

## **“Pairwise Ranking” as a Priority Setting Tool in Community Work**

**Background:** Community capacity building uses participatory tools such as identifying strengths and needs, pairwise ranking, and creation of action plans to address the priorities of a community. The process involves work in one large group and then small groups. Each small group works with a trained facilitator. The first meeting of the small groups is dedicated to brainstorming and identification of issues and strengths. During the second meeting of the small groups, the groups use pairwise ranking to establish an order of priorities. This allows members of the community to come to consensus on priorities without voting. Each small group will then be asked to develop an action plan for one of the issues during the third meeting of the small groups.

**Pairwise Ranking.** Prepare one ranking summary grid for the group; list issues of the community in the first column and then across the top, as in the example given (see page 2). Take two issues at a time, and ask each participant which is the more important of the two. The facilitator and recorder offer their rankings and rationale last each time. If making a decision about one cell is difficult, skip it for a few minutes and go on to other cells. Come back later and see if it is any easier a second time. Do not try to settle a conflict by voting. If after discussion there is still disagreement over a particular cell, put 1/2 point for each of the choices — indicating that it is a tie. Ties will have no adverse impact on the eventual ranked order.

### **Step-by-Step Process**

- a. In the cell where the first and the second issue intersect, write the name of the more important issue. Then, compare first issue to third issue, and note the more important issue in the intersecting cell. Keep comparing the first issue to the rest of the issues. Note the more important issue for each pair in the intersecting cell.
- b. Move to the second issue and repeat the process until all issues have been compared; there will be fewer comparisons as you go along.
- c. Moving across the row, count the number of times the first issue was determined to be the higher priority.
- d. Repeat the process with the rest of the issues; the issue that was named the highest priority the most often is the group’s top issue; note the rank of the issue in a contrasting color (e.g. a red or green marker).
- e. If time permits, discuss the rankings: are there any surprises? Does this “feel right”? Make adjustments as necessary.

The International Women’s Convocation adapted this group decision-making process for the first and second international U\*U women’s convocations (Houston, TX, 2009; Marosvásárhely, Transylvania, 2012). The *Global Sisters Groups* met several times during the two convocations, providing an opportunity for participants to talk in small, facilitated groups in order to build a shared understanding of issues impacting women's lives locally and globally, and to articulate responses as women of faith. We will be using this process again at the Third International Convocation of U\*U Women, February 16-19, 2017, Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove, CA (See page 3 for more information.)

## *Rank-Ordering Example*

Sample of Rank-Ordering Issues: From the First International Convocation, Houston 2009

Issue ID	Violence (V)	Balancing (B)	Poverty (P)	Restricted roles (RD)	Healthcare (H)	Empowerment (EM)	Education (ED)	Reproductive (RP)	Aging (A)	TOTAL	Rank
Jobs	J/V	J	P	J/RD	H	EM	ED	RP	J	3	7
Violence		V	P/V	V	H	EM	ED	RP	V	4	6
Balancing			P	RD	H	EM	ED	RP	A	0	10
Poverty				P	H/P	EM	ED	RP	P	5	5
Roles					H	EM	ED	RP	RD	2.5	8
Healthcare						EM	ED	H/RP	H	6	4
Empowerment							ED/EM	EM	EM	8.5	1
Education								ED	ED	8.5	1
Reproductive									RP	6.5	3
Aging										1	9

Note: The order of issues was mixed, to avoid the appearance of pre-determined ranking. This is an optional step.



## SAVE THE DATE!

*Please put this extraordinary gathering of liberal religious women on your 2017 calendar!*

**WE are Global Sisters  
YOU are a part of our future**

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*Savor this time to:*

**JOIN** with U\*U women of diverse ages and cultures to help build just societies worldwide

**LISTEN** to speakers who uplift and enlighten

**PARTICIPATE IN** informative workshops and inspiring worship

**EXPLORE** our own spirit through arts, nature, and community

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***For more information or to register - [www.IntlWomensConvo.org](http://www.IntlWomensConvo.org)***

International Women's Convocation: A nonprofit 501c (3) charitable organization