

Section 2: Note to Users

Effective training of facilitators is best done by or with people who have first-hand experience in using community-led approaches.

This section makes extensive use of participatory role-plays, with group reflection on the process and how to improve the facilitator's skills.

A useful approach, however, is to intermix these activities with the reflective activities promoted in Section 1. For example, if a person who is learning how to facilitate a community-led process shows during a role-play a need for additional practice regarding empathy or asking probing questions, one could have the participant complete that evening the relevant tools on empathy (FAC 4) and asking probing questions (FAC 6).

TRN 7. Role-play (Fish Bowl) and Discussion: Building an Inclusive Community Process 1

A. Background

Purpose: The purpose of this role-play is to stimulate awareness of the problems of non-inclusive approaches to community decision-making and enable constructive thinking about how to build a more inclusive process. It shows how enthusiastic participation by community leaders or members of the community elite can make it difficult to have an authentic discussion or to include diverse views. An important takeaway point is that in taking a community-led approach, directive action by the community leader may not be helpful, and steps may be needed to engage and respect community leaders without having them control the process.

Time: 60–90 mins.

No. of participants: Over 20 people, ideally.

Materials needed:

- 1 role sheet for the facilitator
- 2 copies of the role sheets for the community members (attached)
- a relatively large space, with room for 12 people seated in an inner circle (the “fish bowl”), with the rest of the people arranged in a wider circle so that everyone can observe what is happening in the inner circle

B. Workshop Facilitator's Notes

In this session, you will organize a role-play that simulates an interaction between a facilitator from the Healthy Children’s Foundation (HCF, a national NGO) and members of a rural village. The setting is a community meeting convened to discuss which harm to children the community will select for purposes of subsequent community-driven action. The role-play is designed to bring out the limits of “convenience group” meetings and “chief- and elite-driven approaches” as a means of partnering with the community, enable empathy with local community views, and increase openness to a more inclusive way of working with community people.

Your activities will include five steps (time frames are approximate):

1. Rearrange the seating (5 mins).

2. Select people to play the role of HCF facilitator (1), Chief (1), and community members (10).
3. Role-play preparation: Ask each group to divide people up according to the different roles for each group (see instructions and handouts on the following pages). Allow the groups time to understand and prepare for their roles in the role-play (15 mins).
4. Enable the two groups to conduct the role-play in which the facilitator works with community members to decide which harm to children they want to address through community action (15 mins).
5. Facilitate reflection and discussion with participants, no longer playing the roles that had been assigned (30 mins).

Step 1: Rearrange the space

Organize the space into two concentric circles. In the inner circle will be 12 seated participants who take part in a “community discussion.” The other participants will surround this first circle (the “fish bowl”), enabling them to observe what is happening there.

Step 2: Role assignment

Select participants to play the role of HCF facilitator (1), Chief (1), and community members (10). The rest of the participants are observers/reflectors.

Step 3: Preparation

A. Read the setting aloud, so everyone will know what the role-play is about.

Setting: A facilitator from a national children’s agency (The Healthy Children’s Foundation, HCF) wants to enable a highly participatory process in which a community decides which harm(s) to children it wants to address. Previously, the HCF had conducted ethnographic research in which community members had indicated the top three harms to children. Listed in order of “greatest concern” to local people, they are: early marriage (for girls—the traditional marriage age was 15 years but it has dropped to 11 years of age); heavy work (boys working in nearby mines); and drug use (marijuana and glue sniffing, mostly by boys).

Those findings have already been fed back to the community, which is a small, relatively traditional, rural village. The community members understand that a facilitator from HCF will come to help them to decide which harm(s) to children that they can subsequently address through community action.

The facilitator is visiting the community mid-day during the week and has respectfully asked the Chief of the village to convene a community discussion about which harm(s) they want to address. The Chief and the community people understand they will need to select one or several harms to children, and they are eager to partner with HCF. The Chief and the Town Crier went house-to-house to ask everyone to attend the meeting, which will be held in the traditional meeting space outside the Chief's hut. The Chief will welcome the facilitator, who will then begin their work with the community.

B. Then ask the Chief and community members to stay in the room by themselves to prepare for their roles, without being overheard by others. Meanwhile, the facilitator goes to a separate area, while the other workshop participants stretch their legs outside for several minutes.

C. Distribute the role sheets (see following pages), not letting the HCF facilitator see the roles of the Chief and community members.

D. Give several minutes so the participants can decide how to best play their respective roles. The HCF facilitator can do this on his or her own (and ask questions of you). For the Chief and community members, the important thing is that the Chief leads and dominates the discussion.

Step 4: Enable the role-play

A. Before bringing the facilitator in, have the Chief and community members take their seats in the inner circle. Invite others (observers) to sit around but outside of the inner circle and to pay attention to the group process.

B. Invite the facilitator in—he or she is just arriving in the village and will be greeted by the Chief, thus beginning the role-play.

C. Let the role-play continue for about 15 mins before you step in to say “Cut!” and begin the discussion.

Step 5: Facilitate reflection and discussion

A. Open with a few questions for observers:

- What positive things did the facilitator do to enable participation?
- Thinking about what happened in the inner circle, how would you describe the group process during this discussion?

B. Then ask questions for everyone about inclusion, adjusting the order to what had been said in response to the questions above:

- Do you think this is a strong process or a weak process in terms of enabling the community to decide which harm to children to address? Why?

- [If participants are slow to point out issues, you could ask: Did the community members who were present participate equally in this discussion? What role did the Chief play? What are the problems of having an open discussion when the Chief is controlling things or speaking first? Was this really a community decision-making process, when many community members were not present?]
- Who was missing from this discussion or not participating in it?
- Why is it important for a process of community decision-making to be inclusive?
- What could be done to reduce the problem of the Chief controlling the discussion and decision-making?

NOTE: This discussion may continue straight into the following discussion (see next tool), which may also be done as a follow-on session to this one but after taking a break.

Facilitator's Role

As the facilitator, you aim to help the community take a decision about which harm(s) to children the community will address through its own action. During this meeting, you want to respect the Chief, who had organized this meeting at your request. You feel strongly that having the Chief on board with this process will enable it to win community support, to be “legitimate” in the eyes of the community, and to be sustainable. Wanting to make the Chief happy, you sometimes let him speak more than you really think he should be speaking.

Following custom, the Chief will open the meeting and then hand off to you. To begin the discussion, you should thank the Chief for having called the meeting, and thank the community members for coming. There is no pressure for the community to take a decision today, as you recognize that there may need to be many discussions before the community agrees which issue to address.

Early on in the discussion, you should remind the participants that during the learning phase (ethnography), they had identified three main harms to children: early marriage (for girls—the traditional marriage age was 15 years but it has dropped to 11 years of age); heavy work (boys working in nearby mines); and drug use (marijuana and glue sniffing, mostly by boys). You should mention that people may consider other issues as well, though you remind them that this process cannot by itself address poverty. Remind participants, too, that there are no right or wrong answers and that each person’s opinion matters.

With these points in mind, you ask the community “Which harm(s) to children do you think the community should address?” Following up, you ask various participants, including children, what they think.

Chief's Role

As the respected leader of your people, you are a take-charge person and see yourself as speaking for the community. You like when community members speak, but you like it even more when they show respect to you and even defer to your judgment.

You open this role-play by welcoming the facilitator to the village again. Before handing over to him or her, you state that to help the community decide which harm to children to address, you have brought together most of the key people in the village—the opinion leaders and people who are most able to make good decisions. You invite each person to introduce themselves. Then you turn to the facilitator and say, “Now it is your meeting—please go ahead.”

Your role is to lead and control this discussion. After the facilitator invites views of the community, step forward immediately and present your view that drug use is the biggest harm because the drugs are dangerous and they lead children, particularly boys, to drop out of school. Once out of school, the boys do more drugs, gamble, and stop respecting their families and the community elders. In essence, they become a burden on everyone, and they invite other children to misbehave and stop being good future citizens of the community. You let others speak to some extent, yet you are so excited that you keep interrupting or jumping in to assert your own views.

Community Members' Roles

At the beginning of the role-play, the Chief will ask each of you to introduce yourself briefly to the facilitator by saying your name and who you are (as in: “I am John, the Chief's nephew. I’m a farmer.”). You are all highly respectful of your Chief and always let him speak first and interrupt whenever he wants to. You want to express your views yet are eager to agree with the Chief.

Most of you are parents and adults. Please choose among yourselves which of the following roles you wish to play:

- two of you are relatives of the Chief;
- two of you are teenagers, and you remain silent during the meeting, deferring to the Chief if you are asked anything directly;
- three of you think the most important harm to children to address is early marriage;
- four of you think the most important harm to children to address is heavy work;
- three of you think the most important harm to children to address is drug use.