

## INTRODUCTION

# Facilitation skills



### A brief description

Reveal tools will be most effective when used by people with good facilitation skills. This is an introductory tool that we suggest people read before using any of the other tools in *Reveal*. It contains advice and guidance on good facilitation. For specific advice on facilitating Bible studies see **Tool B - How to write and lead a Bible study**.



### What is facilitation?

Facilitation is encouraging all members of a group to participate so that they achieve something together. Facilitation is different to teaching. Teaching often involves the sharing of information from teacher to student. Facilitation is encouraging the sharing of information in several directions – to all learn together and from each other.



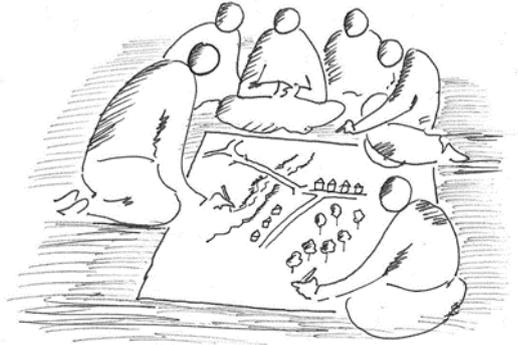
### Keys to success

#### Planning your activities

- Think beforehand about when you will carry out the activities. The time needs to be convenient for all those you want to take part; think about the different needs of women, men and children. Try to ask people ahead of time when would be best for them. You may need to hold activities at different times for different people.
- Think also about the location. Are all people – including people with disabilities – able to take part in the activities?
- What other factors may prevent certain social groups, ethnicities, ages or abilities from taking part? How can you seek to include all groups in a way that ensures they will be willing to speak up and contribute? Think particularly about the most vulnerable.
- If you are addressing a subject that people find difficult or embarrassing, you may want to divide men and women into separate groups.
- Even if the issues aren't sensitive, you may get more honest answers if you talk to children first, then women, then men. This prevents everyone just agreeing with the men!
- Think about children. Is the subject you are discussing appropriate for children? If not, can you organise a separate activity for children to do so that they can contribute in a different way?

## Using Reveal tools

- While Reveal contains information on a lot of issues, it is also important to access information locally, for example, from government officials, NGOs and libraries.
- Remember that communities also have a lot of their own knowledge that we should always seek to build on. Part of your role as a facilitator is to help community members share their knowledge with one another.
- When facilitating discussions, start by doing something to build relationships with the group. Show yourself as an equal to them, rather than a more educated or powerful person. Show that you will also be learning from the activities.
- You could also start by asking the group to agree some ground rules for participation so that each person feels free to share their ideas. Such rules might include not interrupting each other and respecting different views.
- Make sure that everyone understands the questions you are asking. If necessary ask them again in a different way.
- Try to ask open-ended questions that could have a range of different answers, rather than closed questions that can be answered by a simple 'yes' or 'no'.
- Think about how you can encourage useful points to be discussed further.
- When energy levels fall and people's attention wanders, consider using short enjoyable activities (often called 'energisers') that help to refresh people and can also help group members get to know each other better. Always be sensitive to culture, gender and disability and respect those who do not want to take part.
- Remember that each person has something unique and valuable to share. Try to help all group members to feel comfortable about sharing their hopes, concerns and ideas. How can you encourage quiet people to participate? Could you divide the group into smaller groups?



### Examples of energisers

**Mirrors** Place people into pairs. One person is the actor, the other the mirror. The mirror does whatever the actor does, mirroring their actions. After a few minutes, change roles.

**Song Singing** Songs that are easy to learn and join in with is always enjoyable. Action songs can be fun, or use songs that involve clapping or tapping out rhythms.

**What sound is this?** Someone makes a sound and everyone else tries to identify it – the person who guesses right makes another sound. Sounds could include animal and bird noises, machines, vehicles or food preparation.

**Trains** Ask participants to make train noises and actions with their arms. Take them on a journey, gathering speed through a valley, slowing to climb a hill, speeding up as they come down the hill, putting on the brakes to stop in a station and slowing starting up again. Relate the journey to local place names.

**Source:** *Footsteps 60*, article on 'Useful energisers'. See the full article for more examples. Many of the ideas in the article came from the book *Participatory Workshops* by Robert Chambers and were included in *Footsteps* with kind permission.

- Think about how you can encourage and help adults with low levels of formal education, literacy or confidence to take a full part. Could you ask the group to present and share information using drawings or drama?
- It is important to not let one or two people do all the talking. Think of ways to sensitively manage people who talk a lot! Could you give them a special separate activity to do to help inform the group? For example they could draw a map of the village or write a list of stakeholders.
- Try to handle any conflict that arises in a sensitive and appropriate way, so that differences are valued and respected.
- Do not be afraid of being asked difficult questions. You do not have to have all the answers! If you don't know the answer to a question then don't try to make one up. Simply say that this something you need to find out more about, or ask if anyone else in the group has any ideas. There is background information on many issues in Section A1 of Reveal. You could also draw on the wisdom and knowledge of other members of the community, outside of the immediate group. Where else could you find more information?

### Some of the skills a good facilitator needs include:

- listening to others
- communicating clearly
- checking understanding,
- summarising and drawing together different ideas
- thinking and acting creatively
- managing people's feelings
- encouraging humour and respect
- being well prepared whilst
- remaining flexible
- keeping to time without being driven by it.

**Source: Footsteps 60, article on Good facilitation**

### Learning styles

We all learn in different ways. Some of us learn by reading, others by looking at something visual such as pictures or watching drama. Some of us learn by hearing things (aural), others by doing things (actions). Can you include a variety of written, visual, aural and action activities in your facilitation?

### Thinking styles

We are all different! Some of us think by talking, while some of us think inside our head (these people are sometimes called 'reflectors'). Reflectors tend to need time to process information and contribute later. How can you enable this to happen?

### PRA (Participatory Rural Assessment) tools

PRA tools are one useful approach to help facilitate communities to think about the resources they have and the future they want to work towards. See **Introductory tool - Community assessment tools** for a list of tools and where to find them.



### Finding out more

Tearfund (2004) *Footsteps - Facilitation Skills*

[http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps\\_51-60/footsteps\\_60/](http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/resources/publications/footsteps/footsteps_51-60/footsteps_60/)