

## Tips for Organisers

The successes of campaigns and advocacy efforts depend a lot on the strength and commitment of the community behind it. As a 'team leader' or 'community organiser', an important part of your work is to assure that the group works together in both effective and democratic ways.

Keep in mind that for many people getting involved in the campaign, it might be the first time that they participate in a collective project. The lack of experience in organising and working collectively is balanced by the commitment to resist a policy that directly affect them, their family or their, for example sex workers organising against the implementation of the criminalisation of their clients.

Here are some tips for facilitating meetings and workshops, as well as information on group process and active listening.

## Facilitating Meetings and Workshops

**“Tell me, and I will forget.  
Show me, and I may remember.  
Involve me, and I will understand.”**

CONFUCIUS 450 BC

There are many resources available online. For example you can check: <http://www.seedsforchange.org.uk/facilwsh.pdf> which includes free and downloadable resources on facilitation, minute taking or how to include new people and on which some of this resource is based.

Facilitation can transform a fastidious, 'one person dominated' meeting where no decisions are being taken into a collective, empowering experience which will move your campaigns and projects forward.

Here are some tips for you to facilitate meetings and workshops:

- Be sure that the role of facilitator is taken by different people, as well as the role the 'secretary' for minute taking. Accurate minute taking is an important process, and sharing minutes rapidly to all group members will ensure that actions take place swiftly.
- Help the group plan the meeting agenda. Think about timing and order of agenda items, and how to tackle each point.
- Keep the group to the agenda and decision-making process.
- Keep the meeting focussed on one item at a time.
- Help everyone to participate. Keep track of who wants to speak. Draw out quiet people and limit those who talk a lot.
- Challenge aggressive or discriminatory behaviour and put-downs.
- Introduce techniques such as ideastorming, go-rounds and working groups to make the meeting more efficient and participatory.
- Test for agreement and get clear decisions made.
- Ensure that action points and decisions are recorded.
- Keep the meeting to time.
- Help the group deal with conflict.
- Listen for underlying issues, concerns or emotions. Help bring them out so they can be dealt with.

## Group Process/Group Dynamic

The dynamic of your group will have a strong impact on the development of your campaign, advocacy and project. A powerful group should involve all its members, be structured and efficient whilst allowing creativity and spontaneity. Members should feel that their contributions are appreciated by the rest of the groups and that they are making a difference.

It is easy to observe your group, take notes of group dynamics, and then collectively challenge some of these dynamics for a more successful group. Be careful, that 'processing' doesn't overtake the initial objectives of your group!

[taken from website:  
<http://getinvolved.rutgers.edu/documents/organizations/ScarletSourceGroupDynamics.pdf>]

## Observation

One of the easiest aspects of group process to observe is the pattern of communication:

- Who talks? For how long? How often?
- At whom do people look when they speak?
- Who talks after whom? Who interrupts whom?
- What style of communication is used (assertions, questions, tone of voice, gestures, etc.)?
- Who sits where? Do the same people always sit in the same place?

The kinds of observations we make give us clues to other important things which may be going on in the group (e.g., such as who leads whom or who influences whom).

## Participation

One indication of involvement is verbal participation. Look for differences in the amount of participation among members.

- Who are the high participants? Who are the low participants?
- Do you see any shift in participation (e.g., highs become quiet; lows suddenly become talkative)? What are possible reasons for this in the group's interaction?
- How are the silent people treated? How is their silence interpreted? Consent? Disagreement? Disinterest? Fear? Etc.?
- Who talks to whom? Do you see any reason for this in the group's interactions?
- Who keeps the ball rolling? Why? Do you see any reason for this in the group's interactions?

## Decision Making

Many kinds of decisions are made in groups without considering the effects that these decisions will have on other members. Some people try to impose their own decisions on the group, while others want all members to participate or share in the decision making process.

- Does anyone make a decision and carry it out without checking with other group members (self-authorized)? For example, one person decides on the topic to be discussed and immediately begins to talk about it. What effect does this have on other group members?
- Does the group drift from topic to topic? Who topic-jumps? Do you see any reason for this in the group's interactions?

- Who supports other members' suggestions or decisions? Does this support result in the two members deciding the topic or activity for the group? How does this affect the other group members?
- Is there any evidence of a majority pushing a decision through over other member's objections? Do they call for a vote (majority support)?
- Is there any attempt to get all members participating in a decision (consensus)? What effect does this seem to have on the group?
- Does anyone make any contributions which do not receive any kind of response or recognition? What effect does this have on the member?

## Active Listening

Active listening is a crucial facilitation skill that all organisers should develop. It involves pro-actively listening for what your community member is trying to communicate, without projecting our own thoughts and expectations on them. When facilitating a workshop, meeting or discussion, active listening is needed to figure out what the participants know and what they want to learn.

As sex workers, it is important to pro-actively listen to each other so that we can learn about our different working conditions, issues linked to other forms of social stigma such as racism or transphobia. Experiencing similar stigma does not negate our other forms of oppression.