resources, not just money.

c) Knowledge Resources

- - Documentation: Write down what you learn
- - Training materials: Develop and share curricula
- - Research: Conduct and publish studies
- - Traditional knowledge: Record elders' wisdom

Knowledge is resource you can share without depleting.

d) Physical Resources

- - Shared spaces: Community centres, farm plots, processing facilities
- - Equipment: Tools, technology, vehicles used collectively
- - Seed banks: Genetic diversity as shared resource
- - Infrastructure: Cooperatively owned facilities

Collective ownership maximises impact of limited resources.



e) Social Resources

- - Networks: Relationships with allies, partners, supporters
- - Reputation: Credibility built through consistent good work
- - Coalition partnerships: Combined power of multiple organisations
- - Media relationships: Journalists who cover your work

These social assets enable work that money alone can't buy.

3 Mobilisation Strategies:

- **Start Small:** Begin with resources already available before seeking external funding. This builds independence and demonstrates viability.
- **Think Collectively:** Pool resources with partners rather than each organisation working separately.
- **Build Assets:** Invest in durable resources (equipment, infrastructure, knowledge systems) not just consumable activities.
- **Create Reciprocity:** Exchange resources with allies rather than only one-way transactions.
- **Develop Enterprises:** Create income-generating activities aligned with movement goals.

Use this tool when planning organisational sustainability or designing campaigns or when planning advocacy strategies or coordinating with other organisations.



HOW CAN RADIO BE USED AS AN ORGANISING TOOL?

The Example of ZASHO

1 The Background

When Kalomo Community Radio Station offered ZASHO, the Zambia Smallholder Farmers Organisation, ten free radio slots, it might have seemed like a small gesture. But for farmers facing soil depletion, deforestation, and climate change, those radio programs became a lifeline.

Kalomo District is a key food-producing region where farmers faced mounting pressures. Soil exhausted from years of chemical fertilisers. Climate change bringing unpredictable rains. Rising input costs while crop prices remained stagnant. Many farmers knew something was wrong but didn't see alternatives.

2 What Credibility Sounds Like

ZASHO and ZAAB designed the programs strategically. Weekly thirty-minute programs mixed farmer testimonies with expert explanations, call-in segments, and traditional music. They started with problems farmers recognised, showed practical alternatives like composting and natural pest control, used local language rather than academic concepts, and featured farmers from the listening area.

The key was credibility. Programs featured farmers listeners might know, from villages they could visit. When Farmer Mwape from nearby Choma explained how composting restored his soil, listeners thought if he can do it, maybe I can too.

Call-in segments transformed programs from broadcasting to conversation. Listeners asked where to get seeds that don't require chemicals, how to make compost without enough material, whether agroecology could really produce enough to feed families. ZASHO adapted future programs based on listener questions.

3 Preparing the soil

Before broadcasting began, ZASHO held meetings with traditional leaders and district officials explaining the programs' purpose. This preparation paid off. When a local chief discussed indigenous seed varieties on air, his endorsement carried weight.

Within months, evidence of impact emerged. Farmers contacted ZASHO asking for training. Community groups formed to share seeds and knowledge. Extension workers reported farmers asking about compost and natural pest control.

One farmer explained, "I heard Farmer Mwape talking about bokashi on the radio. I knew him, he farms near my cousin. So, I visited him. Now ten of us are making it together."



4 Starting conversations and planting ideas

The campaign faced real obstacles. Not all farmers had radios, and signal didn't cover all areas. Commercial stations broadcast advertisements for chemical fertilisers competing with their message. Producing quality content required time and money despite free slots.

Despite challenges, the campaign succeeded because partnership with a trusted radio station provided existing audience, content grounded in local reality helped farmers recognise their own experiences, interactive format let listeners shape conversation, and follow-through with in-person training served interested farmers.

"Radio can't do everything," the ZASHO coordinator admitted to Andrew. "But it starts conversations, plants ideas, shows alternatives exist. Then when we offer training, people are ready."

