

they will help us reach our goals? How will we involve the public? Will our actions make sense to the local community?

■ **Nonviolent direct action/civil disobedience/civil resistance:** Have we done all we can to build support for our action? Will it encourage more community involvement or will it be counter-productive? How will it advance our cause rather than be an end in itself? Are our objectives clear? Will it put the kind of pressure on our adversaries that will influence them to move? Who will it pressure?

■ **Celebrate:** Take time to recognise what we have done and celebrate our achievements. This is important for sustaining ourselves and strengthening our sense of community. Celebrate after an important event, and when you reach a particular goal.

■ **Evaluate:** It's important to evaluate our campaign, not just at the end, but throughout the process. Unless we do so, we may be making mistakes that we will not recognise until it is too late. We should listen to everyone involved. Keeping a record of our meetings, our decisions, and our work becomes the basis of our own case study. See 'action evaluation' for a series of questions to assess how an action contributed to a campaign (p142).



## Constructive programme

Andrew Dey, Joanne Sheehan and Subhash Katel

According to Gandhi, nonviolent social change requires building a new society in the shell of the old, which he called 'constructive programme'. 'Nonviolence for Gandhi was more than just a technique of struggle or a strategy for resisting military aggression,' Robert Burrowes explains in *The Strategy of Nonviolent Defense: A Gandhian Approach*. Rather, 'it was intimately related to the wider struggle for social justice, economic self-reliance, and ecological harmony as well as the quest for self-realisation.' As Burrowes describes it:

*"For the individual, constructive programme meant increased power-from-within through the development of personal identity, self-reliance, and fearlessness. For the community, it meant the creation of a new set of political, social, and economic relations".*

In cases where political revolutions have taken place but the population was not organised to exercise self-determination, creating a new society has been

### Nonviolence

Historical uses of nonviolent action  
Violence  
Gender and nonviolence

### Strategy

Planning nonviolent campaigns  
Education is Freedom Popular education  
Mobilising for change: building power in Nepal

### Case studies

Colombia: Peace Community of San Jose de Apartadó

### Training

10/10 strategies  
The healthy tree/the problem tree  
Imagine the future: setting goals



IPES FARMERS PROCESS THE JAMAICA HARVEST, EL SALVADOR

PHOTO: ANDREW DEY

extremely difficult, and a new dictatorship usurping power has too often resulted.

Gandhi posited three elements needed for social transformation: personal transformation, political action, and constructive programme. He saw them as intertwined, all equally necessary to achieve social change.

### Components of a constructive programme

The different components that constructive programmes try to incorporate into their work are equality, liberatory education, economic self-reliance, and a clean environment. Be careful though; just because an activity appears to fully address one of these, it does not mean that activity equates to being a constructive programme. Just because a large, multinational corporation sells fair-trade coffee in its shops does not mean that we would consider their work a constructive programme focusing on economic self-reliance for the farmers! The structural violence of the economic system is not being addressed through such work; if anything, farmers have become that bit more reliant on oppressive structures. Constructive programme is an element of nonviolent social change, and should therefore be based on nonviolent principles (see p56).

The Instituto de Permacultura de El Salvador (IPES – <http://permacultura.com.sv>) is an example of how all four components of a constructive programme can be put into practice. IPES teaches campesino (subsistence farmers) communities in El Salvador how to grow crops to the rigorously environmentally sustainable model of permaculture. The four components of constructive programme are described opposite and in the table on the following page, followed by an example of how IPES' work promotes equality, is educational, develops economic self-reliance and encourages effective work for the environment.

The process of working on constructive programme has fundamental benefits, the first of which is providing immediate assistance to those in greatest need – constructive programme should be meeting a particular, concrete need for a community. As people come together in community – not individual-action, they build constituencies for social change. Gandhi saw constructive programme as training for civil disobedience, which often included non-cooperation. Constructive work provides opportunities to develop the skills needed to build a new society.

	<b><i>Gandhi's understanding of constructive programme</i></b>	<b><i>Constructive programme in El Salvador</i></b>
Equality	<p>For Gandhi, equality meant creating ashrams, political campaigns, and cooperative enterprises across social divides. These would cut through communal and religious lines, gender inequality, and caste distinctions – especially ‘untouchability’ – and include members of the ‘hill tribes’ and people suffering from leprosy.</p> <p>Working for equality means overcoming oppression and structural violence (see ‘violence’, p27).</p>	<p>IPES trains campesinos, supporting communities with relatively little social power to be more inter-reliant. The training IPES gives is in both practical permaculture techniques, and the skills needed to act as permaculture leaders when they return home. Trainees are encouraged to practise and learn from one another, and local leaders are organised in associations, giving them a powerful voice in development strategies; this way, they gain support, and advocate for sustainable farming and living practises with the government and NGO's.</p>
Education	<p>Gandhi began education projects; literacy campaigns to promote basic reading and maths skills, political education, knowledge about health, and nonviolence training for students.</p> <p>Paulo Friere's ‘conscientisation’ or ‘popular education’ approach (p73) is an example of how education can offer a community radical insight into the structural conditions that uphold the problems they face, and the article by Nepalese land reform activists (p79) also exemplifies this approach.</p>	<p>IPES’ work focuses on training permaculture leaders. In particular, they use a farmer-to-farmer methodology that relies on trainees sharing their knowledge with their community when they return home, and demonstrating what they have learned in their community. IPES puts a particular emphasis on training young people.</p> <p>Alongside learning practical skills in a participatory manner (trainings are designed to be accessible to people with very low levels of literacy), participants look at the structural conditions they face nationally and internationally that have led to the food crisis in the country, and about climate change. This includes greater historical awareness of the legacy of colonialism.</p>

	<b><i>Gandhi's understanding of constructive programme</i></b>	<b><i>Constructive programme in El Salvador</i></b>
Economic self-reliance	Gandhi's economic self-reliance campaigns involved, most famously, spinning homemade cloth (khadi), which was done throughout India. A constructive programme that was often done collectively, it was also a campaign of non-cooperation with Indians' systematic dependency on the British for cloth. Economic self-reliance also involved diversifying crops, creating village industries, and developing labour unions. Democratically run worker cooperatives are examples of economic self-reliance.	Since 1945, many Salvadorian governments have promoted high intensity 'green revolution' farming techniques, reliant on agrochemicals and expensive, 'single-use' seed. Farmers become dependent on a very unsustainable farming method which is very economically volatile, and the prices they will receive at market fluctuate greatly from year to year. The permaculture methods encouraged by IPES are based on local inputs, develop inter-reliant agriculture systems and promote seed-sharing schemes, so that farmers are able to become more self-reliant, and grow a wider range of produce. IPES encourages local farmers markets, so local people can sell surplus produce, rather than relying on imported food from Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico and the USA.
Environmental efforts	Environmental efforts involved the whole community in village sanitation, which meant, for Hindus, overtly flouting caste norms. Throughout the world, constructive programmes have focussed explicitly on environmental concerns, through community supported energy production schemes, local food production and farming, and recycling projects	As in many cases, the poorest and most vulnerable in El Salvador have felt the impact of climate change first. IPES teaches permaculture techniques that help farmers to develop biodiversity and improve soil conditions using techniques that do not need harmful chemicals or seed brought from corporations. Permaculture methods improve local sanitation through the use of compost toilets, rainwater is harvested for drinking and watering plants, and the use of local and natural building materials is encouraged.