

## Ten Principles for Engaging and Nurturing Older Women Activists

1. Respect and develop the capacities and creative energy of older women. Acknowledge their experience, and celebrate their participation and achievements. Provide skill-building and educational opportunities to build on their desire for life-long learning.
2. Understand that “older women” are a diverse group. Different age cohorts have had different life experiences that may affect their attitudes and comfort with activism. Resist stereotyping, Counteract ageist and sexist attitudes. Avoid making assumptions about older women’s abilities.
3. Nurture grassroots organization and female approaches that encourage autonomy, trust, inclusiveness, diversity, good humour, and non-hierarchical, non-bureaucratic ways of working.
4. Allow individuals and groups to define advocacy for themselves and to find their own levels of evolving comfort with activism as a part of voluntary work. Promote the idea of a successful marriage between fundraising and advocacy.
5. Recruit leaders with experience in advocacy and voluntarism, but also women who have less experience but are passionate about the cause. Mentor and nurture newcomers.
6. Take a human rights approach based on solidarity not charity. Capitalize on older women’s passion for social justice, their outrage about injustice and their desire to make a difference in their older years. Provide opportunities to meet with advocates from other jurisdictions and countries.
7. Provide for episodic volunteering that allows older women to withdraw from time to time because of caregiving responsibilities, illness, travel or the birth of a grandchild. Work in pairs or with “alternates” who can pick up responsibilities when someone needs to be away for a while. Promote a “no guilt” approach.
8. Emphasize social support, friendship and teamwork. Enable older women to expand their social networks rather than see them decrease. Build on intergenerational ties.
9. Take time to recognize and celebrate small (and great) achievements.
10. Follow best practices that apply to all voluntary organizations, which include advocacy as a function of their work. For example:
  - Be multi-partisan (be inclusive of all political parties).
  - Rally around a visionary leader and a credible organization.
  - Partner with credible organizations on national and international issues.
  - Clearly define the scope of your concern and stay focused.
  - Provide the right kind and amount of information: **Information + outrage = action**
  - Talk about your values.
  - Put a human face on the issues (use story telling, photos, personal contact).
  - Build networks at national and regional levels.

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