

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 8. Role-play: Building an Inclusive Community Process 2

This role-play can be done as a stand-alone or as a sequel to the preceding role-play.

A. Background

Purpose

The purpose of this role-play is to give the facilitator in a community-led approach experience in helping community members take stock of how large community meetings are not a fully inclusive means of the community taking a decision. For training purposes, it offers pointers on how to ask questions that stimulate reflection on the limits of large meetings and to invite collective problem-solving about how to overcome those limits.

Background

The facilitator knows the community members well and is working with them to help them select which harm or harms to children to be addressed through community-led action. Because a high level of inclusivity is fundamental in a community-led process, the facilitator wants to help the community think through how it can create a more inclusive process for deciding which harm(s) to children to address.

Participants

The participants consist of 10–20 people who play the role of community members (self-assigned) and a participant who is learning to facilitate a community-led process who plays the facilitator.

B. Workshop Facilitator's Notes

1. The facilitator leaves the meeting space and takes 10 mins to read the facilitator's sheet (see below).
2. With the facilitator away from the meeting space, the other participants assign themselves roles as community members. It is useful to have a mix of elder men, elder women, young mothers, young fathers, teenage girls, and teenage boys. Some people tend to speak more than others or even to dominate the discussion. All the community members agree that every member of the community should have a voice in its decision-making.

3. Some of the community members (self-designated) think initially that large community meetings are the best (and the traditional) way of enabling the community to take a decision on an issue such as which harm to children should they address through community-led action. Yet they loosen up and are willing to consider other options as the facilitator raises questions and invites them to think them through.
4. The community participants like the facilitator and the way he or she asks questions and invites discussion. They offer supportive alternatives such as better announcement of meetings, Town Crier encouragement for everyone to attend the meeting, small group discussions, and home visits as a way of enabling all members of the community to have a voice in discussions of which harm to children to address.
5. Role-play. The role-play begins with the facilitator entering the meeting space, greeting the community, and explaining the purpose of the meeting. The role-play should continue for about 30 mins, with the workshop coordinator playing the role of “movie producer” and intervening with a “Time out” if some adjustment is needed.

Discussion and Reflection

Following the role-play, it is useful to invite everyone to step outside their assigned roles and now share their own opinion on questions such as:

- In the discussions, how well did the facilitator do in enabling or encouraging different people to speak? What could have been done better?
- In reality, what are the limits of community meetings as vehicles for making decisions?
- In a large group meeting with both men and women present, will women likely feel free to discuss openly issues such as gender-based violence? Why or why not?
- How could small group discussions among, for example, a group of 10 women and a group of 10 men, help to address the preceding concern? What challenges could arise in having small group discussions, and how could they be managed?
- How could home visits help to address the preceding concern? Who would make the home visits, and how would the process be? What challenges could arise in having home visits, and how could the challenges be managed?

Facilitator's Sheet

Your goal in this community meeting is to help the community think through its process for taking a decision about which harm to children to address. You know that the community typically takes decisions by having a “full community meeting” in which people discuss the issue and take a decision. However, it is clear that not everyone participates in such meetings—people with disabilities and the poorest of the poor, for example, typically do not participate. Also, children have little voice as they are “expected to be seen but not heard.” Further, women and girls are unlikely to discuss openly issues such as rape and gender-based violence in a setting where men are present.

Your aim in this session is twofold. First, you want to help community members understand that taking decisions at large meetings is not a fully inclusive process. Also, you want to help community members construct a more inclusive process of decision-making. Your strategy is to help people reflect on the importance of each person having a voice and then work to raise awareness of the limits of making decisions at full meetings.

A useful first step in this session is for you to ask questions such as, “What does it mean to say that the community has taken a decision?” or, “Should everyone have input into community decisions?” and “Why is it important that each person participate in decision-making?”

With this as a foundation, you can help people to reflect on how participatory current processes of community decision-making are. Ask questions such as: “How does a community here take a decision?” Typically, people reply along the lines of: “We discuss the issue as a whole community in our community meetings, and everyone participates.” If this happens, you should ask follow-on questions designed to trigger awareness that some people may be left out of those community discussions and that even if people attend the community meetings, it may be challenging for them to speak up. Among such questions are the following:

- “Does everyone attend the community meetings?”
- “Are some people here very poor compared to others? Do they usually attend the community meetings? Why or why not?”
- “Are there people here who have disabilities (maybe they are blind, or cannot hear, or are unable to walk)? Do they attend and take part in the meetings? Why or why not?”
- “Do children, even teenagers, attend the community meetings? Do they regularly speak up and share their perspectives? Why or why not?”

In asking these questions, your role is not to force agreement or suggest solutions but to help the community discuss issues fully before taking a decision. After discussion, people in most communities agree that although community meetings are open to everyone, there are people who seldom, if ever, attend such meetings. These may include people with disabilities, people who are very poor or whose families are most vulnerable, or people who are stigmatized for any reason. People also typically realize that children do not usually speak up at full community

meetings. They may also note that women do not speak as much as men or that only the women who are power brokers speak up.

From here, the next step is to ask questions that invite problem-solving, noting that this may take some time. It may also require a number of discussions, and the discussion today is only the beginning. Try asking open-ended questions that do not blame anyone for having excluded particular subgroups or for not participating themselves. Such questions may include the following:

- “What could enable women to participate more fully or contribute to community discussions and decision-making?”
- “What could enable children to participate more fully or contribute to community discussions and decision-making?”

You could ask similar questions in regard to the poorest people, people with disabilities, or any subgroup that seems to be excluded or somehow less prominent in collective discussions and decision-making.

Asked with patience, such questions help to create a reflective space for group problem-solving. The reflective space enables people to step back and identify possible alternatives that are more inclusive and participatory.

Quite commonly, proponents of large-scale community meetings suggest steps such as going house-to-house well in advance of meetings in order to make sure that everyone in the community knows there will be a meeting and that everyone is welcome. In regard to this option and others that might be suggested, it is not for the facilitator to support or reject the option, as that is up to the community. But you should invite reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of each option, for example, by asking follow-up questions with an appreciative attitude. Such questions could include things such as: “Thank you for this suggestion—what do other people think of this?” or “How is this option helpful?” and subsequently, “Will everyone be able to participate in full community meetings?”

Through the ensuing discussions, most communities come to the realization that even with advance notice and a welcoming attitude, it will likely be difficult for people such as the poorest of the poor and people with particular disabilities to come to the meetings. This realization typically leads people to suggest other options. Home visits and small group discussions are frequently among the options that communities develop. Part of the excitement of community-led work is to see the imaginative solutions that local people can develop.