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Post-Training Evaluation

Training in Group Facilitation Methods (GFM) and Participatory Strategic Planning (PSP), Entebbe, Uganda, 21-24 March, 2011

Nine months have now passed since this training took place as part of the Peace Exchange which took place in Entebbe. While the initial assessment of the training as very positive, we wanted to see what has happened since the course, whether the learning and development highlighted in the Peace Exchange evaluation has been sustained and what sort of impact it has had. To discover this we circulated a questionnaire to all participants, and received 9 replies (out of 25). This report collects and synthesizes those responses.

I. What were the main things you learnt from the Facilitation Training?

Facilitation Skills

- Different ways of facilitation.
- To guide people with different/opposed views or opinion at the beginning towards a constructive dialogue, fruitful discussions and eventually consensus
- Skills to facilitate dialogue and strategic planning meetings/workshops
- I learnt how to facilitate discussion and training sessions which are aimed at solving a problem, and finding solution.
- The way a facilitator works with participants is important and this can either make or break the workshop.

Facilitation Methods

- I reckon, the three major facilitation tools were the highlights of my learning in Entebbe. 2 out of 3 tools were new to me and learning them proved essential to me.
- Using resource material
- I learnt how to frame relevant questions, and how to take on a discussion in a productive way, so that results are achieved instead of just talking
- I learnt the methods of Group Facilitation & Participatory Strategic planning from that training which is being most fruitful to work in the field through the planning.

- I learnt the methods of Group Facilitation Methods & Participatory Strategic planning from that training.
- I learnt that there are other interesting ways of facilitating a workshop. I liked the consensus building model, and I found it quite interesting and simple to use as a facilitation model.
- I learnt most important and essential things from that Group Facilitation Methods & Participatory Strategic planning. I had been able to share my experiences and to learn others experiences which are effective to act in the field.
- Group Facilitation Methods & Participatory Strategic planning training is not taken by enough persons so that, in this situation, we have to make planning to promote these things.
- The printed module which was given to us, is very helpful in remembering and revising the training.

Building strategy for our work.

- To define same goals and shared vision of the future as an organisation
- I learnt how to involve partners and stakeholders in the process of strategy building.
- We made strategies for possible work of peace establishment.
- We made participatory planning for peace.
- I learnt how to do a participatory approach to strategic planning
- It seemed to get all partners on board towards a shared vision and goals.

2. On what occasions have you been able to apply that learning?

- I have used Focused Group Conversation for our small regular meetings with youth in Jammu and Kashmir, as well as training them on these facilitative methods so that they can further use it in their own communities.
- I have at one occasion improvised the method using questions for group conversations.
- I have prepared a strategic approach note for our organization Yakjah Reconciliation and Development Network.
- Internally – we used the Consensus Workshop once as part of the planning for agreements with Peace Direct partners.
- I have been able to apply the learned facilitation tools on two different occasions i.e. training sessions in past few months.
- We organized strategic planning workshops in April to define the vision and main activities of AYC for the next 4 years.
- I was invited to facilitate 3 training sessions on “Internal Organization Governance” in the conference of Amnesty International titled “Active Human Rights Participation” which happened in London on 3rd and 4th June. I used the facilitation skills learnt in the training course to facilitate the session, I used the Consensus workshop Method. (June 2011)

- I was invited in the Norwegian Summer Camp organized by Norwegian Humanist Association in Oslo, to facilitate session on “Humanism; a way to Peace”. I used different techniques to conduct the session including focused Conversation. (Aug 2011)
- I used the strategy building workshop in the Executive Committee of IHEYO (International Humanist and Ethical Youth Organization) to make 5 years strategic plan for IHEYO (Aug 2011)
- I used the techniques of facilitation in our peacebuilding training
- I have been able to apply that learning to make organizational strategies and group facilitation.
- I am also using this method in trainings which we provide for local people.
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- Often, as a part of my current work
- I have been able to apply the learning on our capacity building programs with the youths and traditional leadership. The capacity building workshop with the youths was mainly focusing on trialing the youth peace education curriculum. The work with chiefs is on Conflict transformation and the workshop was held last week in one of the rural areas in Zimbabwe.

3. Choosing one of your experiences, write a story or brief account to convey what happened

- A. A group of girls came together and I introduced them the idea of FGD. After explaining the methodology we choose the question ‘What role can the youth play in peace building in Jammu and Kashmir. For this we had to start with what are the issues of youth, how do they feel about, how do they interpret it and what could be done. We came up with such a deep insight which otherwise is a very complex problem. Whenever I share this insight with others they are really impressed. We recently also shared this insight in an open letter to the elected Chief Minister of the state.
- B. The session was significantly better organized than most PD strategy meetings! It felt like there was a clear structure, and the outcome was good also. The one big lesson I learnt however was that we scheduled the session on a busy day and with a tight time deadline. This meant that when it came to the later parts, people were already getting anxious about finishing up which meant a lot of decisions were rushed.
- C. It was splendid to see how the whole training and the sessions went on schedule and how time was managed there. I have personally attended dozens of sessions and conducted multiple sessions myself but time management has always been a major drawback in all

those sessions. But hats off! Time was fruitfully managed in Entebbe sessions. In addition, I was also happy to see the participants arriving and leaving on time. Now, I can really believe time can be managed well.

D. After the third Peace Exchange meeting organized by Peace Direct, AYC felt the necessity and urgency to have a mid-term strategic plan which define the main areas of work for the next four years. That's why Landry Ninteretse and Olivier Manirankunda who participated in the Entebbe meeting invited the rest of members for a strategic planning workshop on April 09th and 16th 2011. On the first day, participants defined the practical vision and the underlying contradictions. On the second day, we dealt with Strategic directions and Focused Implementation.



The two-day workshop was so beneficial to all of us as we have been able to define a common and shared vision as well as planned activities for the next four years. We highly appreciated contributions/inputs from participants and we just guided them through the process. We had to answer clarification questions-which is normal as members had never encounter this method before- and at the second day, the debates became much easier and questions were no longer strange to participants. The most important thing is that now AYC has its own strategic plan drawn by its members. The remaining challenge is its full and successful implementation.



- E. I submitted my application as a participant for the conference on Amnesty International on “Active Human Rights Participation” which was happening in London. Each applicant has to submit a Human Rights Participation dilemma, I wrote about the issue of token participation/less participation of women in the women rights Organizations. Based on the dilemma I had mentioned, I was invited to facilitate sessions on the theme of “Internal Organization Governance”. When I received the invitation I was confused whether to accept it or not, though I knew it was a wonderful opportunity for me to learn, and to polish my skills as facilitator, but I was afraid I won’t be able to do it. But then, the training I had received in Uganda gave me courage to design my training session. The best and relevant methodology for the training I thought was “Consensus workshop”. So, I designed my workshop and submitted it. Facilitating training sessions in London was very encouraging, empowering, and inspiring. Even I learnt from the experience of facilitation. Through these tools, one doesn’t need to be expert of any topic, because through better formulation of questions, the discussion can be formulated.
- F. I think for the most interesting story was when Envision was conducting Peace Education with youth. Some of these youths come from diverse backgrounds sometimes which are quite harsh and not conducive for normal growth. So when one of the friends of the teenagers committed suicide, we conducted a session with the teenagers, discussing how teenagers can cope in adverse situations and how they can look for alternatives without having to resort to suicide.

4. What are the main challenges you face in applying what you learnt?

- As of now the need to train others in this method for it becomes quite challenging for me to be the only person organizing the workshops.
- We have many times thought of providing these trainings to other NGOs for a cost, so that our Yakjah is able to earn some money and use those for community work and training our youth. We do not have proper training kit and authority to do so.
- I think the book gave an excellent guide to planning, so no unexpected challenges, apart from the lesson on timing.
- I personally felt applying what I learned in Entebbe needs time and other resources. For instance, I was intending to apply this in one of my sessions in Peshawar, Pakistan. However, the session room was not as big it should have been. I had to take the session out. But most of the time, you are allowed to conduct sessions in a restricted place or area you rent.
- We’re not facing particular challenges in our organization-except the internal difficult context which didn’t allow us to put into practice immediately what we learnt. However, we’re

confident that as soon as the problems are solved, we'll be able to carry out full and effective implementation of the defined strategic plan.

- During the clustering phase, the discussion sometimes becomes lengthy and boring, because participants do not find it interesting to cluster same cards together, and to title it. Though it is very participatory, but it is seen as something not very useful.
- The sessions on strategic planning needs more practice
- Lack of enough resources and means
- Political instability
- Delay receiving information due to the geographical constraints
- High expectations of victims
- Increase in criminal groups and underground arm groups and their activities
- The need for continuous follow-up
- Danger of politicisation
- Prevailing Impunity
- Difficulty in personal safety
- Senior management do not want to devote time to it
- The major challenge I face in applying what I learnt is limited resources to conduct more workshops. If it were possible, it would be great to facilitate in workshops at least once a month. I also think it would be great to have a refresher course on the consensus building model.

5. To help you meet those challenges:

What areas could have been given more emphasis in the training?

- Introduce more facilitative methods
- Each tool takes time to complete. I think we could have worked on saving time or shortening the length of the sessions. That's it!
- Focused implementation is a crucial part of the training as it's where the whole process starts.
- To make the clustering phase more interesting and shorter
- The sessions on strategic planning needs more practice.
- Participants' capacity building through the PSP training
- Training gave more emphasis in Participatory Strategic Planning
- It was a very large group, perhaps the training is better for smaller groups, so everyone feels that they can contribute.
- Monitoring and Evaluation

What further support or training do you feel you need now?

- Partnerships and access to resource material
- Is it possible to order another copy of the planning book?
- Soft copies of the training manuals!
- The support we do need now is a regular accompaniment and contacts in implementation of the strategic planning. That would ensure that the aim of the workshop is meant.
- I would like to be further trained on strategic planning component
- Proposal writing and Peace mediation trainings
- Perhaps access to online tools and resources.
- Due to dwindling funding, I think it would be great for Peace Direct to support us with skills on how to write proposals and how to skillfully mobilise funds. Peace Direct could also train us on new Conflict Resolution and Peace building initiatives and how we can daily improve our work.

6. From your experiences, what have you learnt about the contribution of participation/facilitation to peacebuilding?

- It allows a platform for exchange for diversity of people to come together and in a very non-threatening way come up with collective outputs.
- Low cost input.
- It is simple and engaging.
- It can be replicated at the community level.
- For me, it was great to see how keen the peacebuilders were on, but at the same time it seemed quite natural to them – much more so I think than to top-down NGOs here in the UK (PD being an exception, of course!)
- Peacebuilding is a long process. It is not just a step you take. It is a long walk and I reckon it is very essential to indulge all the stakeholders in that process and invite them to walk along. Hence, it becomes quite necessary to have their participation and their say. As a peacebuilder, our role lies in bringing them together and facilitates them in this whole process.
- Participation and facilitation are key elements to peacebuilding as they allow a harmonization of views and reaching agreement where they seem impossible at the beginning. Every individual/member of organization has points of view that need to be heard /expressed. Disagreement is normal but good facilitation helps to reach consensus and establish a basic common ground for dialogue, conflict resolution and building solid organizations and societies.
- These skills can be used in de-radicalization programs, which aims to involve young people in creative and critical discussions so that they can analyze the conflict in their communities, and then through focused conversations and consensus workshop can develop strategies by themselves for countering extremism, and for resolving conflicts effectively.

- Peace building works should be participatory and only participatory peace process should be able to bring long term peace.
- It was a fantastic workshop and I think it is the best strategic planning approach that I have come across.
- I have learnt that good facilitation techniques can make or break a peace building process. Facilitators always need to have good skills and strategies to engage conflicting parties, and bring them to some form of settlement. I have also learnt that there is a need to improve facilitation techniques daily. Consensus building as strategy focuses on the contribution that can be made by all players in the peace building process. There is no blaming and shaming, but there is more emphasis on working as a team to build a consensus on conflict issues and building consensus on the solutions. This is a very important technique in peace building.

7. What differences have you seen in yourself or in your work/organization as a result of your facilitation? (e.g. ways of working, relationships with individuals/partners, ownership of projects, motivation of participants, etc.)

- There is improved rhythm in the work.
- I always preferred facilitation methods to training methods. So it has increased those skills.
- We've used the spidergram and it's now part of our evaluation of our relationship with partner organisations. I think the consensus workshop reinforced our collaborative approach to working with partners.
- I think I have improved my facilitation skills. I also started focusing more on time management and on the factors that keep the participants alive and motivated. It's perhaps just the beginning and I hope to continue it. Furthermore, I have built a network of partners with whom I have a great understanding and sharing of ideas. It obviously helps me a lot in all walks of my peacebuilding process.
- Ownership of organization's work
- Improved motivation of members
- Improved ability to facilitate workshop
- I see myself as more confident in conducting training on topics relevant to peace building, conflict resolution, and human rights. I also see myself in better working relationships with my board members because of my enhanced skills to conduct facilitation sessions especially on strategic planning.
- At first, I built up my confidence level to provide effective facilitation. It is making simplest to the ways of working. I can be able to establish good working and personal relations with individuals and partners organizations. These things are also motivating for peacebuilding works. We can see facilitation as a effective tools to conduct our works in a proper way so it brings positive differences in myself.

- I would say the main thing I gained was confidence in understanding a methodology for structuring meetings. I feel that in future meetings I will be confident in using the materials to plan out and know that I'll have a better chance of getting what I want from any meeting or event.
- Facilitation has to effect to conduct any type of activities in the good and simple way. I have seen its' important in the matter of preparing organizational planning and it helps to run any type of project in effective way.
- I am more confident when suggesting ideas forward for partners and our organization.
- At individual level I have seen that I am now able to facilitate and enable participants to come up with their own solutions. I have realized that I do not have to prescribe solutions to others. I have realized that as a result of the new skills and techniques acquired in Entebbe, I can now feel OK with not having all the answers. Before, I used to try to have all the answers and this would lead to frustration on my part.