

# SPECTRUM OF ALLIES

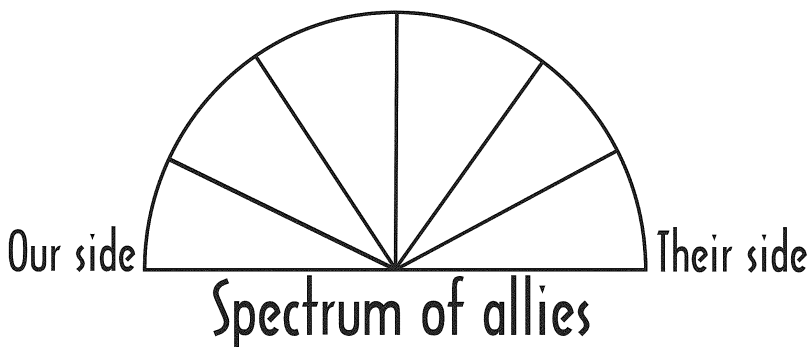
**Time:** Minimum 20 minutes

**Goal or purpose of the exercise:**

- To understand who our allies and opponents are.
- To help in realising that tactics need to be planned in relation to how much they do or do not attract key allies and move people towards being active allies.
- To encourage more optimistic mobilisation efforts through realising it is not necessary to win over the opposition to our point of view.
- To invite people into the fascinating complexity of strategising.

**How it's done/facilitator's notes**

This exercise uses a newsprint diagram to explore the idea that most social change situations involve a struggle between those who want the change and those who don't. Represent those who want the change by a point at one side of the sheet (say, on the left) and the opponents by a point at the other side. Explain that societies (or towns or states) usually include a range of groups that can be put on a spectrum from closest to the point of view of the advocates to farthest away. Draw a horizontal line representing this spectrum. Draw a half-moon or half a pie with wedges (as on the diagram below). The wedges closest to either end represent active allies and opponents, the next passive allies and opponents, and the group in the middle neutral parties.



Use the issue you are working on; if this is a general training, ask for an example of an issue that people in the group might be working on or interested in. State a demand related to the issue. Ask who in society might be inclined to be most supportive, least supportive, and in the middle. Give examples: 'unions', 'poor people's groups', 'Chamber of Commerce', etc. As participants identify groups and their locations on the spectrum, write them into the 'pie'. Identify why people are neutral; discuss if there are ways to move them toward becoming allies. Also note where people may already have moved from one wedge to another and discuss why (e.g., soldiers and veterans tend to support wars in the beginning, but as the war wages, opposition develops).

Give the good news: in most social change campaigns, it is not necessary to win the opponent to your point of view, even if the powerholders are the opponent. It is only necessary to move some or all of the pie wedges one step in your direction. If we shift each wedge one step, we are likely to win, even though the hardliners on the other side don't budge.

As the group develops its strategy and its tactics, it needs to identify which wedge it wants to address and how it can move people. In making choices about whom to reach out to, ask questions such as: which groups do we have some access to or credibility with? Which groups are not being reached? Given our group's purpose, which groups are we most suited to persuade?

This exercise can be done in as little as 20 minutes, but you can spend much more time filling in the wedges and analysing the situation.

*\* Taken from: <http://www.trainingforchange.org/content/view/69/39>*