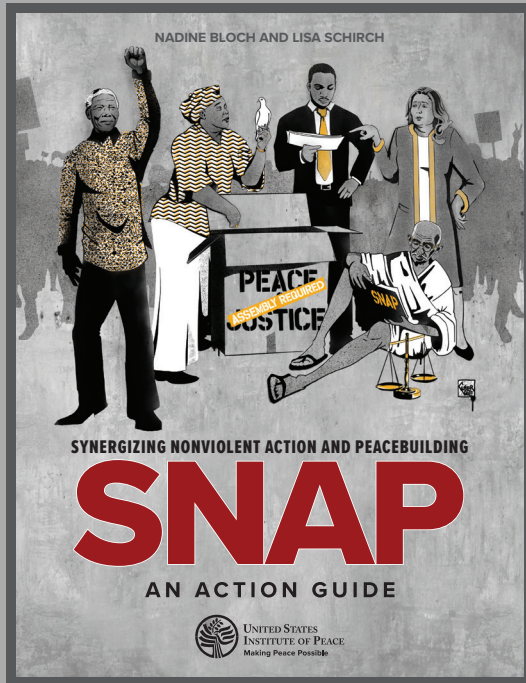




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BY NADINE BLOCH AND LISA SCHIRCH

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UNIT 4

Facilitate to Develop Group Goals and Consensus

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

Identify how facilitation skills can help meetings run more effectively to achieve group goals

Practice using facilitation skills to develop consensus on activist and peacebuilders' goals, tactics, and strategy

UNIT 4



Facilitate to Develop Group Goals and Consensus

Who has not been at a meeting where people interrupt each other, one person dominates the conversation, or a group talks aimlessly without ever making a decision? Many suffer from meeting fatigue. People lose interest in the work because they cannot seem to agree or get anything done together.

Building on the interpersonal peacebuilding skills from the last chapter, this chapter provides an introduction to using facilitation skills and processes in group gatherings. Facilitation is useful for helping groups of people dialogue with each other and find consensus. Activists, organizers, and peacebuilders can use this lesson to understand how to facilitate and create opportunities for productive and open dialogue with diverse groups to broaden their participation and enthusiasm.

Curbing Police Corruption in Uganda

In Uganda, corruption is not uncommon. Police have often been accused of demanding bribes, extortion, and abuse of authority.

The nongovernmental National Foundation for Democracy and Human Rights (NAFODU) in Uganda launched a “fight corruption” campaign that used radio programs, trained volunteer networks to monitor corruption, and offered support to victims of police corruption.

As one part of the campaign, NAFODU facilitated meetings with high-level police officials as well as street-level police officers and citizens. Through facilitated dialogue, citizens expressed their grievances. They also learned that some police officers wanted to improve their institution’s image and find ways to address corruption. These meetings were unique, as citizens do not usually have an opportunity to talk with officials in an egalitarian setting where everyone has an opportunity to talk.

These meetings began to win people over to the campaign and increased the size of the campaign. Not only did more citizens join because of particularly effective facilitated meetings. More police officers also joined, providing more information, access, and the possibility for principled negotiation to develop solutions to the problems of police corruption.

Adapted from Shaazka Beyerle, Curtailing Corruption: People Power for Accountability and Justice (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2014): 187–201.

Key Concepts

WHAT SUPPORTS SUCCESSFUL GROUP GATHERINGS?

Nothing kills enthusiasm for a group and its cause like disorganization or long, unproductive group gatherings. With attention to roles and process, meetings are much more likely to foster effective dialogue and be productive. By assigning various roles to participants, organizers can achieve high-functioning meetings that include participatory/collaborative decision making. Not all roles are required at every gathering, though larger groups and more difficult subjects will benefit from delegated roles and responsibilities (see table 9).

WHAT ARE IMPORTANT FACILITATION SKILLS, RESPONSIBILITIES, TASKS, AND TIPS?

Facilitation is a learned skill. “Natural leaders” or people who play important leadership roles in other activities may make excellent candidates for serving as facilitators, but not always.

Social movements sometimes have powerful charismatic leaders who can mobilize a group with rousing chants or compelling speeches. Others have efficient managers that can juggle many moving parts. Effective facilitators have an additional set of skills. While facilitators do keep their eye on the agenda of a meeting, they have a larger goal of empowering and helping people to communicate and hear each other. Good public speakers may be tempted to use their rhetorical skills to sway disparate people to their points of view. But rather than convincing participants to accept one point of view, good facilitators create a space where all points of view can be heard and shared.

Facilitators are similar to but also distinct from other types of effective leaders. The role of the facilitator may be the most important element of a successful dialogue, as their role is dedicated to process, not to content.

Key competency skills of effective facilitators are shown in table 10.

TABLE 9.

Meeting Roles

ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY
Agenda setter(s)	Meet before the meeting; represent the diversity of people who will attend
Facilitator(s)	Run or chair the meeting; encourage equalized participation of attendees; monitor time and agenda; dedicated to the process, not the content of the meeting; encourage use of cofacilitators when possible
Notetaker	Write/document discussions, commitments, and information
Scribe	Public, large note taking on flip charts or overhead to capture key ideas; supports group in following agenda, limits repetition, and guides meeting participation
Hospitality/nurturer	Attends to people’s physical needs, including temperature of the room, food and drink, and emotional support
Timekeeper	Keeps time; helps meeting run smoothly
“Stack” tender	Keeps a list or “stack” of people who would like to speak
Doorkeeper	Welcomes people, especially latecomers, and brings them up to speed
Accessibility person	Provides physical, language (translation), or other support to participants
Devil’s advocate	Prevents “groupthink” by offering alternative views
Tech	Supports use of computers, projection, livestream, or other technology

TABLE 10.

Facilitation Competency Skills

Establish the purpose of the meeting, gathering, event, or dialogue	Welcome all points of view (within group agreements)
Guide development of "group agreements"	Manage the agenda and guide the process
Foster dialogue, discourage debate (unless debate is on the agenda)	Model active listening skills, including summarizing and paraphrasing what others say
Monitor group dynamics and equalize participation	Help deal with difficult participants

Summarize the discussion and help focus the group members on talking concretely about next steps they want to take individually and collectively

FIGURE 8.

Sample of Basic Group Agreements

Listen to understand the other's point of view rather than to prepare a defense of your own view. Try to listen more than you speak.

Respect others by not speaking over others or calling people names or using other oppressive behavior.

Take space/give space: If you are a person who talks a lot, step back and let others talk. If you are a person who hesitates, share your experiences and thoughts.

WAIT (Why Am I Talking?): Ask yourself this to make sure you have something valuable to add.

Speak about personal experiences. Start your sentences with "I" rather than "you." "I experienced...."

Minimize interruptions and distractions.

What is learned here can leave. What is said here stays. Outside the group, discuss the content of what was said, not who said what.

Ask questions. Ask honest, thought-provoking questions that give people the opportunity to explore and explain their underlying assumptions.

Stay through the hard times. Make a commitment to stay in the dialogue despite the tensions.

Recognize common ground not to solve the problem or agree on everything. Every two people share something in common.

Use hand signals for agreement, slow down motion, volume motion.

"Ouch," then educate. If someone says something hurtful, don't just disengage. Let the individual and the group know why it was hurtful.

WHAT ARE "GROUP AGREEMENTS"?

Groups and organizations work best when they have a set of shared agreements or baseline organizational principles that support participants doing their best work. Setting group agreements for a meeting or dialogue will strengthen group ownership in the process and, if done together, can help participants

consciously choose to honor and protect specific behaviors. If difficult situations or behaviors arise, the group can use the agreements to help resolve the issues. Setting group agreements together communicates that everyone in the group is essentially equal. This is important because most settings where people interact involve some degree of hierarchy where

FIGURE 9.

Facilitation and Group Process Tips and Tools

Simple tools for equalizing participation:

- The Go Round: each person speaks for a timed amount
- Talking sticks (the one holding the stick is entitled to speak) or talking stones (giving the same amount of stones or other objects to each person; when others speak, they deposit their stone in the middle of the circle until there are no more stones)
- Working in different-sized teams from pairs, to triplets, to any smaller subset of the whole group, and then reporting back to big group
- Use a progressive stack (move underrepresented groups to the head of the queue)
- Use a variety of participation methods from individual writing responses to pair shares to small groups with report outs to whole group role plays

Quick collective decision-making tools:

- Fist to 5: using one's hand to signify 0 support (the fist) to all in support (5 fingers)
- Thumbs up or down
- Yes/No go-rounds
- Dot voting (using colored dots/sticky notes to create visual voting record)
- Straw polls or using a nonbinding "temperature" check on a decision or question facing the group

Dealing with difficult behaviors, situations, individuals:

- Setting group agreements, baseline organizational principles, etc.
- Empowering the group to hold each other accountable
- Using a "bike rack" or scribed list of topics to address at another time
- Taking breaks; start off meetings with check-ins or grounding work
- Developing and using agendas/lesson plans, possibly standard formats
- Working in smaller teams or pairs (or larger groups, depending on the issue)
- Including fun, games, and movement into the agenda
- Have a counselor, social worker, other professional on call or in the room with you
- Checking in with individual participants during the break
- Using meta-discussions to address/name difficult situations/conversations

someone is in an authoritative role over others. This is a key reason to develop "group agreements" rather than "ground rules," which imply imposition on others.

Generally, there are two ways to set agreements. In a setting with time constraints, one approach is to list suggestions and ask if people can comply with them in the workshop. With more time, it is important that each person has a chance to contribute to developing the agreements. Beware of prematurely assuming that people have agreed when they have not. After developing the proposed agreements, the facilitator can ask for public indication that the group is willing to hold itself and others accountable to the agreements. A list of basic group agreements is shown in figure 8.

These group meeting facilitation skills are important to foster engaging, respectful, productive, and empowering meetings to address key problems and challenges. Creating an effective environment in which to discuss, assess, and plan is critical to maintaining momentum and enthusiasm in both peacebuilding and nonviolent action. People need to feel they are both listened to and part of the solution in order to stay engaged in nonviolent conflict transformation for the long haul. Figure 9 provides key tips for navigating group processes to foster participation and decision making and ways to handle difficult situations.

Beyond the Page #1

Facilitation and Group Decision-Making Role Play

(20–30 min.)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- Explore and practice using simple facilitation tools and tricks for supporting effective meetings and reaching group consensus on collective goals

SETUP:

- Place chairs in a circle or around a table as if setting up for a meeting. Then prepare written role directions or “spikes” (suggestions on how to act during the role play) to hand out to some participants. In the following spike suggestions, change the *italic sections* to fit your issue area:
 - You want to spend the whole \$10K to start new projects. You think your group is fine without any additional monies for its current work.
 - You think you should give all the money to a *local food pantry/soup kitchen*. Your group really wanted to *grow enough food to donate to a soup kitchen*, but you have not been able to do that. You can be very emotional about it.
 - You want to purchase *the building you meet in or the land you are renting for your community garden*.
 - You want to take most of the money and invest it so that your activist work/*garden/compost project* has an endowment. Act

as though you are the only one who has any financial sense in the group.

- Maybe you have had a bad day. Say something mean, dismissive, or rude. (E.g., We will tell people your paper said to do this!)
 - Note: This is understandably difficult. It is here to give your group the opportunity to model stopping oppressive behavior, the capacity to address issues when they arise in a compassionate and healthy way.
- Interrupt people constantly or talk incessantly.
- Fidget or have a side conversation with someone else in the group. Be a bit disruptive.

HOW IT IS DONE:

1. Have the group split into smaller groups of about seven to ten people each—or use a group about this size in the middle of the room in a “fishbowl” setup (everyone else can watch them as if they were in a fishbowl). They should sit in a circle or around a table.
2. Hand out the small slips of paper that will “spike” the conversation they are about to have; the spikes will help bring up specific issues.

3. Give them the following situation to role-play:
You are a local activist group in your neighborhood. You have been working together for a while, and this is one of your regularly scheduled meeting times—maybe they happen every month or two. Amazingly, someone has given your group a \$10K anonymous grant, and you need to figure out what to do with this generous gift.
4. Tell those folks who have spikes to do their best to follow the directions on the paper, but not give away what it says.
5. Tell the group they have five minutes to figure out what to do. Say GO!
6. After three to five minutes, stop the role play to debrief and collect some lessons. Write these lessons on a flip chart. For guidance on how to conduct the debrief for this exercise, please review the “Quick and Dirty Debriefing Framework” on page 26 and the action guide’s accompanying materials for facilitators.
 - a. What did people notice?
 - b. Were there any roles that were used to help the process? Facilitator, note taker, time keeper, and so on?
 - c. What kinds of problem behaviors came up, and what did you do about them?
7. After a couple minutes of debrief, run another role play following the same scenario but ask for a new volunteer facilitator. Have people swap out the old spikes for new ones.
8. Run the role play again for three to five minutes and debrief. Harvest and scribe what comes up. Make a big sheet of TOOLS/TIPS for artful facilitation.
 - a. What kinds of things were done, or could be done, to equalize participation in the meeting?
 - b. What kinds of things were done, or could be done, to help facilitate collective decision making? Was there an agenda or were any tools used for the meeting process (go-rounds, hand signals, voting or straw polls, individual or pair work, etc.)?
 - c. What kinds of things were done, or could be done, to deal with difficult situations or people in the meeting?
9. Thank the facilitator and the groups and give a big round of applause for a great meeting role play!

Resources

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