

# Checklist for Choosing an Issue<sup>i</sup>

Will the Issue.....

✓ **Result in a real improvement in people's lives?**

If we win this will it result in migrant workers seeing and feeling the improvement?

✓ **Give people a sense of their own power?**

Will people come away from the campaign feeling that the victory was won by them, not by experts, lawyers or politicians?

✓ **Alter the relations of power?**

Will it build a new centre of power in the campaign group? Will it change laws and regulations in ways that increase our power or diminish that of the other side?

✓ **Be worthwhile?**

Will migrants feel that they are fighting for something about which they feel good and that merits the effort?

✓ **Be winnable?**

The problem must not be so large or solution so remote that the organisation is over whelmed. The members must be able to see from the start that they have a good chance of winning, or at least a good strategy exists for winning. Have we ever won on a similar issue and how?

✓ **Be widely felt?**

Many people must feel that this is a real problem and must agree with the solution. It is not enough that a few people feel strongly about it.

✓ **Be deeply felt?**

Some people must not only agree with you but feel strongly enough to do something about it. It is not enough that many people agree about the issue if none feel strongly.

✓ **Be easy to understand?**

It is preferable that you don't have to convince people that the problem exists, that your solution is good, and that they want to help win it. In general a good issue does not require a lengthy and difficult explanation.

✓ **Have a clear target? – decision maker**

The target, or decision maker as he or she is often called, is the person who can give you what you want. A more difficult campaign usually requires several clear targets. This allows the campaign a longer time to build up strength, even if some of the targets refuse your demands in the early months. Remember that

the decision maker is always a person or a number of people, such as the Tánaiste or Taoiseach, not an institution, corporation or elected body. The public is never the target. The Minister or Taoiseach can give you what you want not the public.

✓ **Have a clear time frame that works for you?**

An issue campaign has a beginning, a middle, and an end. You should have an idea of the approximate dates on which those points will fall. Consider how the issue's timetable can be aligned with the electoral timetable.

✓ **Be non-divisive?**

Avoid issues that divide your members/constituency. Don't pit people up against each other, old against young, EU v Non EU. Look down the road several years. Whom will you eventually need to bring into your campaigning and your organisation? Will this issue help or hinder you in reaching them?

✓ **Build leadership?**

The campaign should have many roles that people can play. Issue campaigns that meet most of the other criteria also build leadership if they are planning to do so.

✓ **Set your organisation up for the next campaign?**

Think about future issue directions? Consider the skills the group will develop in the campaign and the contacts it will make for the next one.

✓ **Have a money saving angle?**

Issues that gain people money or save people money are usually widely and deeply felt

✓ **Raise money?**

Would people contribute to the campaign?

✓ **Be consistent with your values and vision?**

The issues we choose to work on must reflect our values and our vision. The MRCI is a national organisation working to promote justice, empowerment and equality for migrant workers and their families.

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<sup>i</sup> Adapted by Migrant Rights Centre Ireland from *Organising for Social Change*. Midwest Academy Manual for Activists. Authors; Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall, Steve Max. Third edition. Seven Locks Press.