

# MAP

## Facilitators Handbook

for Promoting Rural Participation



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# **The MAP Facilitators Handbook** **for Promoting Rural Participation**

by

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Illustrations by Dorothea Holi

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## INTRODUCTION

Animators, change agents, group promoters, action-researchers, facilitators: this handbook is for those who are stationed on the front lines of promoting popular participation in rural development. Though based on the particular experiences of the "Method for Active Participation Research and Development Project" (MAP), the insights presented here are applicable to many programmes committed to promoting rural participation.

MAP was initiated by the Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC) with funding from the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) to conduct research in Kenya, Tanzania, and Zambia from 1988 to 1991. It had four objectives: 1) to develop methodologies for promoting participation of members in local co-ops, 2) to assist national cooperative institutions in applying these methods, especially in the training of facilitators, 3) to develop new techniques for monitoring and evaluating the promotion of participation, and 4) to make adaptations of participatory methodology for use in other development contexts outside of the cooperative sector.

This handbook is one of three volumes comprising the final report of the MAP project. "The MAP Manual for Training Facilitators" is a direct companion to this handbook and will assist trainers to develop a systematic programme for preparing facilitators to work in the field. The third volume, "Methods for Active Participation," is a comprehensive review of findings from the MAP project.

The handbook is divided into five chapters. The first reviews some of the theoretical assumptions of MAP and introduces an approach to involving villagers in the planning process of rural development projects. It also briefly describes the role and responsibilities of facilitators in the promotion of participation. The second chapter presents a number of techniques for enabling the active participation in rural planning events. The third chapter discusses important factors in establishing a creative participatory environment in which effective group planning can occur. The fourth chapter examines ways to ensure quality results in each step of the planning process.

The final chapter reviews the particular programme designs that have been used in applying MAP methodologies during the course of the present research project. It ends with a few suggestions on how MAP might be applied to fit the particular aims of other participation promotion programmes.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Several organisations have been instrumental in producing this handbook. The Kenya National Federation of Cooperatives (KNFC), the Cooperative Union of Tanzania (CUT), and the Cooperative College of Zambia (CCZ) have provided the primary field laboratories as MAP assisted in the development of the "Cooperative Members' Participation Programme" (CMPP). Facilitators and staff of the various provincial and district unions along with their government counterparts have all contributed to the practical experiences from which this handbook has emerged.

The "Land Management Programme" (LAMP) in Babati District, Tanzania, and the "Integrated Rural Development Programme" (IRDP/EP) in the Eastern Province of Zambia have provided additional opportunities for further experimentation with MAP methodologies.

The Swedish Cooperative Centre (SCC) and the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) have provided operational and financial support to the research work of the MAP Project while the Zambia Cooperative Federation (ZCF) has provided an institutional home.

Since its inception, the MAP project has built upon the extensive research activities of The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) and its international network of practitioners. The pioneering work of the ICA in participatory methods "concerned with the human factor" in development continues to be an inspiration to many public, private, and voluntary organisations around the world.

Ms Dorothea Holi of Nairobi has patiently assisted the author in providing enlivening illustrations and diagrams to complement the text.

The second printing of the Handbook has been funded by SIDA in preparation of an integrated resource development programme in South Wollo, Ethiopia.

The contributions of these organisations and associated individuals to the contents of this handbook are all gratefully appreciated and acknowledged.

Terry D. Bergdall  
Lusaka, November 1994

# **The MAP Facilitators Handbook**

## **for Promoting Rural Participation**

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## 1. METHODS FOR ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

### 1.1 MAP, Rural People, and Development

Participation promotion is about change. Many rural people, especially women and those of low economic standing, have been forgotten and ignored in organised development activities. Development professionals often refer to these and other factors as "marginalisation." By whatever name, it has left many scars among rural people: the prevalence of passivity and fatalism, a firm belief that their opinions and thoughts can be of little influence in affecting development efforts, illusory expectations of donors and officials.

Many people in rural areas have become accustomed to waiting for outsiders to do something on their behalf. Repeatedly rural people have been informed through the actions of officials, if not through their formal speeches, that development affairs should be left to outside experts. It is not surprising, therefore, that villagers often begin to see themselves as *passive objects* of development projects rather than active players in the development process.



Passive attitudes are rooted in self-perceptions that have grown over a lifetime of reinforcing messages. The "images" that people have of themselves determine the way they think and act. Correspondingly, when a significant change in a person's behaviour occurs, the change can be traced to a shift in self-images.

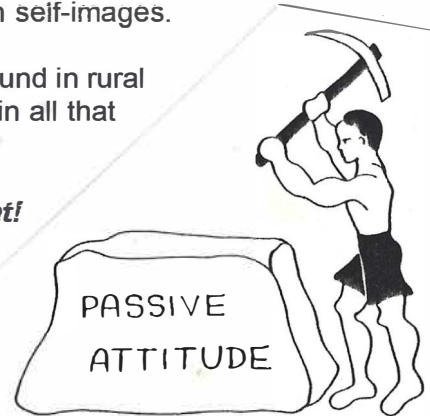
MAP aggressively challenges passive attitudes often found in rural communities and aims to convey one central message in all that it does:

***rural people can be agents of their own development!***

There is no need for villagers to wait for others to take charge of development activities, be they government officials, academic experts, or foreign donors.

MAP methodology follows a simple premise in its approach: attitudes and self-perceptions are more effectively addressed and potentially altered when people EXPERIENCE a new reality rather than when they are TOLD that they ought to think and act differently. The basic means for enabling this to happen in MAP are the conducting of participatory planning seminars followed by the successful implementation of self-help projects.

With MAP, *participants are treated as experts*, i.e. as people who have a wealth of latent knowledge gained through years of practical experience. The opinions and ideas of villagers are both solicited and honoured as participants are guided through a structured process to dig insights out of their accumulated wisdom. As self-help projects are planned using MAP techniques, villagers often realise through their own interaction with each other that many of their suggestions are over-ambitious and cannot be realised.



*Women's participation* is a high priority in MAP methodology and the target for women's involvement is often as high as fifty percent. If quorums for women's attendance are not met, programmes using MAP often postpone or cancel planning events. When such a cancellation occurs, a strong message is communicated about the importance of women's participation.

MAP provides a *forum for farmers* to freely express their concerns, to ask their questions, make their demands, and state their desires. There are usually few opportunities in rural areas where local leaders must face ordinary members of the community in an open-ended "question time." The content of discussions is never predefined in MAP activities. All suggestions and opinions are considered, thereby allowing all social strata within a community to advocate their interests.



Though MAP can be used in many differing situations, it works best when *no external inputs* are provided to assist people in projects they plan. There are, of course, limitations on what very poor villagers can do solely on the basis of their own resources; people can only lift themselves so far by pulling on their "bootstraps." But a shift in self-perception, from a passive victim to an active player, is a realistic expectation of self-help activities. Conversely, the premature introduction of external capital from a charitable patron sends the wrong message. It undermines self-confidence and reinforces a passive attitude by saying that it does indeed pay to wait.



The projects planned in MAP workshops are small self-help projects that people can accomplish by themselves without depending on outside resources. Through the implementation of small scale projects villagers can gain simple experience in the *practical management* of organisational details like budgeting time, working together, and accounting for funds. Important organisational skills can develop slowly but substantially on a solid foundation of local project implementation. Small successes breed confidence for bigger undertakings.



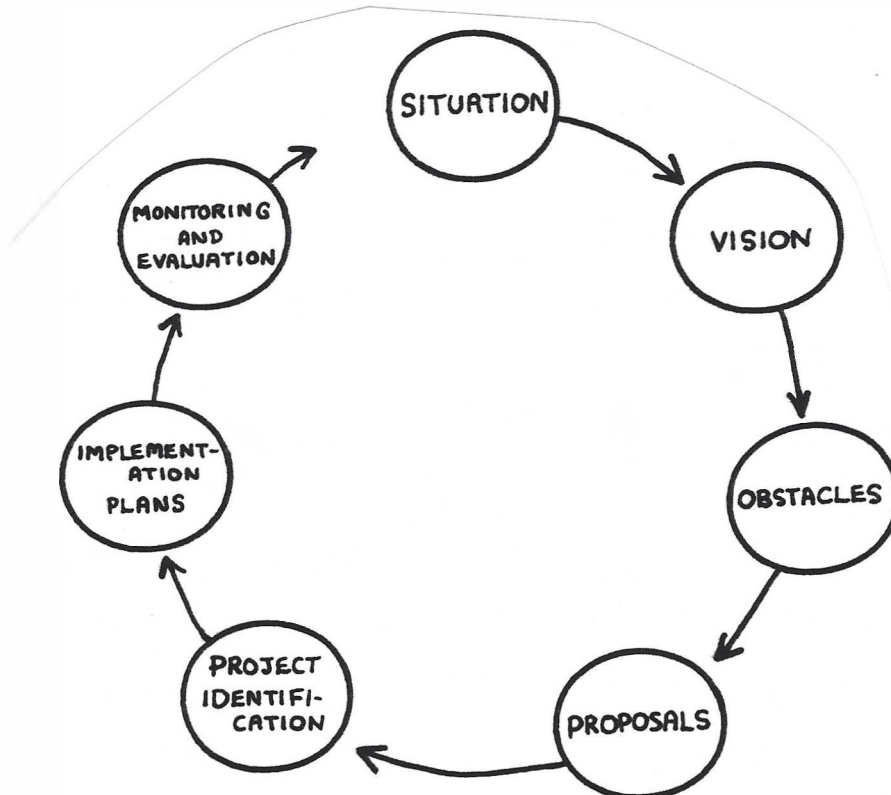
## 1.2 Participation and Project Ownership

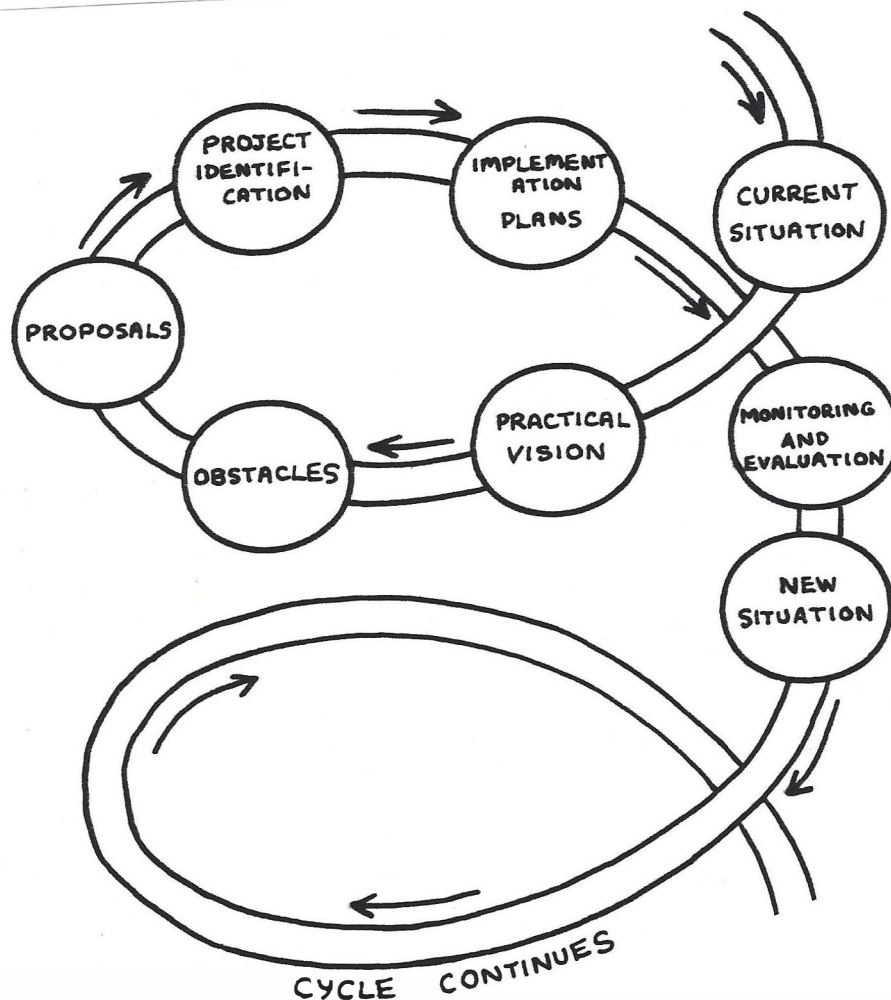
Participation promotion programmes vary considerably in approach and design. Most aim in one form or another to enhance a sense of local ownership in development projects. Some mobilise villagers in open-ended projects where activities are based entirely upon local perceptions of felt needs. Others seek to establish integrating partnerships into larger development schemes to address specific objectives.

MAP methodologies are applicable in most participation programmes because they focus on involving people in the process of planning and implementing projects, a process often referred to as a "project cycle." Typically this includes problem identification, project planning, implementation, and evaluation.

This cycle is systematized in MAP by a sequence of steps. In each step, local villagers take centre stage and are the primary actors as they plan and implement project activities. Facilitators play a supporting role by enabling active participation and ensuring quality thinking.

The MAP process begins with the "current situation" in a preparation meeting when base-line data is collected. The next steps are usually taken in a participatory "planning seminar:" the vision, obstacles, proposals, project selection, and implementation plans. "Monitoring" of the implementation phase takes place in a series of follow-up visits and meetings. Finally, a "participatory evaluation" session ends the process. Or perhaps better said, it starts the process all over again as the evaluation session reviews the new situation which has emerged from the preceding activities and new plans are made.





MAP has structured each of these steps in a series of meetings and workshops during which time rural villagers are asked to consider particular questions:

**Current Situation**--what is the pertinent information that describes the present reality of the area?

**Practical Vision**--what realistic hopes and dreams do participants have for this community or organisation?

**Obstacles**--what is preventing the practical vision from being realised?

**Proposals**--how can these obstacles be overcome, by-passed, or eliminated?

**Self-help Projects**--what small projects would start the journey toward realising the vision?

**Implementation Plans**--who, what, where, when, and how shall these projects be accomplished?

**Monitoring of Implementation Work**--what progress has been made in implementing the projects; what difficulties are being experienced and how can they be overcome?

**Participatory Evaluation**--what has been achieved, how is the situation now different, what needs to happen next?

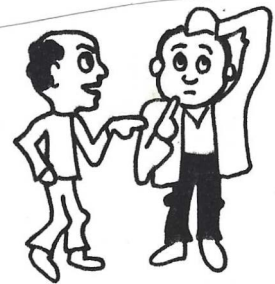


Answering these questions is a big and complicated task even for those who are professionally trained in the formulation of project plans. If great care is not taken, villagers can easily fall into aimless and prolonged discussions as they wrestle with these big questions. Avoiding these pitfalls is the responsibility of facilitators. They guide a participatory planning process so that quality plans can be made within a very short period of time.

### 1.3 The Role of Facilitators

Facilitators play an indispensable role in promoting participation. They either make or break a programme because they are the only ones in a position to make the theories of participation come alive in practice.

Being a facilitator is a new and unfamiliar role to many people. Teachers and conventional extension officers are expected to convey information on particular subjects and thereby play the role of an expert. As expert authorities, they talk about the correct way to do things. Extension officers are additionally expected, in many circumstances, to "sell" a programme or policy and to have people fall into line behind objectives planned by central bureaucracies.



In sharp contrast, facilitators do not tell anyone what to do and avoid acting like an expert. They advocate no particular programme nor persuade people to take any predetermined action. Their job is to enable rural villagers to think, reflect, and act in a self-reliant manner. It often means convincing people that they have an important role to play in rural development. Facilitators enable villagers to get into the habit of trusting their own ideas and digging for deeper insights.

Becoming a MAP facilitator is an ongoing learning process. No one is simply born a natural facilitator. Facilitators work as a team and learn from one another. The most valuable training they receive is "on-the-job" training. Facilitators are continually reflecting on their performance and are constantly thinking about how they might be able to improve their skills.

No MAP seminar is ever complete until facilitators debrief themselves on what took place. They review each other's performances by asking about the strengths and weaknesses of each facilitator; they discuss practical ways that each might improve during the next seminar. In order for such observations to be meaningful, of course, every facilitator will need to have been extremely attentive to all that took place during the course of the entire seminar.



Facilitators have two major over-arching responsibilities entrusted to them. They enable every participant to contribute ideas to the discussions and then ensure that quality thinking has gone into the planning.

The first responsibility is to enable and encourage all participants to share their views. Many new facilitators, however, are tempted to fall back into old habits and play the role of an expert. This problem can often be observed when facilitators talk too much and villagers talk too little. Talkative facilitators are, however, not the only such problem. Facilitators must also guard against the danger of a small number of outspoken participants dominating the discussions.



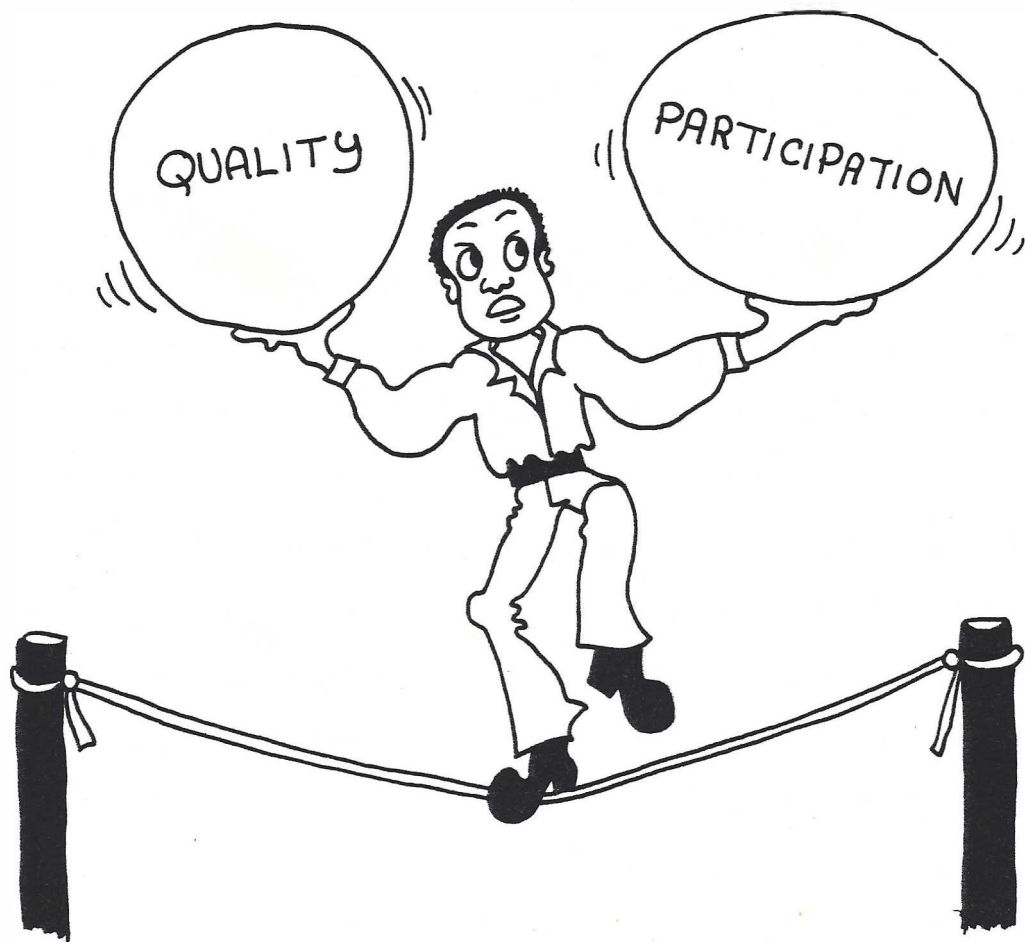
Many villagers, perhaps most, are shy in expressing themselves in public. This is especially true of women. A lot of encouragement from facilitators is often needed for shy people to speak. Facilitators assure them that their ideas are indeed important. Even the slightest hint that their ideas might not be valuable discourages shy folks from actively engaging themselves in the discussions. A facilitator, therefore, never rejects a response from a participant. There are no "wrong" answers. Everyone has something to contribute and every contribution has at its core an insight.

This does not mean that every contribution is clearly formulated when it is first presented. Many ideas are initially superficial, especially when coming from those who have little experience in generating ideas for group planning. The facilitators' job is to push for deeper insights. This is their second major responsibility. Facilitators ensure quality thinking on the part of participants.

This is not easy. Since facilitators want to avoid acting like an expert, they refrain from "correcting" participants. Rather, they ask appropriate questions that enable villagers to think deeper for themselves. Knowing that they should not act like an expert, many new facilitators tend to neglect their responsibilities for ensuring quality thinking. They place their emphasis on encouraging people to speak and accept all answers without challenge regardless of how shallow or unthoughtful: they fear that probing questions might discourage participants from contributing ideas.



Good facilitators learn to perform a balancing act. On the one hand they treat participants as those who have a wealth of practical wisdom and encourage active participation. On the other hand, they go beneath the surface and dig deeper for true insights to ensure high quality results.



How facilitators balance these two perspectives depends upon the unique characteristics of a group. If participants are easily contributing ideas and are not afraid to express their opinions, then more emphasis is placed upon pushing for quality thinking. If participants are shy and reluctant to share their ideas, then facilitators hold back from challenging responses in a search for deeper insights until the group gains some self-confidence.

Experienced facilitators usually follow a general rule: place more emphasis on enabling active participation during the early steps of the planning process (i.e. the vision, obstacles, and proposals) and then shift to ensuring quality thinking towards the end of the process (i.e. planning self-help projects and implementation steps). Several particular techniques can help a facilitator to maintain an effective balance between these essential responsibilities. It is to these that we now turn.

## 2. TECHNIQUES FOR ENABLING BROAD PARTICIPATION

The active involvement of villagers in the planning and implementation of rural development activities is a central aim for many programmes. It is a mistake to think, however, that if rural people are merely given an opportunity to be involved then fruitful participation will automatically follow. Many pitfalls await the unwary facilitator when villagers come to plan: repetitious speeches, wandering discussions, dominating leaders, petty arguments, emotionally charged sidetracks, bored silence, inconclusive results.



MAP employs a number of techniques to enable participatory planning events to be productive experiences. Three basic techniques are reviewed in this chapter. The first concerns techniques of leading "discussions." The second focuses on techniques for generating and organising large amounts of information; collectively, these are known as the "workshop" method. Though conventional lecturing can often be lethal to participation, the final technique found in the chapter concerns the preparation and delivery of effective "presentations."



## 2.1 Discussion Techniques

One friend meets another on the way to the coffee shop and says, "I heard you went to a conference last week. How was it?" A quick response follows, "Oh, it was fine. I had a nice time." End of discussion.

Perhaps the question was casually asked, more of a greeting than a serious enquiry, and if so the quick end to the discussion was an adequate response for both parties. But often such questions are asked in the hope of starting a serious conversation. In that regard, the conversation was a disappointment.

An entirely different conversation would have occurred if a few basic questions like these had been asked instead. "I heard you went to a conference last week:

- (1) Where did it take place?
- (2) Who were some of the other delegates?
- (3) What were some of the different sessions?
- (4) Which session did you find most interesting?
- (5) What did you learn from the discussions?
- (6) How do you plan to use any of this in your work?"

Answers to these questions would almost certainly have produced a conversation that shared genuine concerns. It would have done so because the sequence of questions followed a natural flow of the thought process. It followed a progression of questions through four levels: objective, reflective, interpretive, and decisional.

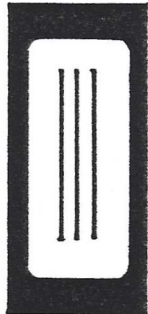
The conversation began with *objective* questions, numbers 1 through 3, that required very little thinking. These first level questions were simple observations that comprised a little "fact finding mission." Basic information was collected: "where did the conference take place, who was there, what was discussed?" A second level *reflective* question was asked next, "what did you find most interesting?" With reflective questions, people begin to consider where they stand in relationship to the objective facts. This step in the sequence involves questions of emotions, feelings, or associations.

An *interpretive* question followed, "what did you learn?" At this level, people consider issues of meaning, values, or purpose. The final question asked, "how do you intend to apply insights gained from the conference," was at the decisional level of thought. Here, the person was asked about personal resolutions for the future.



The sequence of questions moved the conversation from surface observations to deeper considerations and responses. If the sequence had been jumbled, the natural flow of the thought process would have been broken and the conversation would have become disjointed and confusing.

#### OBJECTIVE



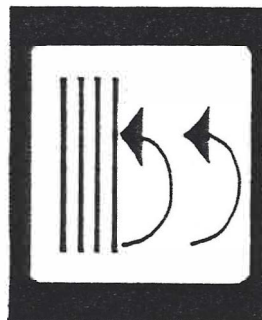
GETTING  
THE FACTS

#### REFLECTIVE



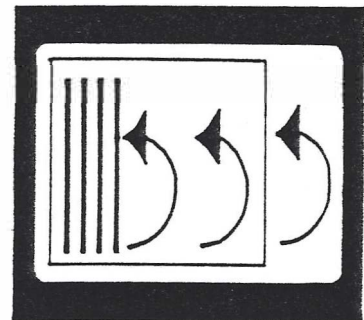
EMOTIONS,  
FEELINGS,  
ASSOCIATIONS

#### INTERPRETIVE



VALUES,  
MEANING,  
PURPOSE

#### DECISIONAL



FUTURE RESOLVES

A simple illustration shows the natural flow of thought through the four levels (from *Winning Through Participation*, by Laura Spencer). Imagine yourself being confronted by a group of armed thieves. You quickly note the situation: "there are two of them, they have knives, I am alone, they are asking me for my money." *Objective level*.

Next you respond emotionally: "I don't want to lose my money, I'm afraid of being hurt or killed, I don't like these people, I wish I was safe at home instead of here." *Reflective level*.

Then you interpret the situation: "I would rather lose my money than my life; these people want my money and will take it the hard way or the easy way; if I fight, I'm sure to get hurt and probably lose my money, too; if I give them my money they'll probably leave me alone." *Interpretive level*.

Finally, you decide on a course of action: "I will give them my money without resisting. As soon as they are out of site, I'll call the police. Starting tomorrow, I'll never again carry more money than I can afford to lose and never walk alone when I do." *Decisional level*.



Leading group discussions builds on this natural thought process. The same sequence of questions is used every time while the content of questions varies according to the topic under consideration.

### **2.1.1 Examples of Group Discussion Questions**

The practical uses for group discussions are countless. In participation promotion programmes, group discussions are a regular feature in formal interaction with participants. They are also useful in staff debriefing sessions. Below are some examples of different types of discussions that might typically occur while conducting participation programmes. Each example lists some possible questions in a sequence that follows the four levels of the thought process.

#### **Introduction discussion for a village planning event**

Objective level:

- what are some development activities that are currently taking place in this community?
- who are some of the people who are presently involved?
- what problems are these activities trying to solve?

Reflective level:

- which development activities are people most pleased with?
- when you think back to the past, what have been some of the biggest success stories for this community?

Interpretive level:

- why were these activities so successful?
- what lessons can be learned from those experiences that will help solve development problems in the future?

Decisional level:

- what would be required of you if you were serious about applying those lessons again in the future?

#### **Reflection on a proposed self-help project**

Objective level:

- what problem would this project help to solve?
- what resources are necessary to do this project?

Reflective level:

- what has been the past experience of this community in trying to address this problem?
- what has prevented this problem from being solved before?

Interpretive level:

- how might these issues be overcome?
- what practical details need to be organised?
- what coordination is required?

Decisional level:

- when do you need to meet again to plan your next steps?
- who will make sure this meeting happens?



## Reflection on a facilitator's performance

### Objective level:

- what were some comments or phrases that you can remember this facilitator saying while leading the session?
- what were some reactions from participants that you can recall?

### Reflective level:

- what did this facilitator do very well? what were some strengths?
- where did the facilitator encounter some difficulties?

### Interpretive level:

- what might this facilitator have done differently to make the session go more effectively?

### Decisional level:

- where do you think this facilitator should work the most next time in order to improve?

## Staff debriefing after a monitoring visit

### Objective level:

- what were the projects this community was undertaking?
- what results and progress were we able to see?

### Reflective level:

- where were you excited by their progress?
- where were you a little disappointed because you expected (or hoped) to see more?

### Interpretive level:

- what problems are slowing them down or are causing them to become stuck?
- how might they overcome these problems?

### Decisional level:

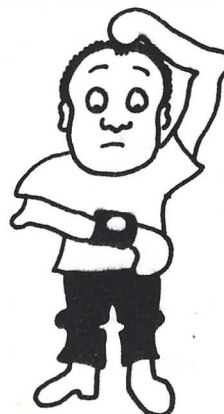
- what can we do as facilitators to encourage these people in doing their projects?
- what can we do in the future to help other communities avoid these same problems when we go to work with them?

## 2.1.2 Practical Hints for Facilitating Successful Group Discussions

Problems often arise as new facilitators lead group discussions. Below are some points of advice on how to prepare and conduct successful group discussions.

### *Timing*

Group discussions on any one particular topic usually take place within thirty minutes or less. If more time is required, the subject is probably too large and should be broken down into smaller discussions.



### *Preparing good questions*

Prepare for group discussions by doing a brainstorm of possible questions pertinent to the subject. Avoid questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no since they tend to end discussions rather than open them up. Take the list of potential questions and order them according to the four levels. As the questions are ordered, other questions may come to mind and these, too, can be added to the list. No level is to be omitted, so look for gaps where additional questions might need to be added.

Repetitive, vague, or tangential questions are eliminated. Once a draft of questions have been created, facilitators review every question by asking themselves "is the question clear? how might people answer it? why is it important? what am I hoping to accomplish by asking it?" Once the facilitator is satisfied with the questions, they are then reordered within each level into an easy flowing sequence.

### *Starting the discussion*

Clearly inform group participants about the topic of the discussion and remind them of its importance. New facilitators often err by launching into a series of questions without explaining the purpose of the discussion. The first question should be particularly precise and unambiguous. Answers should be obvious so that everyone can easily respond without much thinking.

### *Enabling everyone to participate*

Because it is important for everyone to speak at some point in a discussion, it is often a good idea to have everyone in the group answer an early question in the sequence by going from one person to the next. This quickly allows everyone in the group to become accustomed to the idea of making contributions to the discussion.

In large groups, a facilitator can have part of the group answer one question and then have other parts of the group answer a second and third. This avoids boredom with repetitious answers, keeps the thought process actively alive, and enables everyone to make a public statement.

Even when the facilitator asks open-ended questions which anyone can answer, mental notes (if not written notes) should be kept about who is answering how often. If someone has been especially quiet for a long time, the facilitator might ask a direct question: "Mrs Tembo, we haven't heard from you in a while; what do you think about this?"



### *Dealing with silences*

It is not unusual for silences to occur with many groups, particularly if they are unaccustomed to group discussions. Be prepared to rephrase the question in several different ways. If participants seem particularly confused about a question even after it has been rephrased, a facilitator might provide an answer as an example. This often helps to clarify the question.

### *Keeping the discussion on course*

Sometimes participants provide answers that cause the discussion to go astray. A facilitator can bring the discussion back to the subject by repeating the last question or by reviewing previous answers that remained on the subject. A facilitator can acknowledge a distracting comment while also "bracketing" it, e.g. "that is an important concern and later when we turn to that subject we will want to take it up again" and then repeat the question of the moment.

### *Dealing with arguments*

Disagreements are not necessarily bad. A problem arises when participants tend to get stuck in the argument. It is important in strong arguments to clarify the points of disagreement and make sure that the problem is not merely one of misunderstood communication. A facilitator can either summarise the disagreement, or can ask someone else who is not directly involved to do so. Once differing points of view have been clarified, the facilitator can ask the group "do we understand each person's point of view?" To bring the debate to an end, the facilitator might say something like "as we consider this question some more, we will have to be sure to include both of these points of view in our deliberations. Now let's move on to another question."



### *Keeping the discussion practical*

Abstract responses are often made by participants that reflect vague ideas rather than experience. Asking for an example helps to clarify the thinking of participants. For example, if someone says they hope to see "improved education in the community," a facilitator might ask "can you give us an example of what you mean by 'improved education?' how would you know if education has improved?"

### *Dealing with dominating participants*

Some participants want to talk all the time. When someone answers questions at the expense of others, a facilitator can respond in a number of different ways. One is to simply avoid eye contact with the one who is speaking too much and, thereby, refrain from granting "recognition" to speak. If all else fails, the facilitator can politely but firmly say, "we appreciate your comments, but since you have already contributed some of your ideas, let's listen to some others before you add more."



### *Keeping track of the discussions*

Make brief notes of comments made during the discussion. Reference can be made to these at appropriate moments, "you mentioned these ideas," and then read the list back to the group, "which are the most important?" A facilitator can also ask a member of the group to take notes. If this is done, be sure to utilise those notes in some manner. It dishonours people to ask them to do a task and then make no use of their work.



### *Bringing the discussion to a close*

When the discussion is brought to its end, the facilitator quickly reviews some of the main points. If notes have been taken, say how they will be used. Remind participants about the purpose of the discussion and how that purpose has now been realised.

These practical hints will assist a new facilitator in leading effective discussions. The discussion technique itself is a helpful way of introducing subjects or reflecting upon work in the planning of group projects. It is very difficult, however, for firm resolutions and practical plans to emerge from general discussions. The following section presents additional techniques that enable broad participation in the planning of projects.

## **2.2 Workshop Techniques**

It is a delicate task to enable many different people to participate in the collective analysis of problems and the formulation of solutions. The purpose of a "workshop" is to move from the diverse ideas and insights of many individuals towards a shared understanding about an issue under consideration. Three basic techniques make up the "workshop" methodology. The first involves a *brainstorm* of information while the second focuses on *organising data*. The third technique aims at reaching a *group consensus* through the naming of agreed upon categories.

The particularities of these techniques will vary according to the topic of specific workshops. Later, in Chapter Four, the workshop method will be reviewed in regards to different aspects of the planning process: vision, obstacles, proposals, project selection, and implementation planning. The basic principles of the workshop method, however, remain essentially the same throughout.

Workshops can take place with any size group. The larger the group, however, the more important it is to divide into smaller sub-groups, or teams, at different stages of the workshop. When groups are too large, it is difficult for everyone to contribute ideas to discussions. Smaller team discussions allow this to happen. Teams then report back in plenary sessions to the larger group.



Workshops, like discussions, begin with a clear explanation about the purpose of the exercise and the anticipated products and outcomes. The parameters of the workshop are thereby clearly established.

### 2.2.1 Disciplined Brainstorms

Brainstorms best occur in small groups that number no more than a dozen or so participants. If a group is larger than that, then it is best to divide it into teams for brainstorm work. Though brainstorming is a group exercise, it starts with the individual. The quality of any brainstorm is determined by the seriousness with which individuals do their original thinking.



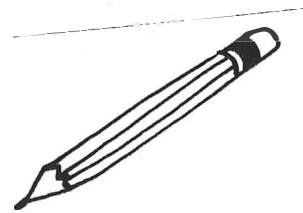
Once individuals have completed their own thinking on the subject, ideas are then shared among the participants and a collective brainstorm list is created that includes all of the ideas. Below are some practical hints and guidelines that will help a facilitator lead productive brainstorming sessions.

### *Clearly introduce the brainstorm topic*

The topic of the brainstorm is introduced by a facilitator who seeks to ensure that it is clearly understood by everyone. Before participants start to brainstorm, the question is written on the wall and the facilitator asks if it makes sense. If there is any possibility of confusion, the facilitator might provide an example or ask for a participant to give one.

### *Have individuals create solitary lists*

Participants are given time to think and collect their thoughts solitarily before anyone shares their ideas publicly. This is best done during a few minutes of total silence while participants list their ideas on a piece of note paper. If such materials are unavailable, or if participants are illiterate, then they can be given time to mentally make their lists. The facilitator encourages participants to write down as many ideas possible. Every idea that comes to mind at this stage should be jotted down even if later it might be discarded. Even seemingly foolish ideas can at times spark a genuine insight on a related idea.

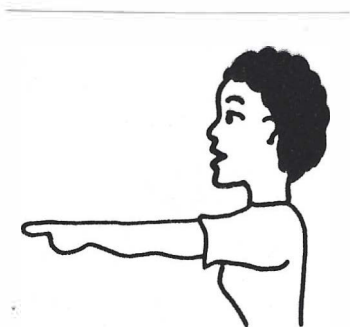


### *Set the ground rules*

Before asking participants to share items from their list, the facilitator explains that everyone will be asked to contribute an idea but that there is no time for long speeches. Participants are asked to boil down their ideas before they share them. Each idea should be stated in a single sentence. Additional ideas will be received only after everyone has spoken. Setting these ground rules allows the facilitator to refer back to them with a polite reminder when they are broken.

### *Have every participant contribute at least one idea*

Go around the group, from one person to the next, asking for the contribution of an idea. If a participant repeats an idea expressed by someone else, no problem, but everyone needs to speak. Once everyone has been called upon to speak, then the discussion can be opened to anyone who wants to make additions to the brainstorm list.



### *Start with someone other than a leader*

Begin listing brainstorm items by asking someone other than a leader to speak first. In rural villages, leaders often sit together, so begin on the opposite side of the group. Because they are leaders, their ideas can subtly intimidate other participants from expressing their true opinions. As a general rule, it is best to have the leaders state their ideas last rather than first.



### *No wrong answers*

The purpose of a brainstorm is to generate a lot of ideas from many different sources. It also allows participants to view ideas through each other's eyes. Do not try to weed out poor ideas while building the initial brainstorm. Since it is important that everyone understand what is being said, the most appropriate questions in brainstorm sessions are ones of clarity. If a point is confusing, facilitators ask the author of the idea to make a (very) brief explanation.

### *Record all ideas*

Write down everyone's idea. The practical means for doing this will depend upon the materials available. The brainstorm list might be written on a black-board or large manila sheets so everyone can see the ideas. Another technique is to write a summary of each idea on an individual sheet of paper or index card. If circumstances make it impossible for any of these, then the facilitator writes all ideas on a piece of note paper so that they can be read back to the group when it comes time to discuss them.



### *Women's involvement*

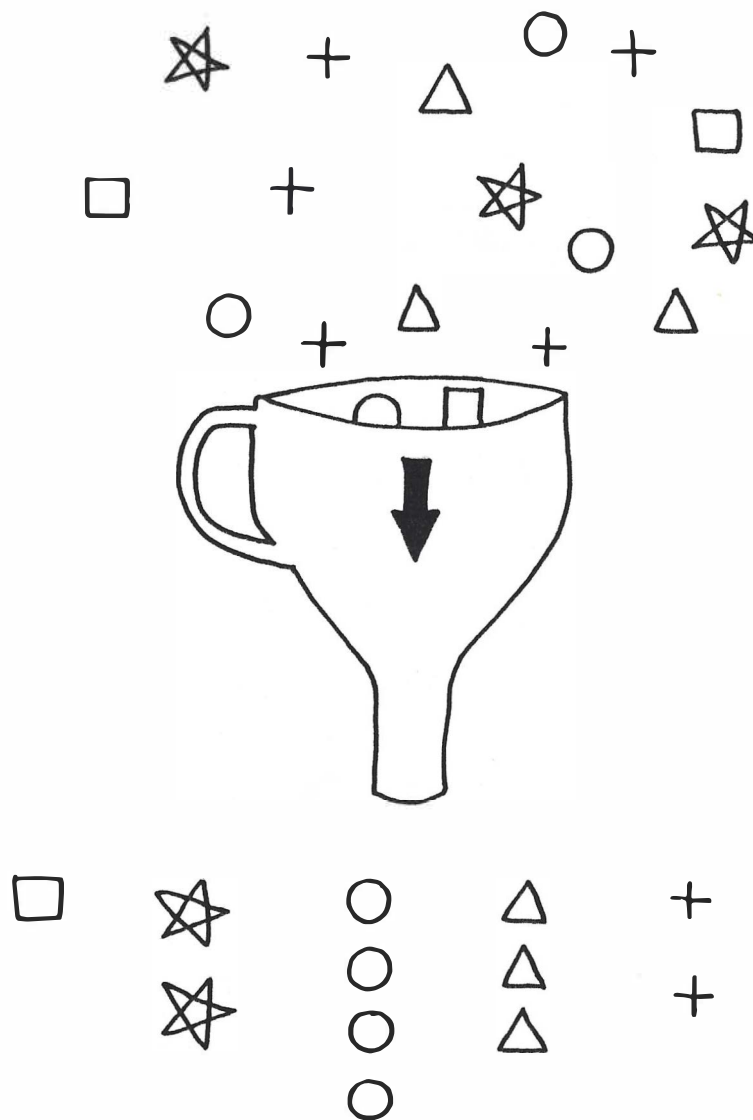
It is important to authentically integrate women into the planning process. Because traditional culture has often subordinated female participation, the insights of rural women tend to become overshadowed by the *dominating presence of men*. A helpful technique for ensuring that women's ideas are highlighted is to have women meet in small teams by themselves. This is not "segregation" or "isolation." It is rather a practical measure to assist women in organising their thoughts and empowering their presentation so that a genuine integration of their ideas can occur once men and women are reconvened in the plenary session.



Brainstorming is the first step in the workshop method. The practical points described above will assist facilitators to lead brief but productive brainstorming sessions. The next step is to organise the information.

#### **2.2.2 Organising Information**

Most raw brainstorm lists are a wild, untidy hodge-podge of ideas. The bigger the group contributing to the brainstorm, the more likely is this the case. For brainstorm lists to become useful, the information needs to be organised. Involving participants in this process is the second technique of the workshop method.



Brainstorm lists are often generated in small team discussions and then reported back to the whole group in a plenary session. It is in these plenaries that facilitators have the group organise brainstorm ideas. Quite simply, this means *putting similar ideas together*. Many, if not most, of these combinations will be obvious to a group as they review the brainstorm.

Other items will be more difficult to put together. Facilitators have participants "intuit" relationships by asking them to explain ways that different ideas might fit together. Such comments often spark new insights among other participants who might see a slightly different way of combining ideas. This give and take of organising data helps to build a common understanding among participants of the topic under consideration.

There are several practical hints which can assist facilitators as brainstorms are organised by participants.

### *Keep brainstorm information visible*

When information from a brainstorm is being organised, it is important to have all ideas placed on a wall (or easel) in front of the group so that every participant can easily read them. They might be written on a blackboard or on large manila sheets. Having brainstorm items taped to the wall on individual cards or sheets of paper is a particularly good way to display information, but logistical arrangements do not always allow for this to happen.

### *Make obvious combinations first*

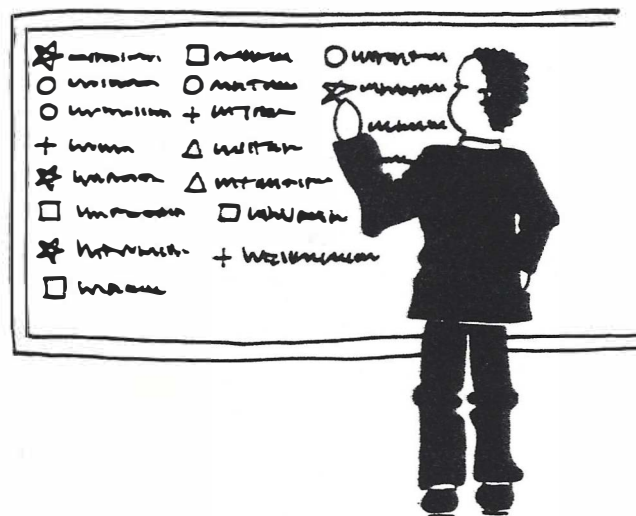
Brainstorm items are put together by similarities. A clear criteria for organising similar ideas is stated by the facilitator. For example, in a "vision" workshop, the criteria is similar "anticipated accomplishments" while in an "obstacles" workshop items are organised by "common root problems." The organising exercise begins by quickly putting together those items that obviously go together.

### *Don't force information together prematurely*

If there is any initial hesitation or disagreement on the part of the group to put brainstorm items together, then facilitators keep them separated until later. After all items have been reviewed and obvious combinations have been made, then those items for which participants were uncertain can be discussed and included into the emerging categories.

### *Avoid naming the categories*

The names for categories emerge from the items that are included within it. Categories are literally "redefined" every time new items are added. Giving a category a name before all of the brainstorm items have been organised can limit the category and potentially exclude possible items. Conversely, category names can also be so general that subtle differences between items tend to be overlooked all together.



A good technique for organising data is to label emerging categories with symbols like x, +, o, \*, so that the categories can be referred to as "stars" or "circles" instead of



words that convey actual meaning. Also avoid labelling categories with letters or numbers because they imply a ranking order. Symbols are neutral and avoid problems of premature naming.

When blackboards or large manila sheets are used for displaying lists, the same symbol can be placed next to similar brainstorm items. If index cards or small sheets of paper are used, symbols can be placed with clusters of similar cards as they are moved around on the wall.



#### *Aim for a good spread of information*

Categories emerge from the group discussions and it is, therefore, impossible to know exactly how many categories will finally be decided upon. However, it is helpful for a facilitator to anticipate a general range for the number of categories. The purpose of the categories is to help participants make an analysis of particular workshop topics. The anticipated range, therefore, is large enough that insights are not buried in a few generalities but not so large that the number of categories are another long list. Six to ten categories is often a good rule of thumb for most group work.

#### *Keep the whole group involved*

Organising brainstorm information into categories is an extended dialogue between a facilitator and the group. Large groups are divided into teams so that every participant can contribute to a brainstorm. When information is organised in large plenaries, however, it is often impractical to have every participant actually speak. In these circumstances, facilitators use innovative means to keep participants involved.

Facilitators can have team participants sit together and then call upon them to select only two or three brainstorm items to share at any one time. Facilitators can also keep mental note of those who speak and those who don't and then call on silent participants at strategic moments.

→ Inevitably, some participants will become more enthusiastically involved in discussions and speak more than others. If they become too dominating, a facilitator can bring in other participants by asking for their observations, too. The techniques used to handle dominating participants in a workshop are the same as those described in leading group discussions.

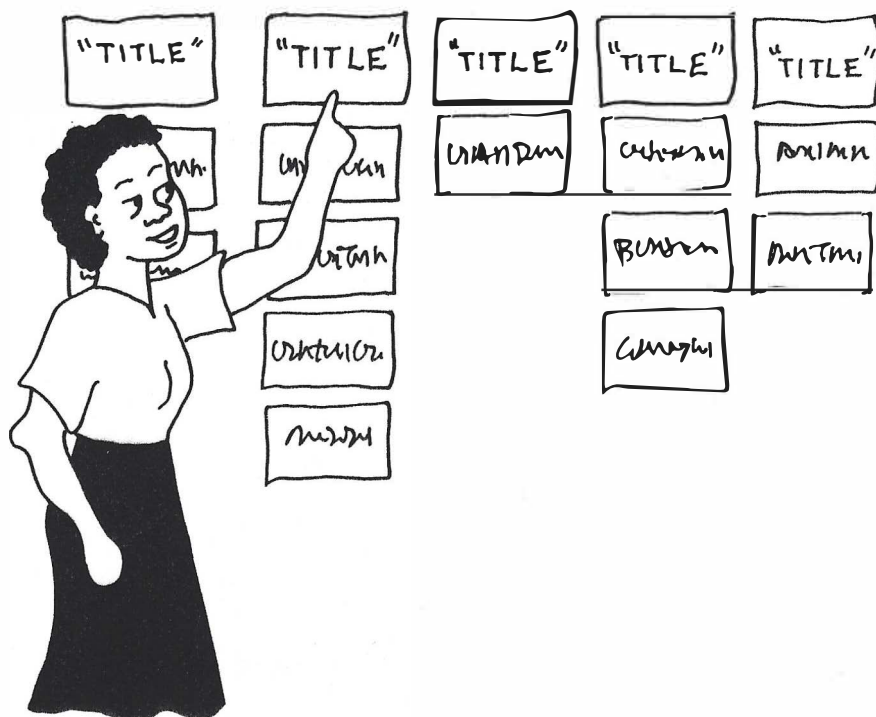
Camea

### *Resolving disagreements*

At times participants will have differing opinions about the categories in which some items should be placed. The first step in such disagreements is for a facilitator to always make sure that both perspectives are properly understood by all of the participants. Many times such disagreements are merely because of poor communication. The facilitator can also call for a third opinion from someone else in the group. If the disagreement still continues, the item can be set aside or "bracketed" until later. Additional information and subsequent discussions often help to clarify the relationship of the controversial items.

### **2.2.3 Group Consensus**

The collective analysis of information moves toward a conclusion when participants name the various categories. The names emerge from the information that compose the categories, which is why it is important that names not be assigned until all of information has been shared. By leaving the naming process until last, it is possible for fresh insights to be gleaned from all perspectives included in categories.



Participants can claim ownership of the resulting product of a workshop because they can trace their own unique contributions from the initial brainstorming session. They can see how their viewpoints are related to the overall analysis of the workshop topic. Reaching a consensus at this final stage is, however, a delicate process. Facilitators can benefit from a number of hints in the naming of categories.

#### *Establish the broad arena of the category*

The facilitator has the group quickly identify the general subject of the category. The name of the overarching theme is written in large letters and placed on the front wall for all to see.

#### *Determine the qualifying aspects of the category's name*

Particular questions to discern the qualifying aspects of the title will depend upon the specific topic of the workshop. In a vision workshop, for example, a facilitator might ask a question like this to clarify anticipations about the category of water: "from all the information listed here, what is it that this community really hopes to accomplish in the next four or five years in regards to 'water?'" A good test for a proposed name is to check and see if every item in the category can comfortably remain under it. If not, then other names are tried.

#### *Disagree to a proposed name by offering an alternative*

Reaching a consensus on a name for a category is like buying a new suit of clothes. It's a matter of trial and error as the group "tries on" different names in order to see if they "fit." It is rarely the case that the first name proposed is the one that a group finally decides upon. When a name has been proposed, the facilitator never allows it to be rejected with a simple "no, that's not it." Disagreement is made by suggesting an alternative. It is through a series of possible alternative names that the group begins to clarify its own thinking.

#### *Conclude the naming exercise with the "affirmative chorus"*

Alternative suggestions for the name of the category continue to be offered until a consensus is reached. Most often this occurs through an "affirmative chorus" as many people say at once "yes, yes, that is it." When facilitators think that a consensus has been reached, they can ask a direct question to confirm if it has or not: "does this title communicate all that we intended with the information compiled in this category?"





### Avoid voting

If the discussion about a name for a category bogs down in a disagreement between two different proposals, avoid the temptation to conduct a vote. *Voting always divides a group* and immediately creates a winners on one side and losers on the other. Continue to seek other alternative names until a consensus has been reached.

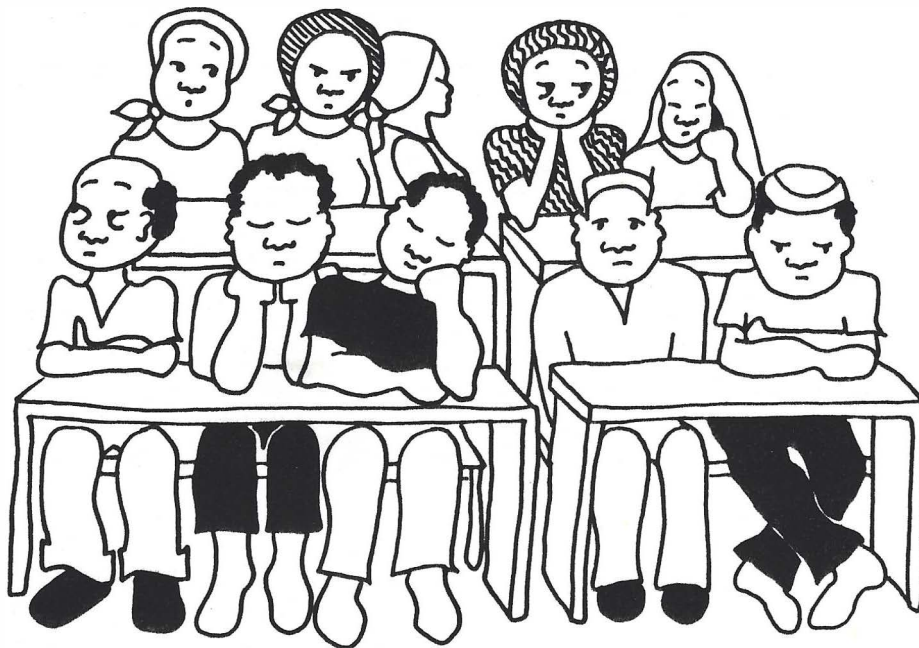


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Once names have been given to all of the categories, the workshop can be brought to a close by some concluding activity. In most participatory programmes, this is usually done (if time allows) by having the group reflect on the experience of doing the workshop. Following the techniques of leading a discussion, a series of brief objective, reflective, and interpretive questions are asked by the facilitator. If time is too short for such a discussion, then the facilitator can make a few concluding comments that honour the work of the participants and says something about the significance of the workshop product.

## 2.3 Presentation Techniques

Lecturing is generally considered to be a very poor approach to use in promoting participation. On occasions, however, it does become necessary to present information to groups of people. To avoid having *bored audiences*, it is important to find ways to keep presentations interesting and stimulating. Their preparation and delivery can be assisted through an assortment of creative techniques.



The preparation of a presentation can be done using the workshop method just described above. Begin by doing a "brainstorm" of all of the points that need to be included in the presentation. This is usually done by the one who will ultimately make the presentation, but ideas from others can also be solicited in the brainstorm.

Once the brainstorm has been completed, then organise the information into categories and name them. A helpful technique for organising a presentation is to decide upon the four basic points of the speech, and then determine the four sub-points under each one. A "4x4" will help create an underlying rationale for a presentation with sixteen key sub-points. The same can be done using a "3x3" format with nine sub-points, etc.

| BASIC POINT | BASIC POINT | BASIC POINT | BASIC POINT |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| SUB-POINT   | SUB-POINT   | SUB-POINT   | SUB-POINT   |
| SUB-POINT   | SUB-POINT   | SUB-POINT   | SUB-POINT   |
| SUB-POINT   | SUB-POINT   | SUB-POINT   | SUB-POINT   |
| SUB-POINT   | SUB-POINT   | SUB-POINT   | SUB-POINT   |



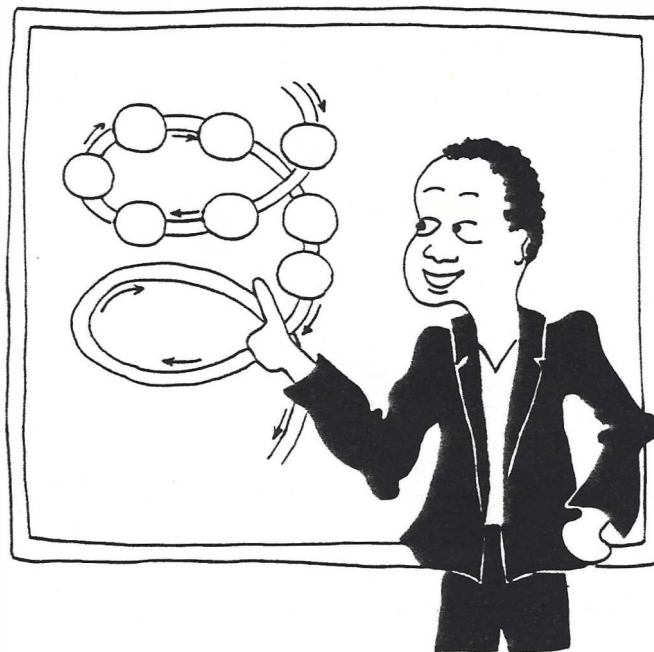
Presentations where someone merely stands up and talks about sixteen or nine points are rarely successful. People easily become bored when listening to someone drone on for a long time. Though there are many techniques to enhance public speaking, the following hints will assist in making presentations more lively and interesting.

#### *Maintain a quick pace*

Decide before making the presentation how long it should be. Then divide the time among the points. Some points will take more time and others less. Be strict with yourself in keeping to the schedule. Mark times on your notes so that you will be reminded about the pace you intend to keep.

#### *Illustrate each point with a visual "image"*

Simple diagrams, often including key words and other visual images drawn on a blackboard as you speak, will help your audience to both follow your presentation and to remember it afterwards. It is a good discipline to create a visual image for each of the sixteen (or nine) sub-points. Visuals should be clear and straightforward and not overly mysterious and in need of a lot of explanation. Test them out by showing them to a friend or colleague without explaining them and ask what they seem to convey. After receiving their comments, discuss what you had hoped to communicate. This should assist you in adjusting the images for more effective use in your presentation.





*Tell about a "life experience" as an example for each key point*

Story telling is always an important part of making interesting presentations. Without examples from real life experiences, the points in a presentation tend to remain abstract and theoretical. Most people would readily agree in principle if a speaker said "rural women are practical thinkers and should be more involved in decision making," but an example illustrating the point would be more effective:

The women of Mupizwa were pleased when the village council decided to build a new school. Many young children had been kept at home because it was too far for them to walk to the neighbouring village to attend the ward school. But they were upset when they learned that the leaders, all who were men, had decided to devote an entire week, Monday through Friday, to building the new school. How could crops be attended and other ongoing work completed? After discussing among themselves, the women suggested that every Friday for an entire month should be set aside for a village-wide work day. Once this idea was put forward to the leaders, it was quickly adopted.

*Have the audience contribute ideas through questions and answers*

The more interaction between the presenter and the audience, the better. This can be accomplished through the use of short questions and answers at strategic moments in your presentation. The point above might be amplified in a presentation by asking "can someone else give another example of why it is important to involve women in village decisions?" Once an example has been given, continue with the next point.



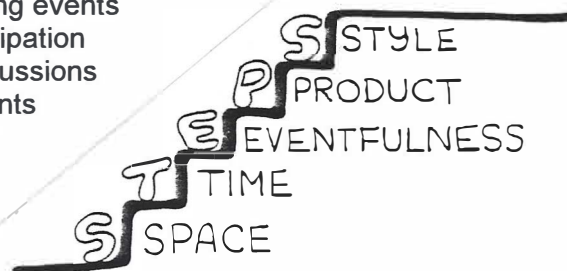
## Conclusion

Group discussions, workshops, and imaginal presentations will help facilitators as they promote participatory activities. The practical techniques described in this chapter can assist development programmes of all types to realise their ambitions to involve rural people in the planning of rural development projects. These techniques are further examined in light of different steps of the project cycle in Chapter Four. But now we turn to considering the indirect details that are so important in establishing a conducive environment for participatory planning.



### 3. FACTORS FOR CREATING A PARTICIPATORY ENVIRONMENT

The general atmosphere in which planning events take place is as crucial to effective participation as are sound techniques for leading discussions and facilitating workshops. "STEPS" points to five important programme dimensions which can create a good environment: space, time, eventfulness, product, and style.



#### 3.1 Space

Participation seminars have occurred in almost every conceivable space. They have been held in classrooms, meeting halls, storerooms, churches, and under trees. But the successful use of these depends upon proper preparation and careful arrangements. Before a seminar actually takes place, facilitators visit the proposed venue during the set-up meeting and review a checklist of the following points.

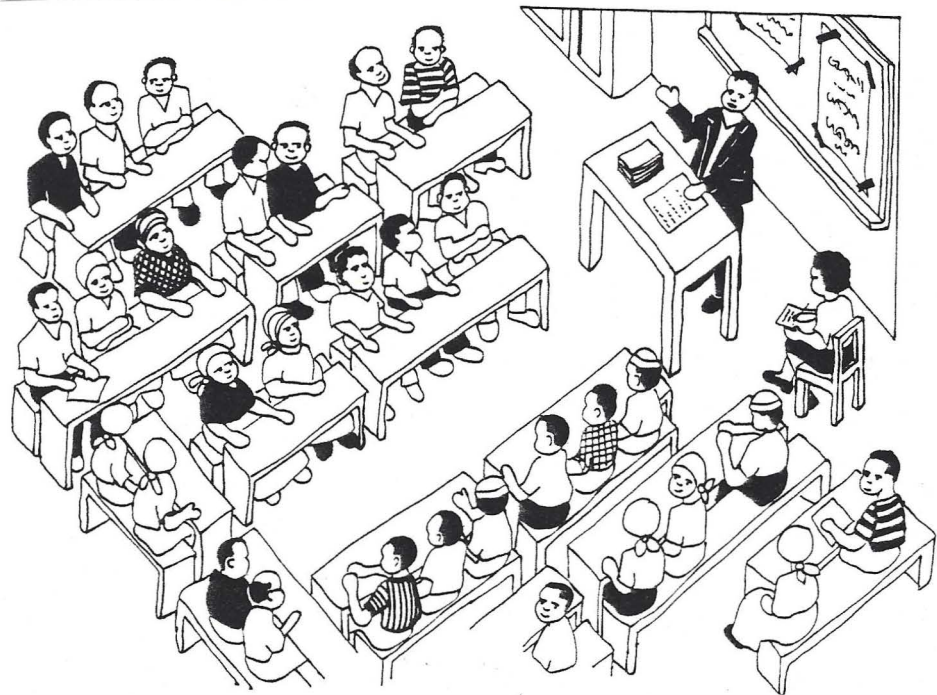
*Can the space comfortably accommodate all participants?*

The venue needs to be large enough to comfortably seat all of the participants. If the space is too small, *participants will feel cramped and unwelcome*. Similarly, if the venue is too large, groups can spread out into an indefinite sprawl. A way must be found to divide off an area from the larger space in order to consolidate discussions.



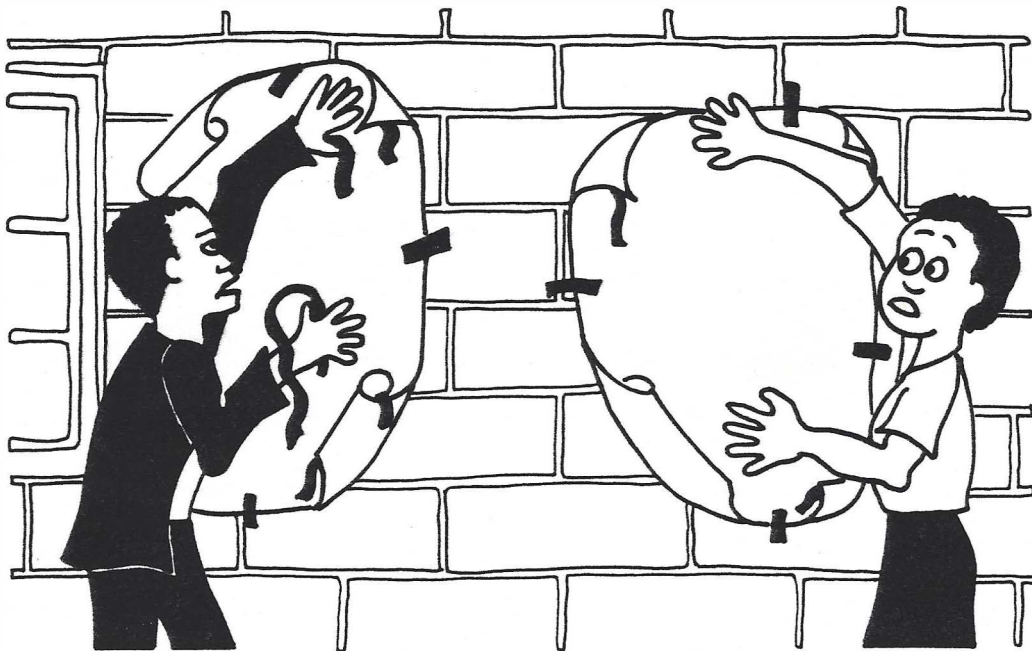
### *How will the participants sit?*

Are tables and chairs available in sufficient numbers? If school desks are to be used, are they large enough to seat adults? If meeting outdoors, are benches or logs available? Is the area adequately grassy so that people can comfortably sit on the ground? The host community will likely have established meeting places where these problems have already been solved, but facilitators visit the venues and consider these questions.



*Can written results from teams be easily displayed during plenaries?*

Summary statements from team discussions need to be displayed during reports to plenaries. Does the venue easily allow for this to happen? If tape is to be used with papers and cards, does it stick firmly to the walls or does it easily fall to the floor? Can chalk be easily seen on the blackboards? Is a large easel required? An easel is usually a necessity if the meeting occurs in the outdoors. Are any other special arrangements needed to allow for an easy display of reports?



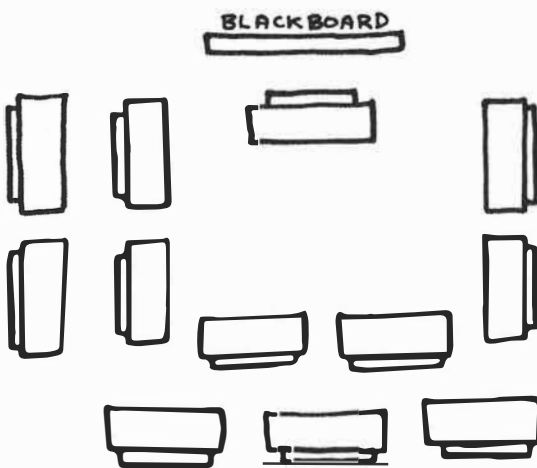
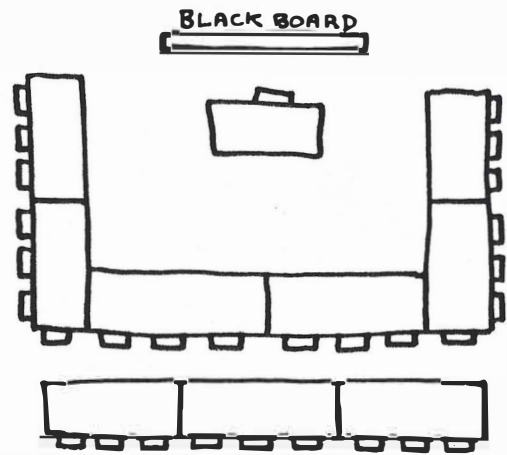
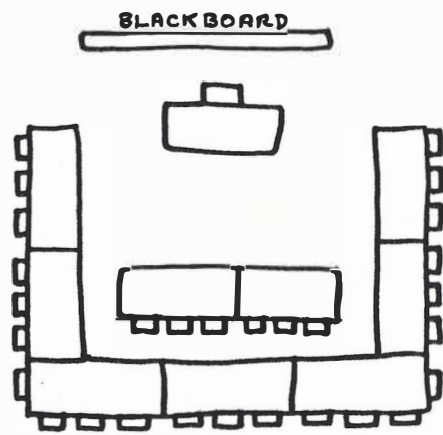
*Is there adequate space for both small teams and group plenaries?*

Space is needed for small teams to work separately. These spaces need to be near-by the meeting area for the large group so that time is not wasted moving about, but far enough away that discussions can occur in quiet surroundings.

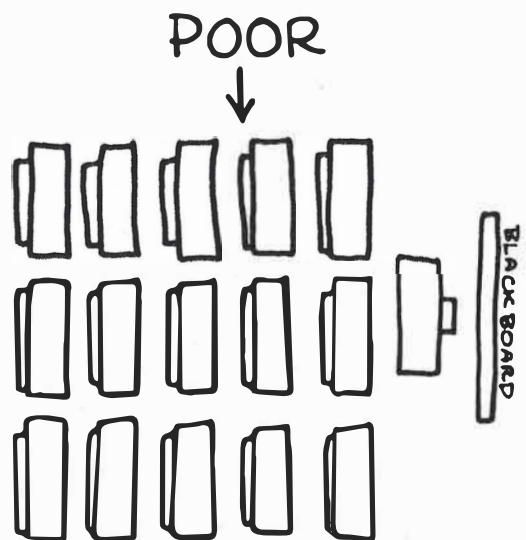
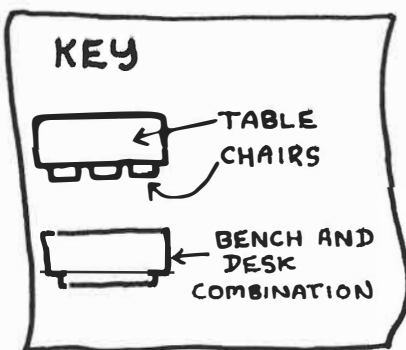
*Plan the seating arrangement according to the venue*

The best seating arrangement for large groups is a modification of the UN style. Table and chairs are arranged to face in three directions with the front of the room reserved for the display of reports and the front table for the facilitator. The traditional classroom arrangement where students sit in rows and face the teacher is avoided at all costs. The same is true for traditional seating arrangements in churches. The seating arrangements for small teams can be in circles.





GOOD  
ARRANGEMENTS





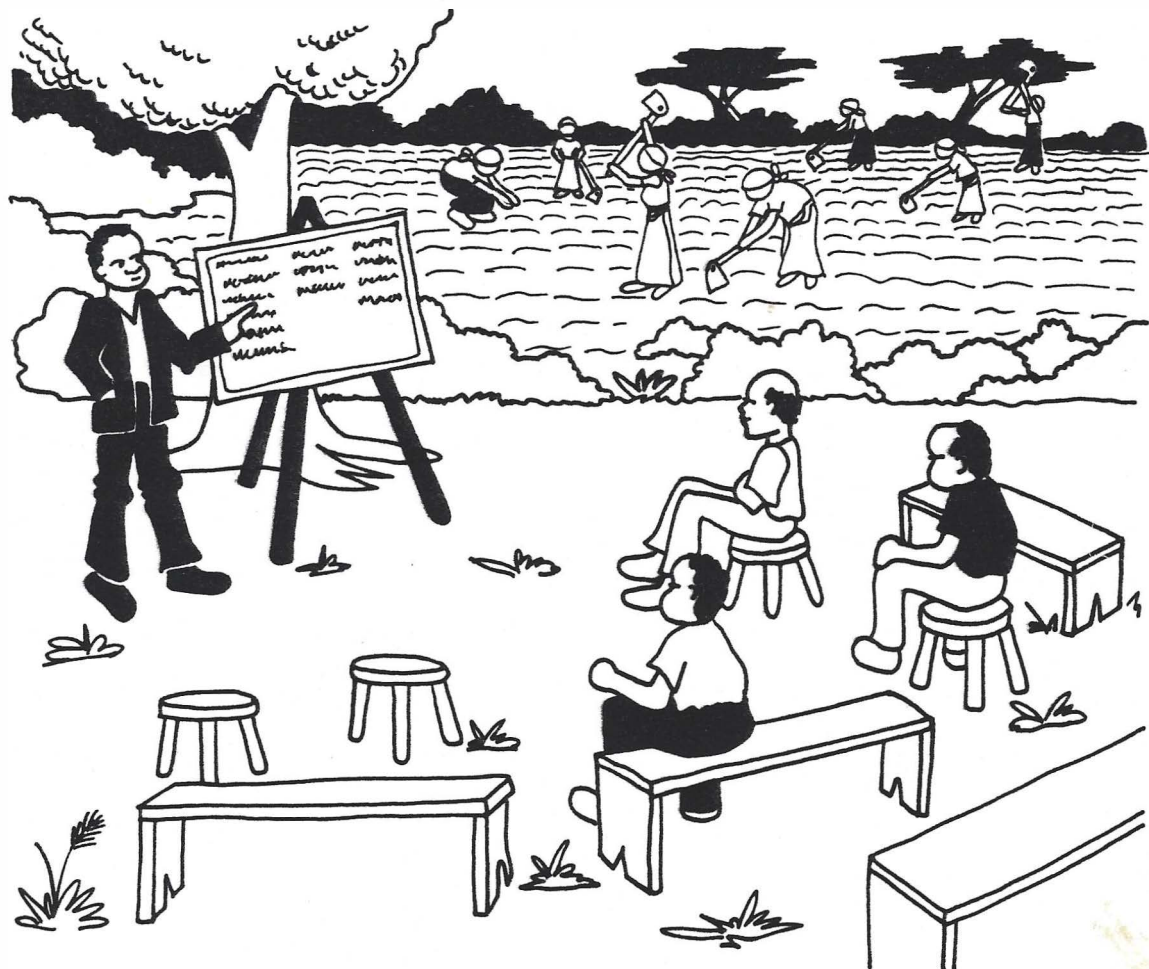
### 3.2 Time

Facilitators make good use of time. The effective management of time is one of the essential elements that make for successful participation programmes. Below are some particular considerations that demand attention in regards to time.

#### *Scheduling in awareness of the agricultural season*

Peak times for planting, cultivating, and harvesting crops are poor times to schedule popular participation events in the rural countryside. These are particularly *difficult times for women* to attend meetings. Facilitators make careful work plans by identifying busy agricultural seasons and avoid scheduling planning events during those times.

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### *Punctual arrival of facilitators*

Facilitators can enthusiastically declare that villagers are important and have valuable contributions to make in formal seminars, but if they arrive late and make villagers wait, then a much different message is communicated. The late arrival of facilitators reinforces an old image that says village people are of low importance. Good facilitators strive to communicate a genuine esteem for villagers in all that they do and remember wisdom from the ages: actions speak louder than words.



### *Pacing of the sessions*



All steps in the planning process do not require an equal division of time. The four levels of questions used in group discussions, for example, are seldom given equal time. Objective questions and reflective questions can usually be answered much faster than interpretive or decisional questions. Facilitating a workshop is like running a long distance race: the trick is in knowing when to slow down and when to speed up. Time estimates are carefully made when the workshop is prepared and provide a facilitator with a guideline for pacing time on each question and topic. Distractions that cause a session to drag, like long repetitive "speeches" from some of the vocal participants, are carefully watched and dealt with when they occur.

### 3.3 Eventfulness

Boredom, when it occurs, undermines participatory planning. Facilitators work to keep sessions exciting and interesting. The content of discussions, of course, must ultimately keep participants actively engaged, but a good workshop builds in additional means to nurture the active interest of participants.

#### *Maintain a balance between various group activities*

Variety is the spice of life. This is just as true in facilitating workshops as it is in other dimensions of everyday living. Good planning sessions balance the emphasis between discussions, workshops, and presentations. Participants need to work solitarily as individuals, work together in small teams, and participate in large plenary discussions. Variance of space is also important. Moving from one room to another is an excellent way to occasion a transition in the planning process.



#### *Techniques for keeping participants engaged*

Small teams are asked to make reports to the plenary gatherings on many occasions. It is a good idea to have these reports made by as many different people as possible rather than allowing one person to emerge as the team's spokesperson. Similarly, when questions are asked from the group, a facilitator can call on different participants in the team to answer. A facilitator can also ask teams to sit together and have mini-discussions during plenary sessions: "which proposal from your teamwork is the most bold and challenging? discuss among yourselves to select one from your list." This keeps everyone involved even though all may not speak publicly to the whole group.

#### *The use of humour*

Discussions become more interesting when people enjoy themselves through common laughter. Humour can be used very effectively in facilitating planning sessions. Though prepared jokes can sometimes work, spontaneous humour emerging from comments in the discussions are usually more effective. The chief



caution is to be sure that the humour never belittles a participant. Humour is usually used in the early parts of a session. As discussions become more intense, which makes them interesting for other reasons, humour is out of place. A light humorous comment while participants are wrestling with a deep and painful problem in their community is obviously inappropriate.

#### *Celebrating a group's output*

When teams present their proposals, other participants often want to demonstrate their approval. These are at times for the specific content of suggestions and ideas while they are at other times for the team's effort. Affirmations by applause, ululation, or other means are common in rural Africa and often occur quite spontaneously. Facilitators can also call for these at strategic intervals to enliven the sessions. Songs are also often appropriate.



#### **3.4 Product**

Specific products resulting from participation planning seminars heighten a group's sense of accomplishment. Far too often, participants leave interesting discussions only to have conclusions and decisions fade into vague memories because no tangible products were ever produced.

#### *Explain the anticipated product during introductions to workshops*

Participants can more confidently enter into discussions when the destination of the session has been clearly stated. People want to know the objective of their talk. Explaining the end product of the session also helps to keep discussions on track. Products of workshops can be decisions and plans that are then recorded in some practical form like written reports.



### *Visual displays*

The final product of most planning exercises are printed reports. Many people in the rural countryside, however, are illiterate. Products may also be produced in the visual form of pictures, charts, or diagrams. Visual renderings of plans and decisions are very practical ways to enable everyone to participate in receiving the final product.

### *Summary charts in the written reports*

The drawing of summary charts of workshops are a helpful way of presenting workshop results. Charts can summarise all of the information from a workshop on a single piece of paper. They also can illustrate complex relationships of information at a glance. Organising the results of an obstacles workshop in chart form by adapting a simple bar graph places different categories in a perspective with one another. A written report, important as it is for elaborating upon explanatory details, requires many pages (and much time to read) in order to communicate the same relationships.

### *Quick distribution of the workshop product*

The final product of a participatory workshop--be it a chart, decision statement, or a long written report--embody the contributions and commitments of participants. The sooner results are distributed after a workshop the better they can mark a sense of significant accomplishment for the time expended in the planning sessions. In almost all circumstances it is possible to produce some form of a product before participants leave a planning seminar. Many programmes present a large wall chart with visual pictures of projects to local leaders in an impromptu "closing ceremony" for the seminar. Others that have access to mimeograph machines even produce summary charts of all the sessions and then distribute copies to every participant before they go home.



If written reports are produced by facilitators later when they return to the office, every attempt should be made to ensure that they are quickly distributed after the completion of the seminar.

### 3.5 Style

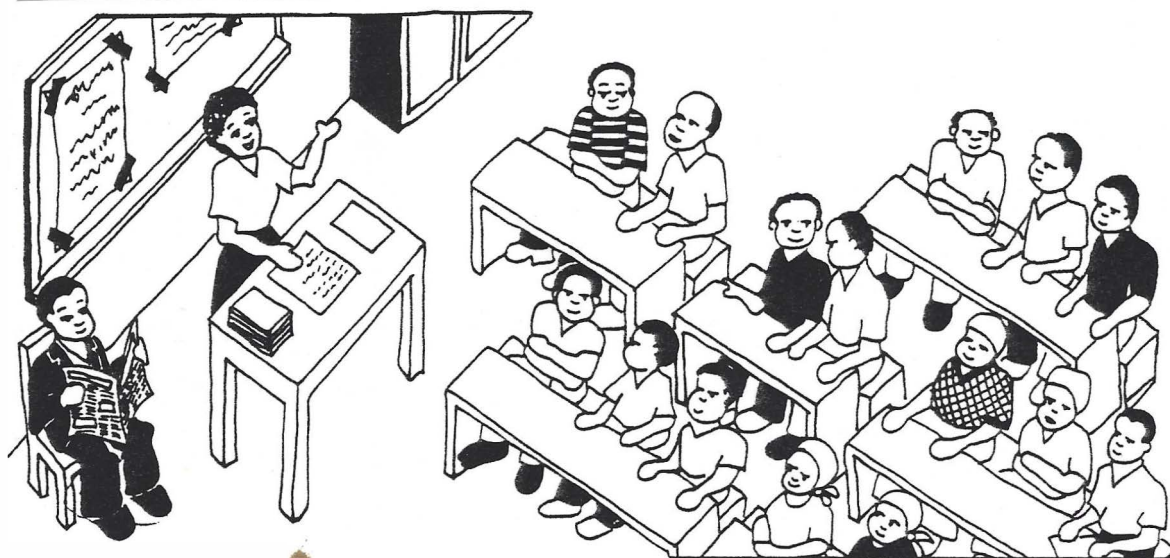
The personal style of a facilitator probably does as much as anything to establish a comfortable working environment conducive for participatory programmes. Some people, of course, seem to be born with charm and grace while others have to work at it. Below are some ways of developing helpful stylistic qualities of a facilitator.

#### *Honouring individual contributions*

Facilitators are affirmative of participants' work. They receive all answers and assume that wisdom lies behind every contribution. This is true for items that may even appear to be superficial or shallow on first reading. It is the responsibility of the facilitators to ask sensitive questions that enable deeper thinking. These questions are asked with respect and communicate a sincere desire to discover basic insights. The work of individual participants is thus honoured by a facilitator's serious questions.

#### *Honouring the group*

Facilitators honour the group by being present to everything that villagers have to say. Quite simply, facilitators pay attention. This is as true when they are sitting at the side of the room as it is when they are leading discussions up front. Inattention communicates a disinterest in participants' ideas. Casually reading a newspaper while villagers struggle to build a plan for their future degrades the significance of the participants' work. It says *a facilitator really isn't interested* and "couldn't care less" about their plans.



### *Demonstrating the power of teamwork*

Facilitators operate as a team and are a demonstration of the power of effective teamwork to villagers. Even when not actually leading discussions, a facilitator is always ready to assist in any appropriate way. They are taking notes and asking appropriate questions from the side of the room if discussions bog down. Facilitators also develop their skills from watching one another and receiving the constructive criticism of others. Staff self-evaluations are a part of the job. This, of course, is not possible if facilitators are not attentively following discussions and taking notes.

### *Intervening in confrontations or domination*

Facilitators play a mediating role when discussions slide into a confrontation between personalities. They do this by objectifying differing perspectives and acknowledging the insights of each. Dominating participants can also slow down progress in discussions. Facilitators maintain a style that politely calls this into question for the sake of the entire group.

### *Facilitators avoid the trappings of a "visiting VIP"*

The aim of facilitators is to empower ordinary villagers and encourage them to become self-confident and self-reliant. Care is taken by facilitators to demonstrate an identification with villagers. Though they dress with clean clothes and are never sloppy in appearance, they avoid overdressing. Female facilitators avoid wearing fancy hairdos that often offend rural sensibilities.





Special treatment is neither expected nor sought. Even the small and subtle symbols of a visiting VIP are shunned: they refrain from keeping participants waiting as they make a "grand entrance;" they mix freely with participants and engage in friendly conversation during the breaks from the formal sessions; *facilitators avoid taking the important looking chairs* that sit above participants.



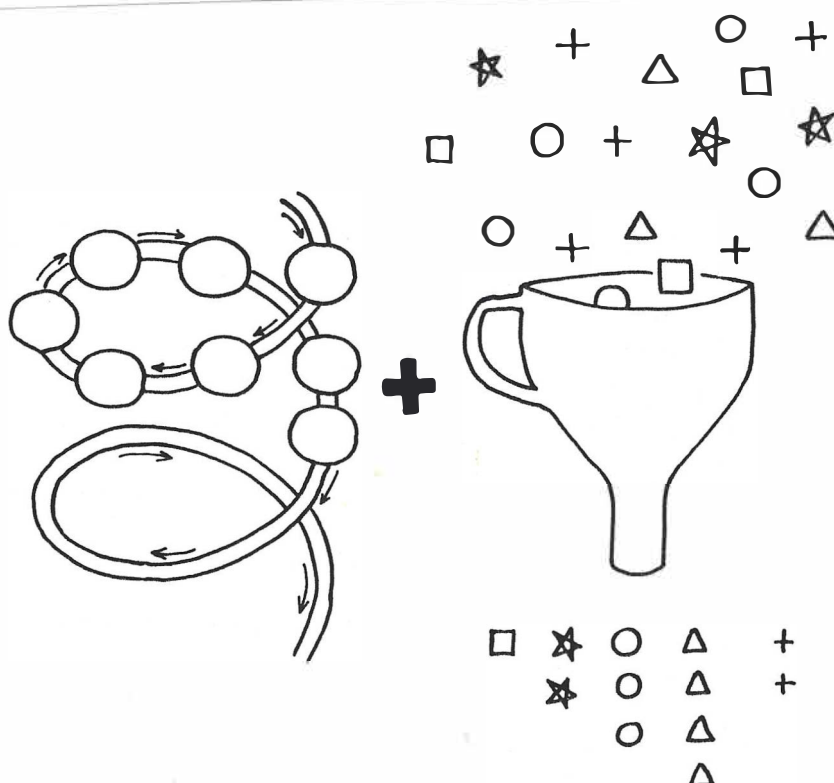
## Conclusion

Creating a participatory environment for conducting a programme is extremely important. The biggest messages are often communicated in the smallest details. Facilitators take care in managing space, time, eventfulness, product, and style.



#### 4. ENSURING QUALITY IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

As was seen in Chapter Two, MAP utilises a number of techniques to enable broad participation in the planning and implementation of rural development projects. This chapter examines ways to ensure a high degree of quality in the different steps of the "project cycle" when using MAP methods. Exciting discussions and enthusiastic workshops are utterly useless if the results end in poor quality plans.



Many aspects of the project cycle take place during short-term MAP "seminars" when participants are engaged in workshops concerning vision, obstacles, proposals, project selection, and implementation plans. This is usually preceded by the collection of "base-line data" during a set-up meeting with village leaders. Once plans have been made in MAP seminars, facilitators continue to "monitor" progress on local projects through a series of visits and follow-up meetings. "Evaluation" is an important part of any project work. With MAP, participatory evaluations often re-initiate the entire process all over again.

A specific section of the present chapter is devoted to each step of the project cycle. Problems and difficulties of applying MAP techniques to each step are discussed and various suggestions are made for ways that facilitators might overcome them. Several examples are also provided as models of good quality results.

Before turning to these sections on the project cycle, a reminder about the importance of reporting to officials. The focus of MAP work is with ordinary rural people, but permission for it to take place often comes from officials sitting far away in city centres. Many a good programme has been derailed because it was misunderstood by senior government officials. It is crucial, therefore, that facilitators keep officials informed about the progress of their activities.

Contact with appropriate authorities begins in the set-up phase. Presentation meetings are arranged to discuss plans and review anticipated work schedules. Contact continues through submission of reports from village workshops. Remember, it is far better to err by keeping officials "over informed" than risk the wrath of an official who feels "under informed."



Once contact has been made with all necessary officials, facilitators are then ready to begin their actual work in the rural areas.

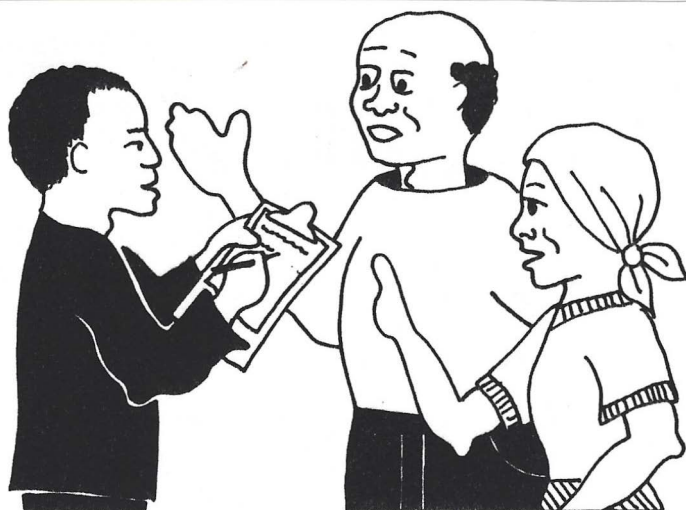
#### **4.1 The Current Situation**

The starting point for any serious planning is a review of the current situation. This is important for several reasons. First, it is educational for the facilitators. When facilitators go to conduct planning seminars, they need to be familiar with the history and concerns of a community so they can be conversant with participants and anticipate possible problem areas when discussing project feasibility.

Second, a review of the current situation is also educational for participants. It is a mistake to simply assume that local residents are readily familiar with current development activities in the community. Though a few people may have such information, it may not be widely known. A review of the current situation will help to establish a common starting point for the planning exercise.

7A

Third, participation programmes are often accountable to donors who expect regular progress reports. Government officials also need to know about programme results. A serious analysis of impact without base-line data from the start of a programme is impossible. The use of standardized questionnaires is a good way to collect base-line data. They objectify the situation within a community and provide a basis for marking progress and change.



Questionnaires for the collection of base-line information can be of varying degrees of complexity. A good guideline for facilitators is this: use a simple questionnaire that obtains important information and then be scrupulously disciplined in faithfully collecting correct data from every community where the programme is conducted. It is easy to design a questionnaire that seeks too much information. Good reliable information on a few points is much better than sloppy information on many points.

Careful attention needs to be given to designing the base-line questionnaire when a participation programme begins. Facilitators and donors need to discuss important information desired and agree upon a common format. Below are some of the possible items that a questionnaire might include.

#### *Population*

In addition to total number of males and females, sub-categories can also be asked: number of children, boys and girls, as defined by a particular age; elderly men and women, again defined by a specific age; numbers of able bodied and disabled. If possible, record the date that information of the population was collected.

#### *Publicly owned facilities by the local community*

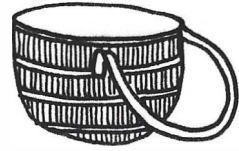
A questionnaire can include a list of typical facilities (schools, health clinic, shop, tractor, access roads, milling machine, storage building) where the number of each is recorded. The condition of these facilities can also be noted (1 = in good working order, 2 = fair condition, 3 = not working). The questionnaire can leave blank space to add other facilities not included on the list.

### *Privately owned facilities within the community*

This category might use the same questions as above but focuses on those facilities that are privately owned.

### *Sources of personal income and livelihood*

In agricultural areas, this is largely a matter of listing food crops, cash crops, livestock, handicrafts, and other sources of income. Since most questionnaires seek information from the community as a whole, these are general estimates rather than specific data from particular households.



### *Availability of extension services*

Information regarding extension work helps provide a picture of government support to an area. The questionnaire might include a list of possible extension services (agriculture, health, community development, cooperatives, other) so that information can be collected on their availability. Opinions can also be obtained about their quality (good, fair, inadequate).

### *Completed development projects in the past*

Since many participation programmes seek to encourage a renewal of self-help activities, it is very important to obtain information on past development projects within the community. Past projects are listed and the following information collected for each: date the project began, date completed, institution(s) which provided any assistance, the specific nature of assistance (amount of money, etc), results, and implementation problems encountered while doing the project.

### *Status of current development projects*

Questions concerning current projects within the community are the same with space for recording an anticipated date of completion. This information, along with that from past projects, provides a context for understanding any future project activities that might be undertaken as a result of planning from the seminar. It also informs facilitators about the feasibility of any proposals for future projects.



Additional items are added or substituted depending upon the particular focus of the participation programme. For example, programmes working with cooperatives might collect information to provide a profile about the services of the local co-op society. Questions might be asked about crops purchases, amount of the annual financial turnover, quantities of fertilizers and pesticides provided to members, etc.

Once the questionnaire has been completed, it becomes the first major piece of information that facilitators place into a newly opened file for the community. This file is subsequently kept up-to-date by adding information after every contact with the community.



## 4.2 Practical Vision

Declaring a "vision" for where a community or organisation intends to go in the future is an important step in any planning process. As the old proverb says, "where there is no vision, the people perish."

Vision statements are most exciting when they articulate people's true aspirations, are concrete and specific, and (while attainable) are beyond immediate reach. Bold vision challenges people to stretch themselves to transform their dreams into reality; it inspires and motivates. Unity comes from a shared commitment to such a common vision.

Vision workshops in MAP begin by asking participants to imagine themselves standing five years in the future and describe what they see. "What are the realistic hopes and dreams you have for this community?" This is the brainstorm question. Participants are reminded that their answers need to be practical and realistic and as specific as possible. When the information from the brainstorms are organised, the criteria for putting items together is a "similar accomplishment."



The initial vision brainstorm from workshop participants often varies in quality. Though most vision items usually reflect genuine aspirations, the statements are sometimes general and abstract. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to push for deeper thinking, especially when vision categories are named from the brainstorm data. Below are some typical problems that often arise while conducting a vision workshop and possible ways that a facilitator can respond.

### *Unrealistic "dreaming"*

Some participants tend to treat the vision brainstorm as a game and suggest ideas that are completely unrealistic. A vision to "build a big hospital" in a village is probably not offered as a serious suggestion. Some participants like to joke by being "grandiose." Facilitators can treat such responses in the spirit they were given, humorously, and put them to the side. But if suggested in all seriousness, the facilitator affirms the contribution while asking about its feasibility. As with many problems, it is best to anticipate possible confusion and handle it before people do their personal brainstorming. A clear reminder in the introduction that all items should be realistic will be helpful.



Special care needs to be given to the use of local language. For a long time, the kiswahili word *ndoto* was used to ask the vision question in rural Tanzania. Only later was it learned that *ndoto* communicated a sense of a "fantastic dream." It is not surprising, therefore, that brainstorm items tended to be frivolous and unrealistic. The situation was eventually corrected by the use of a more appropriate kiswahili word, *mpango*, meaning "future development projects."

### *Short-term thinking*

In the opposite direction, vision items can also be too specific and immediate. It is hard to believe that "two acres of pigeon peas" really conveys the full depth of a youth's aspiration for the future of the village. Again, anticipating this problem and clarifying the purpose of the brainstorm before people do their individual thinking is the best way to deal with it. If such an item come up when organising information during the workshop, they are never rejected: all are a clue to the true vision of the community. The facilitator can ask, "why are two acres of pigeon peas important? what would they help to accomplish in the long-term future of the community?"

Such short-term, immediate items from brainstorm lists is not a big problem because they can always be combined with other items that point toward the long-term future. But it is important that the final names decided upon as titles for different categories of the vision avoid being too immediate and specific. Vision names need to declare the bold challenges that the community wishes to set for itself: "school buildings within walking distance for every child."

## Abstract statements

The most typical problem encountered in vision workshops is one of abstraction. Hopes and dreams are stated so vaguely that they become mere indicators of a broad, general direction thereby losing the compelling power of a bold, concrete vision. Initial brainstorm items can be somewhat abstract without causing too much of a problem, but it is important that facilitators enable the final names for vision categories to be more concrete.

Abstract statements can be transformed into specific vision titles by asking "what would we see if this was to happen?" Take, for example, a statement about "improved health." A facilitator might ask "if we were to return in five years and take a picture of new developments in health care, *what would we see in the photographs?*" Caution would have to be maintained to keep the responses realistic; it is doubtful if most rural villages can establish their own dispensary and clinic with a doctor. Realistic answers might include "pit latrines in every home" and "education classes in sanitation and hygiene," etc.



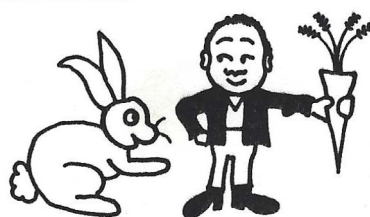
Below are some typical abstract vision statements followed by some statements that are more concrete and substantial. These are merely examples and are not intended to be "right answers." Every group will have its own unique perspective on its vision. The examples do, however, enable a new facilitator to become familiar with the difference between statements that are abstract and those that have substance. Remember, a good vision statement clearly describes a reality that can be seen.

### Vision "Abstractions:"

- improved transportation
- more cooperation
- modern farming techniques
- good health
- increased production
- new sources of income
- better education

### Vision Statements of "Substance:"

- new trailer for village tractor
- village wide work days
- terraces on hillside cultivation
- pit latrines in every home
- introduction of grade cattle
- opening of a new tea shop
- a new teacher for a science class





### 4.3 Obstacles

Obstacles statements describe the underlying causes that are preventing the vision from being realised. Just as weeds in the fields must be pulled by their roots, obstacles, too, have root causes which must be addressed if they are to be overcome. Though obstacles are often referred to as "problems," they are really windows to the future showing a group where they need to move.

The obstacle workshop begins by clarifying the question for the brainstorm: "what is blocking this community from realising its vision?" Though a facilitator tries to have participants look deeply at the issues, much of the information generated in the brainstorm will be irritations and immediate problems. Doctors use symptoms of an illness to diagnosis a disease. Similarly, facilitators use these surface perceptions to guide participants in a search for root causes. A "root cause" is the criteria for putting together problems from the brainstorm. The final names given to obstacle categories reflect the insights from this search beneath the surface.



Below are some typical problems that a facilitator might encounter while conducting an obstacle workshop and possible ways to resolve them.

#### *The given situation*

Often participants say "drought" or "famine" or the "failure of the rains" are their problem. These general statements imply problems over which participants have no control. Obstacles, however, reveal particular practices and life patterns over which participants can exercise a degree of control. When general situation statements are offered as obstacles, facilitators can ask questions to reveal the human causes that may lie beneath these problems: "overgrazing by livestock, poor cultivation practices, inadequate storage of crops from the previous harvest," etc.

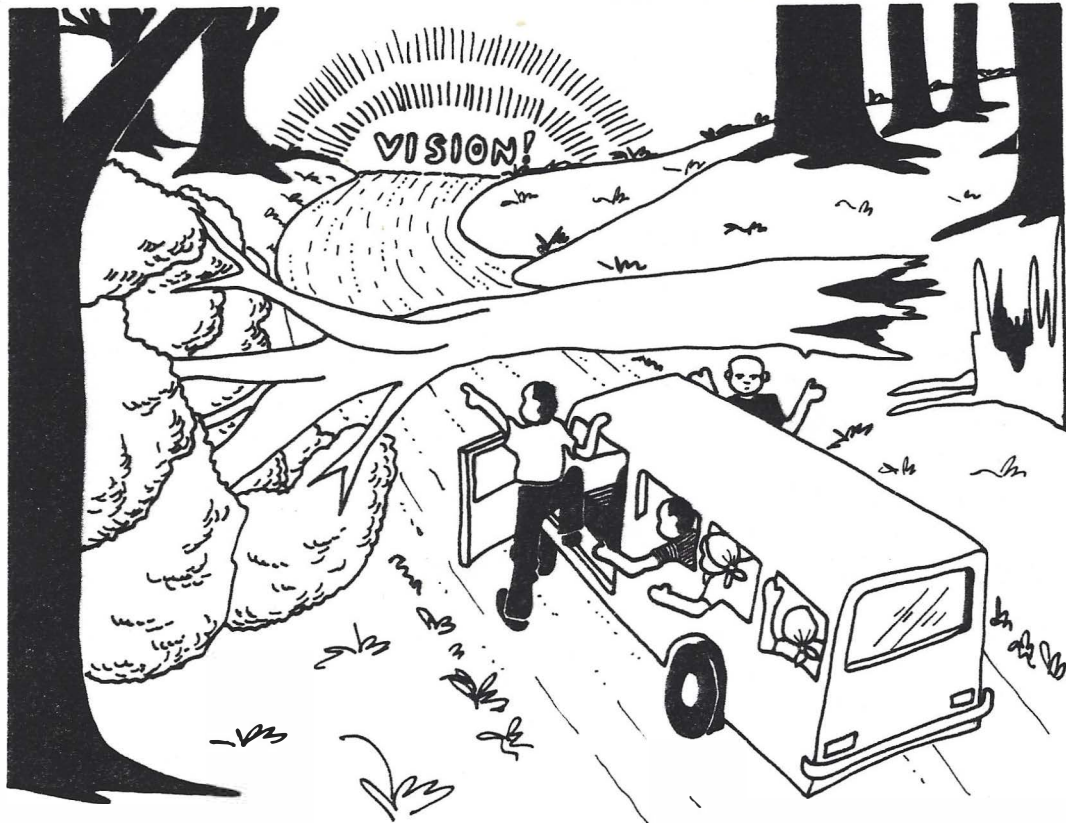
#### *Insufficient money*

"Lack of money" is one of the most frequent items to appear in brainstorming sessions on obstacles. But insufficient funds is a surface reading of the problem. After all, most communities will never reach a point when people will be satisfied with available funds. The challenge of the facilitator is to ask questions that enable participants to look beyond the surface toward the contributing causes for a shortage of funds over which they have some control: "poor financial planning, unprioritized expenditures, unaccountable use of funds, untapped opportunities for income generation," etc.



### *"Lack of..." statements*

Obstacles are real problems that are blocking progress toward the vision like a fallen tree in the road. They are not empty phantoms as "lack of" statements seem to imply. When boarding a rural commuter bus in the rain, a passenger sees very concrete problems: bald tires, broken wind shield wipers, and unmarked roads rather than a "lack of safety." If participants say "lack of" something is a problem, facilitators can enable concrete statements to emerge by asking about the underlying causes.



### *Superficial problems*

A good technique to enable a group to think deeper about obstacles is to repeatedly ask the question "what is stopping you from realising your vision?" The question can be asked over and over again until the group answers "nothing, we just have to decide." The following is an example of questions from a facilitator and responses from participants:

- Q: You said "increased productivity" on your farms is a part of your vision. What is stopping you from having increased productivity on your farms?  
A: Lack of education.  
Q: What kind of education do you need?  
A: Training in modern techniques of agriculture.  
Q: What is stopping you from having agricultural training?  
A: No training days are ever scheduled in this village.

- Q: What is stopping you from scheduling training days?  
A: The agricultural extension officer never visits this village.  
Q: What is stopping the extension officer from making visits?  
A: She is afraid she will be robbed or attacked by animals when walking alone on the road through the forest.  
Q: What is stopping you from accompanying her through the forest on her way to your village?  
A: Nothing, we just have to decide.

When participants arrive at saying "nothing is stopping us, we just have to decide," a tangible root problem is usually revealed. Participants can then take practical steps to solve it. Knowing that the extension officer does not visit the village for fear of being robbed or attacked by wild animals is more revealing than "lack of education."



Below are some examples of shallow obstacle statements and some more revealing counterparts. As before, these provide facilitators with some illustrations of good obstacle statements and are not meant to be definitive of every group's experience.

"Superficial" Obstacles:

- lack of education
- not enough money
- selfishness
- floods
- poor management
- lack of cooperation

"Underlying" Obstacles:

- poor publicity of literacy classes
- unaccountable use of funds
- few benefits of co-op membership
- deforestation & overgrazing of hills
- late ordering of fertilizers
- irregularly called meetings

#### 4.4 Proposals

The proposals workshop has participants consider the question "how can these obstacles be overcome, by-passed, or eliminated?" Answers from the brainstorm explore different ways that the big underlying problems can be solved. This is the first step toward making plans for future action.



Proposals differ from the "vision" in a number of ways. Vision focus on long term aspirations while proposals focus on resolving problems. Five years is a usual time frame for vision while proposals are more immediate and made for only one or two years. Information from the vision brainstorm is organised by "similar accomplishments" while the criteria for combining proposals items is the sharing of a "common intent." When proposal categories are named, they point out the strategic directions in which the community needs to move.

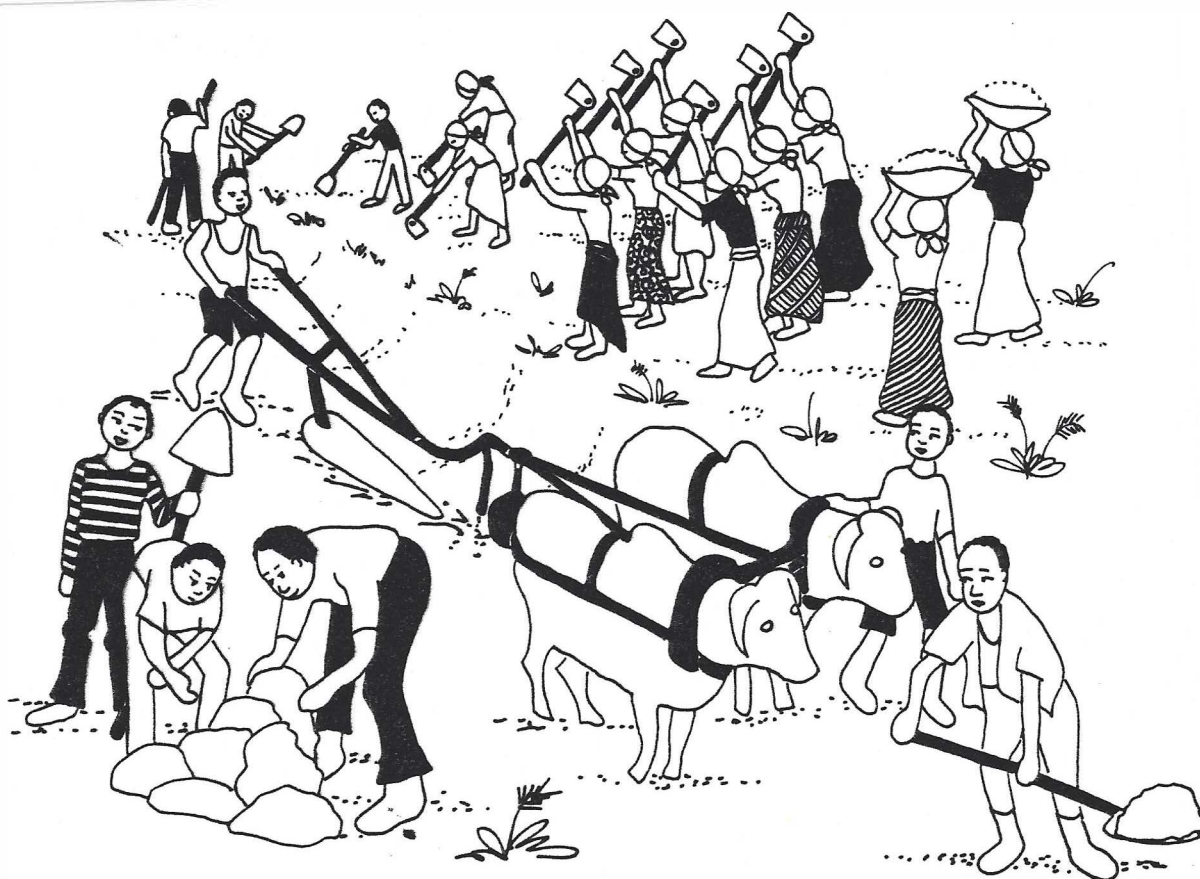
The most typical problem encountered in facilitating a proposals workshop is the tendency of participants to make recommendations for other groups and agencies. With the proposals, participants are creating a plan for themselves; it is not a planning workshop for what someone else should do! It is important for facilitators to clearly remind participants of this fact before they do their brainstorm. The question they consider is "what can WE do to overcome the obstacles that are preventing US from realising OUR vision?"





#### 4.5 Project Selection

Vision, obstacles, and proposals are steps where participants consider the "big picture" about development activities in their community. They are important to the planning process for two reasons: 1) they create a common picture about the community and where it needs to go and 2) they build a sense of confidence among participants that the planning process is on the right track. Yet they only set the stage for the planning of more specific activities. After all, people cannot usually go out and directly do a "vision."



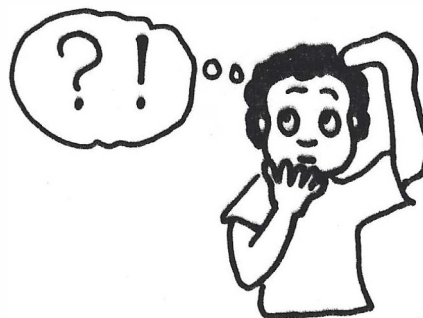
Identifying self-help projects for short-term implementation is, therefore, an important turning point in MAP seminars. For it is in this workshop that practical activities are planned. The question participants are asked to consider is "what small projects can we do with the use of local resources that would start us on our journey towards realising our long-term vision?" This question is usually discussed in small teams where projects are suggested and closely examined. Rather than organising these suggestions into broad categories, the recommended projects are carefully reviewed and then selected in the following plenary session.

Below are some helpful guidelines that will assist a facilitator when conducting a workshop for identifying self-help projects.



### *Consider many possibilities*

A brainstorm is important for generating a lot of ideas about possible projects. There is a temptation in many groups to quickly agree upon the very first projects that are proposed. Before discussing which projects to choose, a facilitator completes the brainstorm by having every participant contribute an idea. Once many ideas have been suggested, then the group can begin to consider the strengths and weaknesses of each proposed project and make a selection based on their responses.



### *Consider the "feasibility" of the projects*

Before deciding to do a project, participants need to carefully consider its feasibility. Is the project really likely to succeed? A facilitator can lead a brief conversation that quickly examines questions like these:

- what resources will be required to do this project?
- how might these resources be obtained?
- what past experience do you have with this type of project?
- what is the likelihood of overcoming past problems?
- what are the prospects for finding a market?
- is there a real cause to think you can make sales or just a "hope?"
- what conditions are required for the project to succeed?
- why is it realistic to think that this project can succeed now?
- would it be better to leave this project for a later time?



### *Name an "anticipated accomplishment"*

Once a project has been broadly determined, specific objectives of the project need to be stated in an "anticipated accomplishment." A good guideline is to always have participants assign a number to the project, thereby establishing an "anticipated accomplishment." By quantifying the project, participants begin to consider practical tasks involved in working on the project and provide themselves with an easy way to measure progress and results. For example, "poultry production" is a general title for a project but "establish and maintain 100 layers" makes it much more specific.

*Discuss the "ownership" of the project*

When planning community development projects, it is important to establish the ownership of the project. Ownership has to do with project control either in regards to future decisions or distribution of benefits. If not specifically asked, participants may simply assume that the ownership of the project is commonly understood only to learn later, when benefits are to be distributed, that many different perspectives were held on the subject. Deciding upon ownership during the planning phase will help avoid disagreements later on.



Some communities decide that the ownership of the project should be by a special group or "club" rather than the general community as an unspecified whole. When ownership of the project is to be by the formation of a special "club," some good questions for a facilitator to ask are:

- how will membership to this club be determined?
- how will this club make decisions?
- how is money to be handled and accounted for?
- how will any surpluses be distributed?
- how often will the club membership meet?

## 4.6 Implementation Plans

Implementation planning is deciding the "who, where, when, and how" of actually working on a project. Participants usually attend small team discussions to plan these steps according to personal interest. The results of these implementation plans are then shared in the plenary session. Below are some practical guidelines which will assist a facilitator in leading discussions on implementation planning.

### *Implementation steps of "substance"*

Community groups often tend to plan vague empty procedural steps when planning implementation activities: 1) form a works committee, 2) the committee meets and plans, 3) the committee reports to officials, 4) work on the project is then organised and carried out. Such steps do not constitute a plan. They merely describe a contentless process.

Implementation plans identify all of the practical tasks which must be accomplished if a project is to be successfully completed. Materials must be arranged, tools gathered, and work days organised. Sometimes money needs to be collected. Coordinators need to be designated. On the next page is an example of a work sheet for planning implementation steps. If participants do not have access to such work sheets, then facilitators can guide the discussions by asking the same questions.

### *Seasonal considerations for scheduling*

The scheduling of implementation steps needs to be carefully considered in light of other demands on people's time. In rural areas, this most stringently is connected to the seasons for crop planting, cultivation, and harvesting. Before scheduling work on the projects, a facilitator has participants review the agricultural seasons of the area. Once peak times have been identified and marked on a calendar, then implementation activities are scheduled by the participants at times that avoid the busy rush of the agricultural work.



|                                    |                                |                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|
| location:<br>date:                 |                                | Implementation Planning Work Sheet |  |
|                                    | name of the self-help project: |                                    |  |
| what materials are needed?         |                                |                                    |  |
| what tools are required?           |                                |                                    |  |
| how will these be gathered?        |                                |                                    |  |
| how much money will be needed?     |                                |                                    |  |
| how will this money be raised?     |                                |                                    |  |
| what skilled labour is required?   |                                |                                    |  |
| what general labour is needed?     |                                |                                    |  |
| how will this labour be organised? |                                |                                    |  |
| when will the work take place?     |                                |                                    |  |
| who will be the coordinators?      | men<br>1-<br>2-                | women<br>1-<br>2-                  |  |



### *Selection of project coordinators*

Coordinators are not responsible for doing all of the work themselves; it is their job to organise the work and ensure that people are involved and preparations are made. Coordinators need to work as a team thereby providing each other with mutual support and accountability. In planning large projects involving both men and women, it is a good idea to name both male and female coordinators. In such circumstances, it is best to have men and women named in pairs: one woman assigned alone sometimes has difficulties working as a coordinator with a man because the man will often take a strong lead.

## **4.7 Monitoring and Evaluation**

The planning of projects is one thing; actually bringing self-help projects to successful fruition is something altogether different. The wise facilitator never underestimates the need for continued monitoring of projects or self-evaluation with participants. Most of the participation programmes using MAP follow a specific routine of regular monitoring visits and follow-up meetings after completing a planning seminar. Below are some ideas that will assist facilitators in their monitoring and evaluation work.

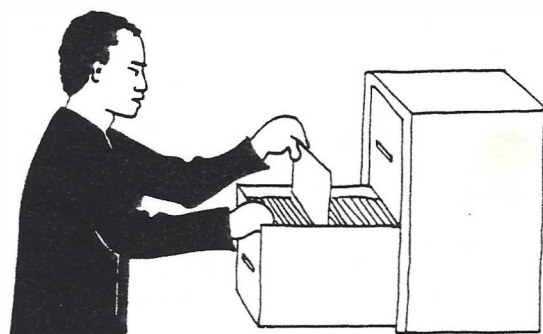
### *Written reports and record keeping*

Good monitoring depends to a large extent on good record keeping. This is true for both the facilitators who are promoting participation and the villagers who are implementing their own projects.

Most MAP seminars end with the presentation of a large wall chart depicting the community's plan to be posted in a prominent location. The chart includes all essential information: names of designated projects, implementation schedules, and the names of project coordinators. An image of each project is also drawn on the chart so that illiterate members of the community can also know about the projects planned during the seminar.

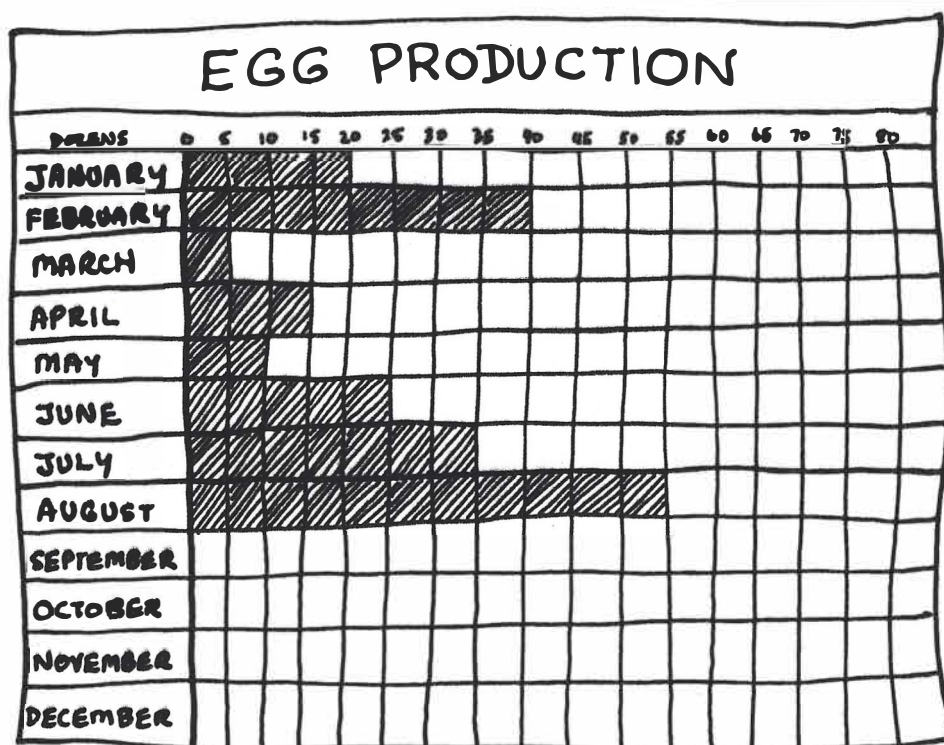
A wall chart is an immediate way to record plans from the seminar. A more thorough report on the community plan is prepared by the facilitators once they return to their office. These reports are then distributed to the seminar participants and to all authorities who are overseeing the programme. These reports are a summary of seminar discussions on vision, obstacles, proposals, self-help projects, and implementation plans.

Facilitators keep an open file on each community where they work. The written report on the community plans joins the base-line data which was collected prior to the holding of the seminar. As follow-up meetings and monitoring visits occur, all information concerning progress on the projects and discussions about overcoming any implementation problems are also added to the files.



### Record keeping by village participants

Locally kept records are very important if a group is to monitor its own progress. Such records can be maintained in a number of different ways. For example, if eggs have begun to be produced and marketed as a part of a poultry project, then sales information can be drawn in chart form and posted for everyone's review. Then every month it can be updated to indicate the condition of the project. Facilitators assist in creating these kinds of simple materials so that local participants can observe and evaluate their own progress.



### Monitoring visits by facilitators

Facilitators often make informal "monitoring visits" to the groups following the conclusion of planning seminars. On these occasions project progress is discussed with leaders and other participants in a spontaneous setting. The purpose of monitoring visits is the same as with more formal follow-up meetings: encouraging participants in their project work and discussing ways to overcome any potential problems that might be causing projects to stall. Once back to the office, this information enables the facilitators to up-date their own records.



### *Formal follow-up meetings*

Typically, a three or four hour "follow-up" meeting takes place on three month intervals where all of the participants from the seminar return to discuss progress on their projects. These meetings are "participatory evaluations" where information on each project is shared. Participants review project problems and discuss ways that they might be overcome. The next stage of project implementation is then planned by arranging work days, materials, tools, organisation, and coordination, etc, in a similar fashion to implementation planning of the original seminar. Depending upon the nature of the group and its projects, other topics, e.g. finance reports, creation of group by-laws, etc, are also discussed during follow-up meetings.



### *By-laws for newly formed groups*

When special "clubs" have been formed to implement a community project, it is good to include time in a follow-up meeting to review the group's operating rules, or "by-laws." These can include the same questions about club membership, decision-making, and distribution of benefits that were raised during the planning of the project in the original seminar. Time can also be given to write up these operating guidelines if they have not been published.



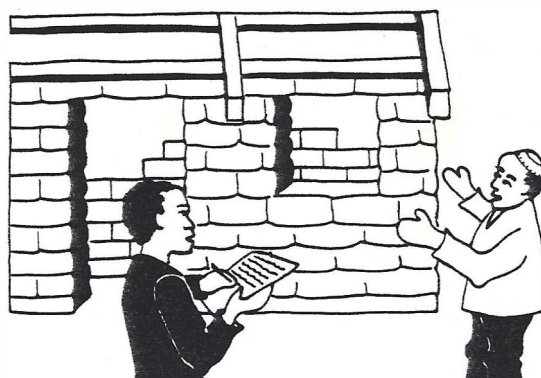
### *Finance reports*

Financial reporting is often a weak point in small-scale rural projects. By calling for a finance report in a follow-up meeting, the facilitators reaffirm the need to keep everyone in the community up-to-date on financial matters. This report can be very basic: how much money has been collected in regards to the project, what expenses have occurred, and what is the current balance? Additional questions from the participants in response to these points will further clarify the situation.



### *Physical inspection of the projects*

During both formal follow-up meetings and more informal monitoring visits, it is a good idea for facilitators to make a physical inspection of the projects. Physical inspections also enable the facilitators to make their own judgements about the real progress on the project. For whatever reason, participants often tend to exaggerate their accomplishments. Viewing a project can enable facilitators to ask participants more specific questions pertaining to the implementation work.





### *Maintaining a "tracking chart"*

The more communities with whom a facilitation team is working, the more difficult it is to keep track of all the various activities that need to take place with each community. Once the intended routine of monitoring visits and follow-up meetings has been determined, they can be displayed on a large "tracking chart" placed on the office wall. This chart is a valuable tool for creating the facilitators' work schedule and for ensuring that all follow-up activities occur at the appropriate time.



### *Planning new projects*

Most self-help projects in rural areas can be successfully launched, if not actually completed, within a year. The planning cycle is brought to full circle as the completed projects help establish a new situation from which future plans are made. Rather than starting again from scratch, "participatory evaluation" events that occur a year after an original seminar can quickly review the contents of previous discussions. These will reveal where adjustments in vision, obstacles, and proposals need to be made according to progress made and any new views from the participants.

It is only at the point of selecting new projects that significant new plans will most likely need to be formulated. This can be accomplished by repeating the same seminar workshops to choose projects and plan implementation steps.

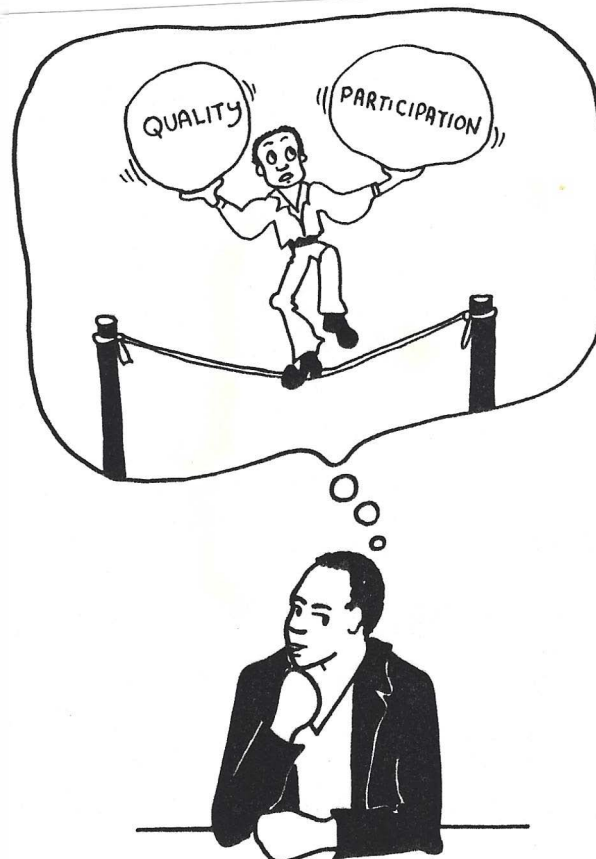
### *Conclusion*

This chapter has focused on techniques for ensuring quality thinking among participants in planning seminars. It has reviewed problems and provided examples for every step of the planning process. If facilitators are to succeed in enabling participants to think deeply, then they themselves need to have a very good understanding about the essential elements of quality plans. This is the first requirement of a good facilitator.



Good facilitation, however, also requires the ability to guide a group through a *journey of discovery*. Practically speaking, this means that facilitators need to place different emphasis on different points during the course of a seminar. Though facilitators need to be able to recognise good solid vision statements, the vision workshop is probably not the best place to push hard for good quality statements when most participants are still timid and unaccustomed to the participatory process. They most likely need to have their contributions affirmed rather than challenged. Later, once they have become familiar with the process, they can be pushed to deeper thinking as they plan particular projects.

This chapter has presented a number of suggestions describing how a facilitator might ensure deep thinking on the part of participants. The sensitivity for knowing *when* to push for deeper thinking is, however, just as important as knowing *how*. That sensitivity largely develops through experience and careful reflection and self-evaluation.



## 5. APPROACHES FOR APPLYING MAP METHODS

The particular design of a participation promotion programme depends upon its overarching aims. Broad strategic approaches establish a framework for determining the process of project planning and implementation. There are no universal guidelines for designing participation programmes, only variables with different values and priorities.

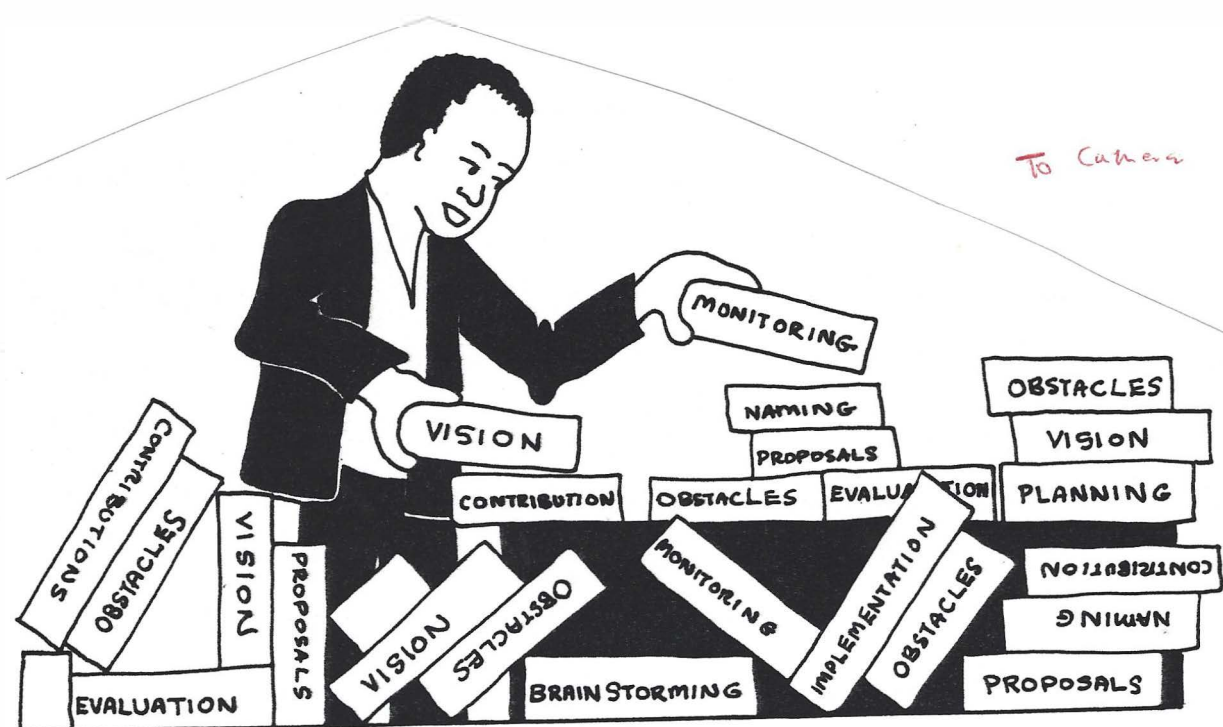


For example, many large development programmes are centrally planned but hope to include some degree of community participation. This is often true of "sector specific" projects that have a particular focus, e.g. health, irrigation, forest conservation, etc. The degree of participation found in needs assessment, project planning, implementation, and project evaluation are all aspects of the programme design. Participation in these "integrating partnerships" varies considerably from one programme to another according to the programme design.

"Community-based" approaches, in contrast, are often open-ended. They encourage community residents to determine areas of project activities depending upon local priorities. The community then becomes responsible for organising itself to implement its projects. Some programmes supply materials or resources from external sources while others call for the exclusive use of locally available resources.

Designing an approach to participation involves a number of strategic choices. Is the programme sector specific or open-ended? Is it centrally planned or locally planned? Does it include the introduction of external resources or is it dependent on locally available resources? Are animators residential or non-residential? Is the programme to be short in duration or long-term? Is the programme expansive working in many communities or is it intensive working in just a few communities? Is priority given to institution building or grass-roots mobilisation.

The MAP methodologies described in this handbook can be applied to all of these situations. In a sense, the techniques and planning processes can serve as the practical "*building blocks*" when designing a participation programme. This can be seen with the various programmes that have already employed MAP methods.



The current chapter presents some actual examples of ways that MAP has been applied in different circumstances. The purpose of these examples is to illustrate the multiple options that exist with MAP as participatory workshops and discussions are combined with specific topics to meet the aims of particular programmes. They do not exhaust the possibilities for which MAP can be used. Indeed, the illustrations only provide a hint about MAP's vast potential in promoting rural participation.



## 5.1 Cooperative Members' Participation Programme

Though the Cooperative Members' Participation Programme (CMPP) is an active programme in many countries, each CMPP has its own special features. Designs for CMPP vary according to the unique conditions and aims of national cooperative movements.

These unique features are illustrated by differences with CMPP found in Kenya and Tanzania. The "institutional strengthening" of existing cooperatives through the involvement of representative members in the planning of local cooperative affairs is the basic aim of CMPP in Kenya. CMPP in Tanzania, however, aims more at a general "grassroots mobilisation" of community activities that might be eventually, but not necessarily, incorporated into formally registered co-ops.

### *CMPP in Kenya*

All members of the elected management committee which governs the primary cooperative society attend a two day planning seminar and are joined by the society's professionally employed staff. Additional representative members of the co-op are invited to attend until the number of participants reaches a total of thirty to forty. Women are encouraged to attend but no quotas are imposed.

The planning seminar begins with an abbreviated workshop on the "vision." Participants brainstorm vision items and share them in very small groups of three people. These small groups each decide upon two important vision items for the society and write each on index cards. The facilitator has all cards from all of the mini-groups passed forward where they are displayed by tape on the front wall. No effort is made to organise this information. Participants are asked to intuitively name five or six key areas of vision as overarching titles. Participants do not leave the plenary room during this workshop which is completed, from start to end, within thirty minutes.



The "obstacles" and "proposals" workshops closely follow procedures described in Chapter Two. Participants are arbitrarily divided into three teams where brainstorm items are shared. Each team selects twelve to fifteen brainstorm items which are written on index cards and reported in the plenary session. Brainstorm items from all three teams are organised into similar categories. These categories are then named with summary titles. Both of workshops take approximately two and a half hours to complete: 45 to 60 minutes for teamwork, followed by plenary discussion of 60 minutes to organise information into categories and 30 minutes to name titles for each category. Both are done on the first day of the seminar with a break for lunch occurring between the "obstacles" and the "proposals."

The second day of the seminar begins with the "projects" workshop with procedures that differ somewhat from those of the day before. The group is divided into teams where each is assigned one or two of the major "proposal" categories. The teams discuss possible projects and conclude by choosing eight for each category. "Projects" selected are to be ones that the primary society can complete by using its own resources. In plenary session, the projects are scheduled sequentially over the next two years within broad blocks of time of approximately three months each. The workshop ends with five or six tracks of scheduled projects. These tracks are determined by the major proposal categories. The "projects" workshop usually takes two and half hours to complete with half of the time in teams and half in plenary.

After a lunch break, the "implementation" workshop takes place. Teams meet to discuss the implementation steps for the first scheduled project in each proposal category. An anticipated accomplishment is named for the "projects" and details of "how, when, where, and who" are planned. These plans from the teams are then reported back to the plenary session where minor changes and adjustments are made by other participants. The "implementation" workshop is usually completed with an hour in teamwork and an hour in the plenary discussions. The session ends with a brief discussion reflecting on the experience of the seminar and anticipating potential problems in implementation.

Follow-up work by CMPP facilitators in Kenya takes place at three month intervals. Because the primary societies have many projects scheduled over a two year period, the follow-up meetings review progress on the previous projects and then plan implementation steps for the next scheduled projects.

#### *CMPP in Tanzania*

Though it shares many similarities, CMPP in Tanzania is different from the programme in Kenya. As noted above, its emphasis is more on "grassroots mobilisation" than on the "institutional strengthening" of formal cooperatives. The Tanzanian programme also has placed a major priority on women's involvement and has attempted to radically simplify workshop procedures.

Facilitators meet with officials of the village government and local cooperative to collect base-line information and to prepare for a two day planning seminar. Thirty to forty participants are invited to attend on a representational basis of men, women, and youth.

Three workshops take place on the first day of the seminar: vision, obstacles, and proposals. All three workshops follow the same basic procedures. Teams meet by

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the divisions of men, women, and youth. Each team discusses the topic of the workshop and brainstorms items. In preparation for the plenary session, the teams select the five key points from their discussion which are then reported to the plenary. Items from each team are listed on the wall at the front of the room when team reports are given.

There is no attempt to organise any of this information into categories. Facilitators instead lead a reflective discussion after all of the reports have been given asking questions like:

- how are the lists from men, women, and youth similar? different?
- (men are asked) why do you think women said what they did?
- (women are asked) why do you think men said what they did?
- what values and concerns are revealed in these different reports?
- what questions of clarity would anyone like to ask another team?

These open questions from the facilitator release the group to ask each other questions on topics of particular concern. Discussions during the "obstacles" workshop especially become lively affairs as people tend to ask leaders a host of awkward questions on financial accountability. Rather than a systematic analysis of obstacles, the workshop becomes an informative discussion about troubling questions that may have been buried for a long time. The following "proposals" workshop then has participants consider practical solutions to these problems

The obstacles workshop usually takes at least two hours to conduct, sometimes more if "hot" questions are being asked, while the vision and proposals workshops are normally completed within an hour and a half each.





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The second day of the seminar begins with the "projects" workshop. Men, women, and youth are again divided into separate teams where they propose two self-help projects for the coming year. No external inputs are anticipated: the projects are to be accomplished through locally available resources. The issue of project ownership is discussed and a consensus reached. When projects are related to income generation, teams typically decide to form special "production groups" or "clubs" primarily composed of, but not limited to, the people involved in the team work. Reports are heard in the plenary and the facilitator leads a discussion about practical issues that must be resolved if the projects are to succeed. This workshop takes a couple of hours to complete.

Men, women, and youth return to the teams during the "implementation" workshop to plan detailed steps (how, when, where, and who) in organising work on the projects. These are reported back in the plenary session where each project is reviewed by other participants for anything that might have been forgotten in the implementation planning. The seminar then ends with a general discussion on coordination and potential problems that will need to be overcome once the projects have been launched. A wall chart of the projects is presented to the village leadership for public display. The workshop is also usually completed in two hours.

Facilitators hold a follow-up meeting with participants three months after the seminar. Less formal monitoring visits are made after a shorter duration. The chairmen and secretaries of the local village government and cooperative leaders along with district extension officers are invited to attend a leadership training event not long after the completion of the CMPP seminar. The primary purpose of this leadership training is to explore ways of sustaining the projects planned during the CMPP. These leaders are intended to conduct subsequent follow-up meetings in the village.

The procedures for CMPP in Tanzania follow the basic principles of MAP as described in this handbook while simplifying many of the actual workshop steps, especially in the plenary discussions. It seeks to be a catalyst for small scale self-help projects which reflect participants' particular concerns. In this manner, CMPP in Tanzania can be said to be a programme of "grassroots mobilisation."

## **5.2 Integrated Rural Development Programme**

For twenty years the IRDP in the Eastern Province of Zambia has worked with local communities in funding a number of projects. These have varied from the digging of water wells to the construction of school buildings. Many of these IRDP projects have since deteriorated because of poor maintenance.

The IRDP is scheduled to complete its operations within a two year period. As a part of its winding-up activities, IRDP wants to compile a final inventory on the status of these projects and establish local maintenance committees to sustain the projects in the future. To accomplish these aims, IRDP designed a programme for conducting two day "village maintenance committee planning seminars" which utilise an adaptation of MAP methods.

A maintenance seminar is composed of four sessions: 1) a review of the "current situation" of the village IRDP project, 2) identification of major maintenance tasks, 3) creation of a maintenance implementation plan, and 4) organising a project



maintenance committee. As many people as possible living in the community are invited to attend the seminar.

The first session, the review of the current situation, begins with an introductory discussion about the project: when was it begun, how many people benefit from its presence, what hardships would be caused if it were to no longer continue? This is followed by a physical inspection of the project. When participants return from the visit, the IRDP facilitator has the entire group complete a prepared "inventory" questionnaire that describes the current condition of the project. This session takes about two hours to complete.

The second session, identification of major maintenance tasks, begins by dividing the entire group into small teams. Each team is no larger than fifteen people, so the number of teams depends upon the total number of participants in attendance. Men and women are sent to separate teams where a brainstorm list is created of all of the maintenance problems/tasks that can be remembered from the physical inspection of the project. These team lists are written on large sheets of paper or index cards for presentation in the plenary. After all teams have reported to the group, duplicate tasks are put together and the composite list of tasks is prioritised. This session is completed in about two and a half hours. It ends the first day of the seminar.



Session three, creating a maintenance implementation plan, occurs on the following morning. The group is divided into two large teams that include a mix of men and women. Each team is assigned to consider one of the two priority tasks as identified on the previous day. In the teams, implementation steps are created for the task using a work sheet that asks questions about materials, tools, required labour, and scheduling (see the worksheet in Chapter Four). The teams reconvene in a plenary session to hear reports.

After hearing the reports and discussing questions from the participants, the group is again divided into teams, this time separating men and women. The teams discuss the following questions:

- what has been the past experience in doing maintenance tasks in this community? give some examples of past successes and past failures;
- why were you able to succeed when you did?
- what caused the failures?
- what can you do now to overcome these problems?
- consider the two maintenance tasks just planned: what activities planned are traditionally those of women? of men?
- will these traditional roles cause a problem in successfully completing the maintenance task? (facilitators will need to push for insights based on their own experience of potential problems);
- how might these problems be overcome.

A reporter from each team summarises the discussions and reports to the group in a plenary. After the reports have been heard, the facilitator ends the session with a question to the group: "based on these discussions, what will be the keys to REALLY succeeding with these maintenance tasks?" Session three takes about three hours to complete.

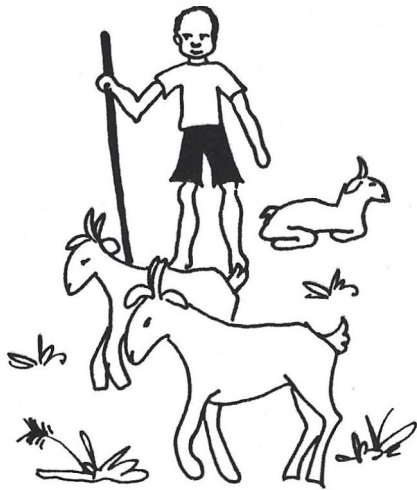
The fourth and final session of the seminar organises a maintenance committee. The group is not divided into teams; the whole session takes place with the entire group of participants. The facilitator leads discussions by asking a series of questions: what are the responsibilities of the "Maintenance Committee?" how does the committee need to function? who should collect and hold the money? how can you ensure that money is not misused? After criteria is discussed for choosing committee members, nominations are made and a maintenance committee is elected. The session ends by scheduling the next meeting time. Session four lasts approximately four hours. With its conclusion, the seminar is brought to a close.

District officers make periodic monitoring visits after the seminar to the newly formed project maintenance committees as a part of their other on-going work in the rural areas.

### **5.3 Babati Land Management Programme**

The Babati Land Management Project (LAMP) aims to improve the land husbandry practices across the district. The programme supports official land management projects through the District Council. Another intention of the LAMP programme is the establishment of a "Mazingira Trust Fund" (MTF) which will provide financial support for local environmental projects.

When the programme began, LAMP wanted contending interest groups, or "constituencies," to contribute their different perspectives to the formulation of future district projects. It also wanted to solicit their possible interest in the MTF. Four constituency seminars were held for 1) pastoralists, 2) small-scale farmers, 3) large commercial farmers, and 4) non-governmental organisations (NGO). These were followed by a final seminar with administrators and elected officials of the district government.



MAP methods were used to create two seminar designs for the various constituencies. The first four with pastoralists, large and small farmers, and NGOs all followed the same format. The seminar for the district officials was different in that it summarised the proceedings of the previous groups and then focused on the question of successful implementation of current LAMP projects for the district.

The initial seminars with the four constituencies took place during a two day period. Each was divided into five working sessions which involved a mix of brainstorming and discussions in small teams followed by reports and reflections with the entire group in plenary sessions. All discussions were led by facilitators who were familiar with MAP methods. The key points for each of the five sessions are described below.

#### Workshop 1: "Personal Hardships" Due to Environmental Problems

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Participants were asked to identify practical difficulties in farming or in their everyday lives that could ultimately be traced back to land management issues. These problems were considered in five categories: 1) land, 2) water, 3) natural resources (forests, etc), 4) agriculture, and 5) livestock.

#### Workshop 2: "Perpetuating Practices" that Cause the Environmental Problems

Camera  
In this session, participants were asked to consider the root causes that are underneath their experience of environmental problems, especially those that are caused by some form of human activity.

#### Workshop 3: "Practical Proposals" for Solving the Problems

Practical proposals were made by participants concerning the practical actions that could be taken by people in their constituency to solve the problems named earlier. These were then prioritised by the group according to the five categories (land, water, natural resources, agriculture, and livestock).

#### Workshop 4: Reflections on "Proposal Implementation"

Past experiences with each priority proposal were discussed by examining three key questions: 1) what have been reasons for past successes with this proposal? 2) what have been causes of past failure? and 3) what can this particular constituency practically do to ensure the success of this proposal in the future?

#### Workshop 5: An Introduction to the "Mazingira Trust Fund"

The concept of the MTF as an independent NGO was introduced by staff of the LAMP programme. The presentation was followed by a lengthy period of questions and answers from participants about the MTF. Those who were interested in attending an organisational meeting for the MTF were asked to list their names and addresses so that they could receive timely notification.

The seminar for district administrators and elected officials took place immediately after all four of the specific constituency seminars were completed. Participants included representatives from the various line ministries responsible for land, water, forests, agriculture, and livestock as well as representatives from the District Council.



Together, these participants were responsible for implementing the LAMP proposals as approved by the District Council.



#### Workshop 1: Reports from the Four Previous Constituency Seminars

Sub-groups were assigned to look at the priority proposals that arose from each constituency. Participants were asked to choose the idea they considered to be the best from the constituency under their review, identify any confusing ideas that might have been made, add new ideas that might have been left-out, and then recommend how the district might practically go about supporting the constituency's priority proposals.

#### Workshop 2: Review of District-wide LAMP Projects

The five major LAMP projects for the coming year as determined by the District Council were presented and initially discussed by the group. This discussion included the proposed budget for each project. Questions and answers enabled a thorough understanding to emerge in regards to the broad directions of the LAMP programme in the immediate future.

### Workshop 3: Workshop on the Implementation the LAMP Projects

Participants were asked to consider innovative means for implementing the LAMP projects. Rather than simply assigning each project to a particular department to implement on its own, possible cooperative ventures were encouraged between departments and with NGOs in order to realise an integrated approach. In sub-groups, participants reviewed implementation steps, integration possibilities, major constraints, and summarised "keys" to success.

### Workshop 4: An Introduction to the "Mazingira Trust Fund"

The concept of the MTF as an independent NGO was introduced by staff of the LAMP programme. The presentation was followed by a lengthy period of questions and answers from the administrators and elected officials about the MTF. Discussion focused on the relationship of the proposed NGO to the official structures of the government within the district.

Proposals from the constituency participation seminars were formally documented in a report and became a significant part of the background information used in planning new district environmental projects. As a result of the constituency seminars, meetings to formulate the MTF were soon held with broad participation of different groups in the district.

## 5.4 Conclusions

The examples above have demonstrated the wide range of possibilities for adapting MAP methods to the aims and objects of programmes interested in promoting rural participation.

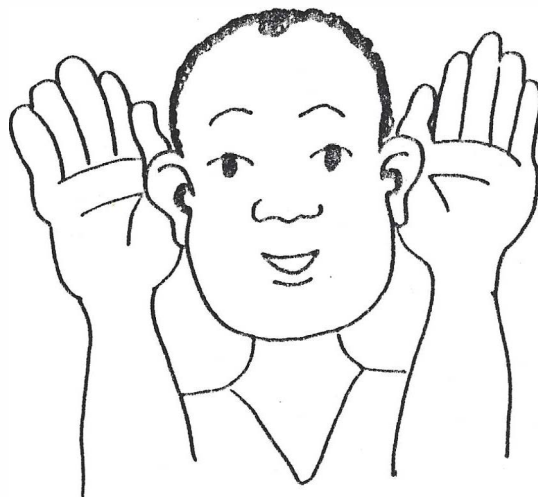
This handbook has provided facilitators with practical insights for engaging rural people in development activities. Yet, with just a slight shift in emphasis the very same techniques can be used with senior managers and professional staff of large organisations. MAP methods, for example, were used with the Ministry of Agriculture in Zambia to formulate proposals for the future of one bi-lateral aid programme.

When using MAP methods to design new participation programmes, it is important to carefully prepare specific procedures for workshops and seminars. These procedures are detailed "scripts" that inform facilitators about the intended flow of the sessions. The descriptions about the CMPP, IRDP, and LAMP seminars above are not scripted procedures. They are far too general. In procedural scripts time allotments are assigned to each step; every point of every workshop is spelled out; specific questions are prepared for every discussion; notes are made on the use of materials. Every detail is given attention. Such written procedures then become the facilitators' "bible" as they go out to conduct the participation seminars.

Printed procedures, even when in the greatest of detail, are no substitute for a facilitator's own personal handwritten notes. Good facilitators prepare for each workshop by writing up their own procedures and phrasing questions and comments according to their own style. This personal preparation helps to thoroughly acquaint facilitators with the procedures of the workshop and thereby develop a sense of self-confidence about their performance before a groups.

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The best of procedures, however, only serve as guidelines for conducting seminars. Stale questions parroted mindlessly from the "blueprint" of printed procedures will not realise the aims of MAP. Good facilitators clearly understand WHY they are asking the questions they do and LISTEN to the answers they receive as they respond accordingly.



Creative, flexible interaction with participants emerges from a comfortable familiarity with the procedures. Disciplined adherence to the procedures followed by careful reflection and regular evaluation with other facilitators will eventually bear fruit as facilitators develop a sense of self-confidence about their work.

The key to developing good facilitation skills and a sensitivity to participants is thus through old fashioned hard work. Such is the journey of facilitators as they move toward fulfilling their calling: to enable rural people to become agents of their own development.

## Recommended Reading

A number of books explore the overarching design of participation programmes and consider the strategic implications involved in different approaches. The following two books will be particularly helpful to new facilitators as they attempt to acquaint themselves with the public discussions that surround "participation:"

Oakely, Peter; et al., *PROJECTS WITH PEOPLE: The Practice of Participation in Rural Development*, International Labour Organisation, Geneva, 1991.

Verhagen, Koenraad, *SELF-HELP PROMOTION: A Challenge to the NGO Community*, Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam, 1987.

Books on the practical methodology of interaction between participants and facilitators are much more scarce. The following three books will help stimulate ideas among facilitators. The first provides practical insights into the awareness training of Paulo Freire and the second offers useful techniques in group analysis of agricultural problems. The third listing presents the same basic approach found in this "Handbook" but written for facilitators working with professional audiences.

Hope, A.; Timmel, S., *TRAINING FOR TRANSFORMATION: A Handbook for Community Workers*, 3 Volumes, Mambo Press, Gweru, Zimbabwe, 1984.

McCracken, J.; Pretty, J.; Conway, G., *An Introduction to Rapid Rural Appraisal for Agricultural Development*, International Institute for Environment and Development, London, 1988.

Spencer, Laura, *WINNING THROUGH PARTICIPATION: Meeting the Challenge of Corporate Change*, Kendall-Hunt, Dubuque, Iowa, 1989.

"Participatory evaluation" is a crucial aspect of developing any successful programme working in rural areas and many books have recently appeared on the subject. The following two books will be valuable to facilitators as they adapt techniques for their own work.

Feuerstein, M.T., *PARTNERS IN EVALUATION: Evaluating Development and Community Development Programmes With Participants*, Macmillan, London, 1986.

Rugh, J., *SELF-EVALUATION: Ideas for Participatory Evaluation of Rural Community Development Projects*, World Neighbors, Oklahoma City, 1986.