Assumptions and Tools for Managing Power

**Assumption #1:** True power is the infinite flow of life force energy, and is accessible to all equally. Infinite potential is shaped by our thoughts and actions; therefore, power is the capacity to create our shared reality.

**Principle:** The *power over* game, though widespread, is an aberration in that it seeks to limit what is limitless. The *power with* game is aligned with ‘how things are.’

**Tools:** Be able to tap into the source of true power at will, and use it consciously and creatively.

**Tools:** Draw power from your ‘higher’ self – your motivation, values, ideals, purpose, spirit, altruism, compassion, will to serve, etc.

**Assumption #2:** Many *power over* relationship have embedded within them the intersection of various identities (i.e., race/ethnicity, gender, class, religion, culture, etc.)

**Principle:** For change to occur, work must be done within and across these differences.

**Tools:** Pursue dialogue, relationship-building, networking, cooperation, trust-building, and (revolutionary) partnerships.

**Assumption #3:** *Power over* relations have similar dynamics, many of which are invisible and unarticulated.

**Principle:** At every level of system, these dynamics are self-reinforcing as long as they remain out of awareness.

**Tools:** Make explicit what is implicit; become aware of unconscious behavior, assumptions, and embedded patterns.

**Principle:** Social messages that we send and receive with ourselves, others, and the system keep the *power over* dynamics going.

**Tools:** Change the messages by changing the language.

**Assumption #4:** Power dynamics are operating all the time at individual, social, structural, and political levels.

**Principle:** Change must occur at all these levels as well.
Tools: Be sensitive to, and able to analyze, the power dynamics at play in interpersonal, inter-group, organizational, societal, and global levels.

Assumption #5: War and poverty are generally sustained by power over games.

**Principle:** Wars are fought to determine who wins the power over game. Poverty is a systemic and ongoing decision to limit the resources and options of some while advantaging others.

Tools: Identify the power dynamics at play in war and poverty.

Assumption #6: You cannot win in a power over game by playing the game; you can only entrench or reverse the positions.

**Principle:** Fight and flight responses are generally not effective means of change.

Tools: Practice ‘engage’ to change the game.

Assumption #7: Successful change strategies include interventions with Power-Ups and Power-Downs, separately and together.

**Principle:** Influence Power-Ups, empower Power-Downs, and create new joint realities.

Tools: Practice a wide range of persuasion, advocacy, negotiation, empowerment, and partnering strategies; generate creative options.

Assumption #8: Interventions can have unintended consequences.

**Principle:** The Drama Triangle (persecutor, victim, rescuer) is a deeply embedded pattern that must be addressed.

Tools: Introduce empathy, responsibility, interest-based negotiation, and joint problem-solving.

Assumption #9: Third parties from the Global North are usually not aware of the power over ‘baggage’ they carry in the eyes of their Global South partners and beneficiaries.

**Principle:** Global North organizations arrive in Global South situations in an automatic Power-Up position, and must start with that awareness.

Tools: Practice self-awareness, historical and cultural sensitivity, role-reversal, and humility.
Assumption #10: As an agent of change, you cannot take others to a place you are unable or unwilling to go yourself (individually and organizationally).

**Principle:** Practice what you preach.

**Tools:** Engage in self-reflective practice; make power part of the everyday conversation; hold each other accountable.