

# Decision-Mapping Tool

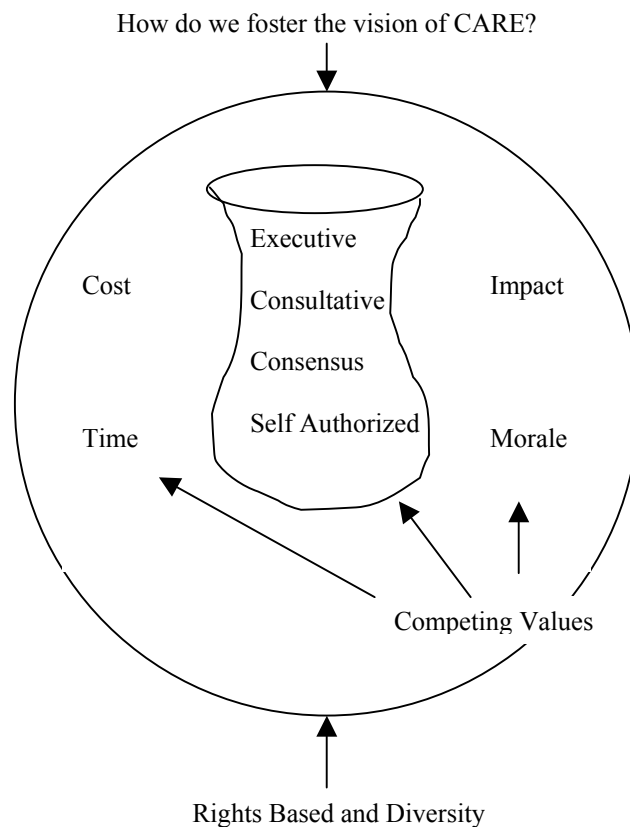
This document is created for the purpose of helping CARE clarify its decision-making processes, on the assumption that such clarity improves both employee morale and the quality of output<sup>1</sup>.

## I. The Decision-Making Model

This model has two components:

- Four different types of decision-making processes (Executive, Consultative, Consensus, and Self-Authorized)
- The contextual issues to consider when determining which decision-making process to employ (Cost, Time, Impact, and Morale; how the decision and how it is reached will foster the vision of CARE and its Rights-based and Diversity initiatives)

Graphically, it looks like this:



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<sup>1</sup> Created for CARE by PeaceTech, Walter Fordham, and Richard Larde

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## II. Decision-Making Processes

1. **Self-Authorized.** People are able to make certain decisions on their own, and on their own behalf, without consultation or discussion with others. They are, of course, always accountable to their supervisor for the results of such decisions. Most staff make self-authorized decisions all the time, relating to their scope of work. The boundaries of which decisions can be self-authorized and which need to be checked with one's supervisor should be discussed between employee and supervisor.

*Example: Employee has two meetings to attend simultaneously. They determine for themselves which meeting they will attend.*

2. **Consensus.** In this process, decisions are taken jointly by several parties acting in collaboration. The group tries to reach unanimity; however, if that is not possible, a general consensus emerges and parties who do not concur agree, at minimum, that they can live with it and are willing to support it. Consensus decisions are generally appropriate when a number of parties will be required to collaborate on the outcome of the decision. They are also appropriate in partnership arrangements.

General guidelines for reaching consensus:

- Make space for each voice to be heard
- Listen for the general 'sense of the group'
- Summarize the discussion occasionally to make sure key points are being captured
- Test for consensus ('do we all agree that...?')
- Make sure that dissenting views are aired fully
- Ask dissenters if they can live with, and support, the emerging consensus

If you cannot reach consensus:

- Take a time break, and come back to the conversation at another time
- Negotiate with each other, listening for the interests behind the positions of each party; seek areas of common ground, compromise, and, if necessary, bartering ("I'll agree to this if you will do that...")
- If negotiation fails, ask an agreed-upon third party to mediate, helping the group arrive at a decision together
- If mediation fails, take the decision to an agreed-upon third party for arbitration. In this case, all parties agree to abide by the decision of the arbitrator, who listens to all views and renders a decision.

*Example: Employees from different units or divisions have limited office space in a building and have to agree how the space will be allocated.*

3. **Consultative.** In this case, there is input from a variety of parties, but the decision rests with a single individual. Some consultative processes are mandated by policy (e.g., hiring

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panels); others are initiated by someone who has the authority to make a decision on their own, but chooses – for any number of reasons – to get input from others.

General guidelines for the decision-maker:

- determine who should be part of the consultation, either as individuals or in a group
- communicate clearly that what is sought is consultation, not consensus decision-making
- seek diverse perspectives
- set up a clear consultative process
- listen respectfully to all input
- let the input inform your choices in ways that most make sense to you
- inform those who participated in the consultation what your decision is, share your reasoning if you desire, and thank them for their participation.

General guidelines for those involved in the consultation:

- be clear that you are involved in a consultative process, not a decision-making process; if not clear, ask
- share your views freely and thoroughly
- if a decision is made that is other than what you suggested, it doesn't mean you have not been respected or heard; do not take it personally

*Example: A supervisor asks a hiring panel to interview candidates, seeking feedback on the candidates and recommendations for the hire; then makes the hiring decision.*

4. **Executive.** In this situation, a person has the authority and is empowered to make decisions on behalf of others, and chooses not to engage in a consultative process. This type of decision-making is appropriate when there is a time constraint, when the issues are clear, or when consultation would not add significantly to the quality of the decision. Please note: the use of the word 'executive' here does not connote someone in the Executive Division, but rather refers to a situation where someone has the authority to execute a unilateral decision that affects others.

*Example: The Director of Security mandates that all CARE employees must travel with CARE badges shown at all times when traveling in East Africa.*

## III. The Contextual Issues for Selecting a Decision-Making Process

For most of the work day, most people are making self-authorized decisions. The boundaries of that process are set, as said previously, between employee and supervisor. For the other three processes, however, there may be times when it is not obvious which decision-making process is

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most appropriate. There are four general factors that form the context for deciding how to decide. These are:

1. **Cost.** Who will have to pay for the outcomes of this decision? If money will come out of someone else's budget, perhaps they should be included in the decision (either consultatively or consensually). What are the organizational or political costs of making this decision in one way or another? What are the likely hidden costs?
2. **Time.** What are the time constraints around this decision? How soon do you have to have a clear answer? How much time would it take to engage in a consultative or consensus process, and is that consistent with your timelines and deadlines? How much time will you have to give to explaining why you didn't engage in a consultative or consensus process, if you choose to make an executive decision?
3. **Morale.** How will the process you choose affect the morale of those you work with? How will it impact those who are not invited to participate? Those who are? How can you use the decision-making process to heighten morale?
4. **Impact.** What will be the impact of your choice for a decision-making process on other tasks on your to-do list, in your work unit, on other parts of the organization?

Clearly, there will be times when considering these factors leads to a situation of competing values. For instance, you must agree on a job description for a new position in your unit. You highly value the opportunity a consensus process will give to improve the morale of the work team on which this new hire will function. However, your timeline is such that you need this person immediately if not sooner. You have competing values, between time and morale. What do you do?

In cases of competing values, it is important to acknowledge the struggle, even as you choose one over the other. If, for instance in the example just given, that the time element is more critical than the morale factor, explain to your people that this was the situation, you had to make a tough choice, and it doesn't mean you don't value their input. Remember that, lacking information, people will make assumptions and create story-lines about your behavior. Therefore, rule of thumb – share the information that went into your decision.

Finally, in determining which decision-making process to use, please also consider the congruency of process and goal. This is often called 'walking your talk.' How does your chosen decision-making process foster (or not) the vision of CARE? How does it relate to CARE's commitment to a Rights-based approach and to its Diversity initiative?

### IV. Enhancing Diversity Through Decision-Making

When working within a participatory decision-making process (consultative or consensual), how can you insure that diverse viewpoints are invited and included? There are four elements to consider:

1. **Voice.** Who is at the table? Who is missing? Do people feel safe to talk? Who has a vested interest in this decision? Who will be impacted by it? How is 'voice' given to different views that arise from people's experiences with their culture, world view, working style, gender, ethnicity, etc.?

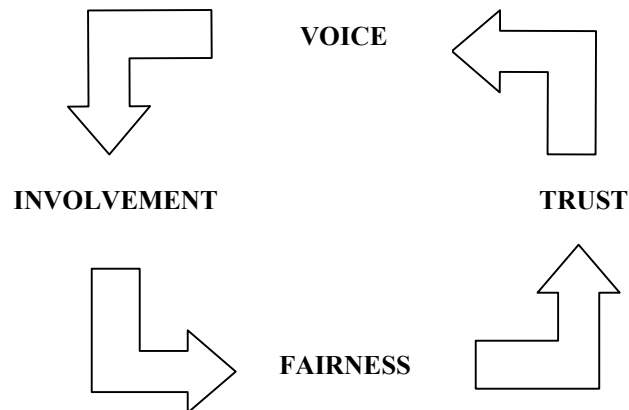
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2. **Involvement.** Who is heard? Who is not heard? How are issues of status managed? Do people with higher status have greater influence, more air time? Do people with lesser status or different cultural assumptions about authority hold back from participating? How can you involve the more silent members of the group?

3. **Fairness.** What is the general perception of fairness about the decision-making process and about the final decision? Who feels treated fairly; who doesn't? Pay attention to the feedback loop. Let people know what the outcome is and why.

4. **Trust** – Is trust enhanced or decreased through this process? Do people feel they are respected; that they can trust the process to truly take into consideration what is important to them?

These four elements affect one another, as in the following diagram:



As people feel their voice matters, they are more likely to participate more fully. The more people participate safely and satisfactorily, the more they are likely to feel treated fairly. The more people feel treated fairly, the more trust they will feel – for the individuals involved, for the process, and for the organization.

### V. How to Use This Tool

This document lays out a set of information about the kinds of decision-making processes that might be employed at CARE, and the things to consider in choosing and implementing any one of those processes. Some suggestions for how to use this tool include:

1. **Discuss With Your Team.** Set aside at least two hours to sit with your work team, your unit, or whatever the appropriate set of co-workers may be, to discuss this document. Try to map out certain categories of decisions that will always default to a particular decision-making process, so that you do not have to have the conversation over and over again. For instance, you may agree that decisions involving the creation of a new project will always be done by consultation.

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Of course there will always be exceptions, and unexpected circumstances, but to the extent that you can create a clear template in advance for choosing the appropriate decision-making processes, you will save time and energy in the long run. You can also use this time for people to clear the air about previous decisions for which there are left-over bad feelings, acknowledging that this document is in part an attempt to minimize such situations in the future.

2. **Use This as a Checklist.** Post this document, or some simplified version of it, near your desk or computer, and refer to it as you would to a checklist whenever you are wondering what type of decision-making process to employ.
3. **Use This as an External Standard.** When people disagree over anything, the differences can be resolved more easily when you can refer to an external standard. This de-personalizes the conversation, and moves it from an oppositional 'I say this, you say that' forum to one in which both (or all) parties are looking to the same objective source. If you cannot agree with others in your work setting about which decision-making process is appropriate, refer to this document as a guideline.