

LEARNING CIRCLES

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATORY LEARNING GUIDE



Acknowledgements

Governing Water (2004 – 2007) is a project funded by the European Commission. The aim is to raise awareness and promote dialogue on good governance, using water as a discussion issue within and between communities in Fiji.

More than 40 rural and urban communities on Viti Levu and Vanua Levu have participated in the Governing Water project. Through Governing Water, over 300 community facilitators and schoolteachers have been trained. Forty-five community-based management plans and water action plans to improve community and water governance have also been developed and implemented.

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The Learning Circle Guide

The Learning Circle Guide was developed with assistance and support from communities, partners and friends in government, non-government and regional organizations, and shares actions, tools and lessons learnt.

The Learning Circle Guide can be used to mobilise community actions to improve governance and leadership, management of water and many other issues in communities. Through Learning Circles, participants provide the content for learning and action based on their views, experiences, ideas, and skills. This forms the basis for making decisions and developing plans to address community issues.

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Linking Knowledge To Change

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Introduction to Learning Circles

A Learning Circle is a method of participatory education for people to become more aware of their community concerns. It involves people meeting in a group to discuss, plan, and take action!

Learning Circles have been used in the Governing Water Programme to demonstrate that good governance starts in the community through dialogue and participation of all community members. Governing Water Learning Circles raise awareness of good governance and promote inter-ethnic dialogue by using water as a discussion issue within and between communities in Fiji.

*A Learning Circle is a **Circle of Voices**.*

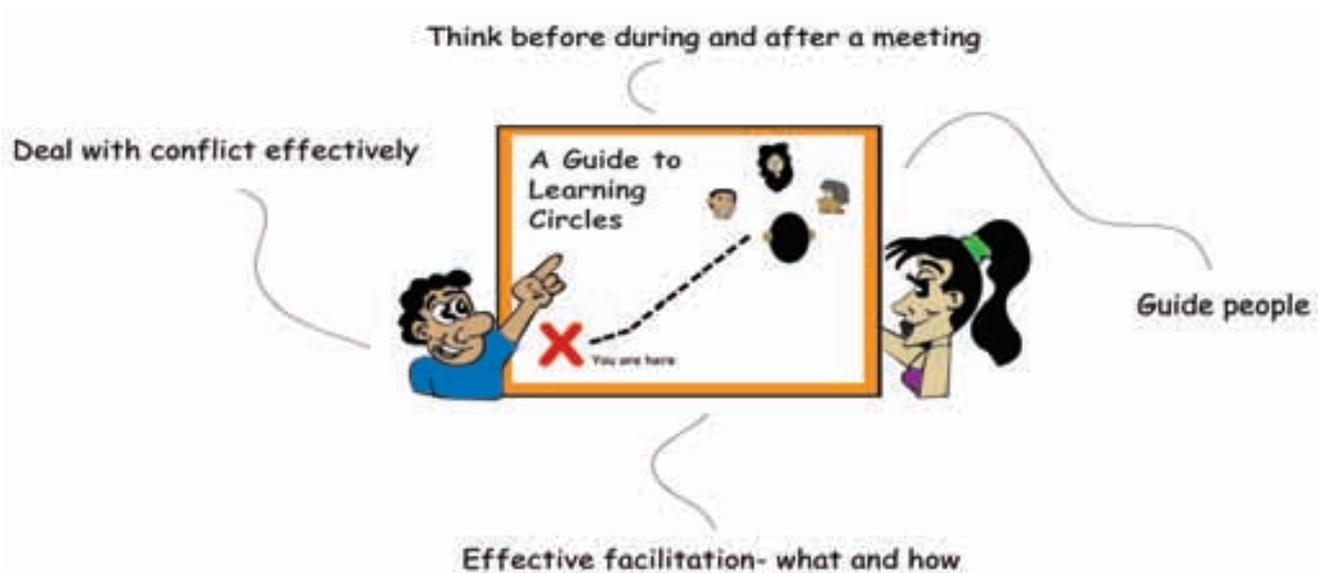
It involves people talking about things that concern or interest them and deciding what they would like to do about it.



The Learning Circle Guide

The Learning Circles Guide provides instructions and tips for facilitating participatory learning. The Guide can help you to improve your skills in the following areas:

- Communication – build confidence to participate in discussions, speak in front of groups, become an active listener;
- Leadership qualities – listen to the views of others, think about all aspects of an issue, work for a plan of action;
- Community development – understand the importance of working together to identify needs and solutions.



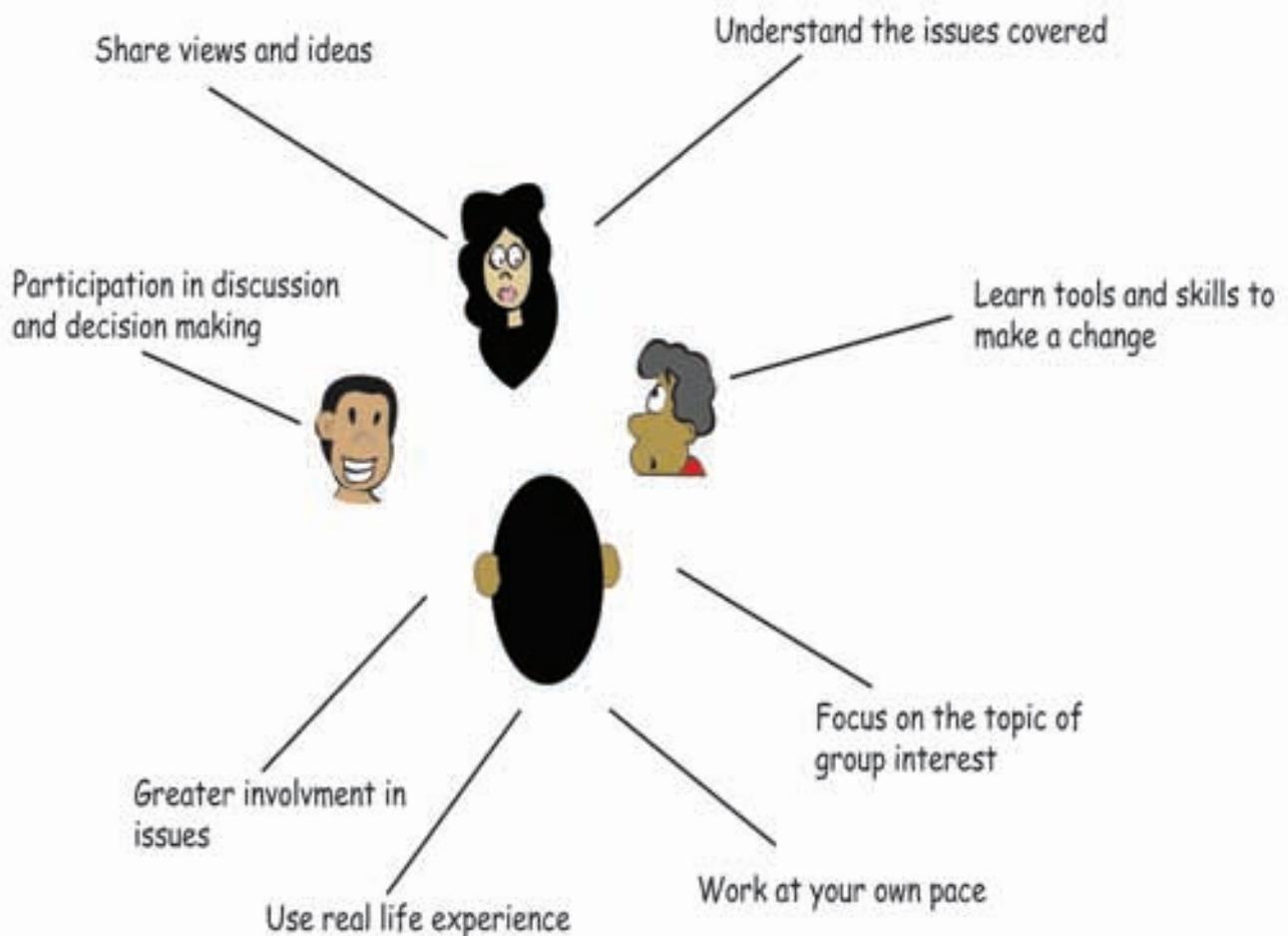
Learning Circles: Participation and Education

Learning Circles is participatory education and is based on the active involvement and empowerment of stakeholders. It starts from individual experience, and uses creative techniques like drawing, mapping, role plays, games, case studies, and simulations to:

- build trust and promote discussion
- identify and explore individual or group issues
- share experiences and knowledge
- help people to plan and take action together to make changes

People participate and use their skills for questioning, self and team reflection, creative thinking, imagination, judgement, assessment, planning and decision-making.

This does not mean that every participant must have the same input, or the same interests. Participants have different knowledge and skills, different needs and opportunities, and different amounts of time to be able to participate.



The Learning Circle Approach

Learning Circles: Linking Knowledge to Change

Learning Circles aim to provide each person with the chance to increase their understanding of the issues or topics that concern them, and the tools and skills to implement actions to make a difference.

Participants of Learning Circles provide the content for discussions based on their views, experience, ideas, knowledge, interests and skills. This is the foundation for making decisions, developing plans and taking action.



Learning Circles are built around the idea that everyone has something to contribute and everyone has a right to participate. Learning Circles are a way of sharing, building skills and finding out information, but they also encourage discovery, debate, and confidence to get involved in community decision-making, planning for change and taking action!

Some Benefits and Outcomes of Learning Circles

- *Enjoy the Learning Circle as a social outing as you learn and develop more confidence along the way.*
- *Join or start a community action group or local committee to address a need.*
- *Identify needs and solutions to make informed decisions regarding your own or community development.*
- *Get involved in developing or implementing a community management and development plan in your local area.*
- *Develop greater self-awareness and willingness to question as you observe what is happening in your local environment.*
- *Ask considered questions of decision-makers and community leaders.*
- *Create unity and strengthen working together (solesolevaki) to promote greater collaboration within the community.*
- *Contribute to the strengthening of existing traditional governance structures.*
- *Take action such as write letters to the local newspaper, call a local radio station, seek support from government departments or other stakeholders, or invite a speaker to your group.*
- *Encourage ownership of ideas and development by women and youth in the community.*
- *Get involved in a program to provide more opportunities for young people in your area.*
- *Make new friends, explore ideas and share experiences with the knowledge, opportunity and ideas to make up your own mind and make your own decisions*



The Learning Circle Process

The Learning Circles process includes:

- **Preparing**, including planning and thinking of things before the meeting.
- **Facilitation** through different **methods** to ensure good participation, good flow of questions and avoidance of conflict. This includes **note taking** during the meeting for records and to look for areas of improvement.
- **Evaluating** at the end and **monitoring** the implementation of any decisions and action.

Preparing for Learning Circles

Be clear about what the group wants to achieve...

- Why are you having a Learning Circle meeting?
- Who wants to/should participate?
- What do the members want the content of the Learning Circle to be?

Know your group members...

- How many will be present? Their background?
- What are their skills, experience and ideas of participatory learning?
- What is their knowledge about the issues or topics being discussed?

Make sure that the time for the meeting and venue is convenient to all your members...

- If you are conducting it in your village, try to have it away from any homes because noise from the home may distract your group members.

If you invite Guest Speakers think about...

- How you might recognize their contribution, for example, by providing a meal or travel allowance
- Give an idea of what you would like from his/her speech and see if the speaker needs transport to and from the meeting.

Organize the time, content and methods of your Learning Circle sessions carefully...

- How much do your group members already know about the content?
- What else do they need to learn?
- What will they be interested in?



Mr Isikeli Raisuqe of the Ministry of Agriculture giving tips to participants on Compost Piggery

Tips for Preparing Community Learning Circles

- Give enough time for people to know about the meeting beforehand and to prepare themselves. Consider other commitments of the people when planning activities.
- Make sure instructions or information given is clear when making arrangements for participants, speakers, catering or refreshments.
- Try to be at the community before time and do not keep the people waiting.
- Organise sitting arrangements so participants will feel comfortable and they can see and hear facilitators clearly.
- Be tactful and respectful.
- Be clear of what you want to do, what you can do and what you cannot do.
- Prepare to be flexible with time and work according to the flow of the participants needs.
- Be truthful about attending to the needs of the people by following through on promises and giving feedback in your next visit.
- A copy of all information recorded from communities should be sent back to them as it belongs to them. Inform members of the community that all information collected and shared during meetings will be confidential and will only be released if approved by them.
- Acknowledge the support and participation of the community during or after the Learning Circle.
- Consider follow-up visits and regular monitoring after establishing a project in the community.



A Learning Circle in Veinuqa

For each Learning Circle it might be helpful to prepare a planning sheet which clearly states what you intend to do and achieve for yourself.

Try to be creative with the seating arrangements. A circle is recommended and make sure that you encourage mixing and promote easy dialogue among your group.



Suggested sitting arrangements



HORSE SHOE



CIRCULAR



TRIANGULAR

Facilitating Learning Circles

A simple definition of facilitation is helping a group to accomplish its goal. Facilitation of Learning Circles is helped by good communication and coaching skills and by being sensible and flexible, being neutral, and independent, and being accountable to the group you are working with.

The first step to being a good facilitator is to understand that you are not the boss, nor a teacher, but rather a guide to good, flowing, and constructive discussion. Being a facilitator is not an easy task and it is important that you are aware of the limits of this task. You need to be clear with the group members about your position and your responsibilities as a facilitator



Adapt the activities you will use in your Learning Circle to be suitable to the situation and do not worry about doing it perfectly. If you do make a mistake and use inappropriate words or behaviour, apologise to the group and move on.

Some Tips for Facilitating Learning Circles in Communities

- Prepare thoroughly a day before your Learning Circle to familiarise yourself with the task and build your confidence.
- Display newsprint with the objectives and program for the Learning Circle so people can refer to it.
- Start talking to group members as they begin to arrive, smile and be relaxed even if you are nervous or uneasy.
- Your posture and attitude during facilitation speaks louder than words. Pay attention to the way you present yourself, your style of facilitation and the arrangement of the learning environment.
- Avoid placing barriers between yourself and your group members. Be open in your posture and sit at the same level as the group members.
- Avoid distracting body movements, for example, do not fiddle with pens or touch your hair. Your audience might focus on these nervous gestures rather than listening to you.



It is important that participants agree to the content and flow of the Learning Circle

- Look at the group members and do not stare at your notes or the guide. Make eye contact with the whole group by letting your eyes roam around the room.
Call members by their right name.
- The message you are giving comprises three components – the words, the tone of your voice and your body language. Keep messages simple and be neutral in your views, decisions and concerns.
- Speak clearly and do not be afraid of pauses. Also speak to group members as equals, use the words ‘we’ or ‘our’ instead of ‘you’ or ‘y project...’
- Do an introduction exercise at the beginning of the Learning Circle to break the ice between you and your group members if needed. Have breaks and energising games when appropriate.
- Make sure that there is a consensus in decisions among the group members to prevent clashes of ideas and values.



As a Facilitator you need to like what you are doing, enjoy it, practice and this will develop your skills and confidence

Consider protocol and culture when preparing for and facilitating Learning Circles

- *Inform the Provincial Office or Provincial Administration of planned community visits.*
- *Liaise with the Turaga ni Koro or Advisory Councillor as your initial contact person.*
- *Be aware of traditional protocol and customs, dress code, language etc, which may include starting and finishing the day with prayers.*
- *Be aware of religious beliefs and practices of your participants when preparing for Learning Circles or workshop.*
- *Do not stop traditional protocol by the people, but you can ask for proper time and limit.*
- *Ask the participants first before mixing them together for activities as some people cannot be too close to other members of the community due to traditional taboo or ‘veitabuki’.*
- *When conducting role plays it can be good to divide into groups of men, women and youth for cultural consideration.*
- *Always check on the consensus of participants in deciding important points during the meeting and group discussions.*



Ensure your participants are comfortable during the Learning Circle and when placing them in groups.



Methods of facilitating Learning Circles

Many methods of instruction can be used during Learning Circles. It is important to use a style that encourages participation and open dialogue and takes traditional norms of your group into consideration. Combining different learning methods will make meetings more interesting.

Lectures

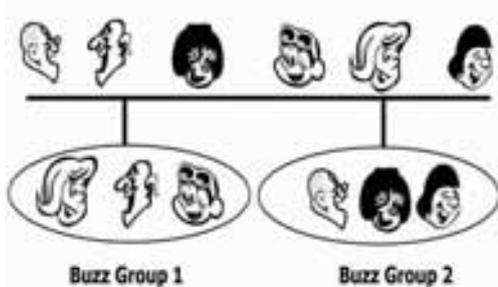
This is the one-way communication of a prepared talk, sometimes with questions and answers at the end. Lectures are useful for introducing new subjects or presenting summaries or overviews to group members. They can be combined with visual aids, such as slides, overhead transparencies or PowerPoint presentations.



Limit your lecture to 10-15 minutes, and break it up with short group exercises to examine key learning points. This will help participants stay focused.

Buzz groups or small groups

A buzz group or small group can be used to discuss one or two questions or issues. Break the group into pairs, trios or more depending on the number of participants you have. Give the groups a time limit for them to talk. If appropriate, after the discussion, one member of each small group can report the findings to the whole group. *A good small group session will generate many ideas, comments and opinions.*



Small groups are helpful for facilitators as they allow you to:

- o Change the pace of the session*
- o Have an idea of the mood by listening to some of the discussions.*



Group members can reflect on what they have learnt and how they might apply it in their communities.

Brainstorming and collecting ideas

Use a brainstorming session to discover new ideas and responses very quickly. The aim is to get down as many ideas as possible without judging them, listing them exactly as they are expressed on a board or newsprint. After the brainstorm session, the ideas can be discussed further and evaluated. Ideas can then be grouped and/or ranked.



Role Plays

In role-plays, group members play out real life or possible situations. When done well, role-plays increase members' self-confidence. It gives them the opportunity to understand or even feel empathy for other people's viewpoints or roles and can lead to practical answers, solutions or guidelines.

Role-plays can also take a lot of time and their success depends on the willingness of members to take an active part. Some members may find role-plays too exposing, threatening or embarrassing. This may be overcome at the beginning by carefully explaining the objectives of the role-play and being aware of cultural considerations.

Case studies

Case studies involve the presentation of an incident, event or scenario that has happened or could happen. Facilitators select examples of relevance to the group for discussion. Some activities can use both case study material and role-plays. This is a form of learning whereby group members put themselves in the role of those in the case study.

Summarise at the end of each session by going over what the participants have presented, gathering their feedback of the activity and/or listing the lessons that people learnt from the activity.

It is very important to decide before the Learning Circle meeting day which method/s of carrying out activities you will use. This will give you enough time to practice the activity and prepare your materials and meeting space. Be prepared to have a 'Plan B' as backup for presentations or facilitation of sessions.



Think about what method your participants will enjoy and get the most from. A game, Powerpoint presentation, or role plays etc. Always make sure that you have power supply and the materials for what you plan to do.

Dealing with questions, dominant participants and conflict

People will come to your Learning Circle with a wide variety of interests, views, attitudes and personal experiences. This is one of the features that make Learning Circles good to explore, learn and solve community problems. As a Facilitator, it is important to 'manage' your Learning Circle.

Be sure to ask questions as this is an important tool for facilitation! Asking questions effectively allows you to go past the symptoms of a problem to get to the basic causes. It helps the group to examine the issue or topic in many different ways, and encourage participants to reason, think critically and understand different points of view.



Good questions

Effective questioning can be like peeling away the layers of an onion. Questioning helps participation and the start of discussions; experiences are shared; perceptions and attitudes are examined and a deeper understanding of the issue is developed. This allows you to look carefully at each layer to get to the centre.



An understanding of the "personality types" of your participants can be useful for avoiding conflict and promoting effective collaboration among your group. Understanding and recognising the various differences is critical to facilitating Learning Circles successfully.



Everyone has experiences, views or attitudes from which others can learn something. With diversity can come arguments and conflict and the important thing is to get people to focus on issues and ideas. Make sure the group members understand that conflicting ideas can be healthy but not to take things personally. It can help to note in the ground rules at the start of the meeting about all respecting other opinions and the role of the facilitator.

Getting everyone to participate

- Emphasise that we learn both by listening and talking.
- Give turns. This is the most common technique to encourage involvement and prevent one or two people dominating. Say politely, 'you have already spoken on this issue, let's hear from someone else who has not yet had a chance.'
- Recognise those who tend to dominate and give them responsible roles. For example, sometimes make those who dominate note takers and observers.
- To encourage good participation this could be one of the recommended ground rules. We will all equally participate in the activities or discussions.

Methods for getting everyone involved



Discussion partners: After asking a question, get everyone to find a partner and discuss the question for a few minutes. Have partners report on what they talked about.

Tossed salad: Place an empty cardboard box on the table. Give out small slips of paper and ask people to write down the answer to a question. Pass the box around for everyone to put their slips in the box then ask someone to 'toss the salad'. Pass the box around again for people to pick out a slip and share the idea/answer they picked out.

Pass the envelope: Give each person an envelope filled with blank slips of paper. Ask the question and then have everyone write down as many answers as they can on the slips in the envelope. Pass the envelopes, either to the next person or to anyone else. Put everyone in pairs to discuss the ideas in their envelope. What are the positives and negatives of each idea? Then ask the pairs to present their discussions to the whole group.



Tossed salad, games, outdoor activities, discussion partners and small groups are all great ways to get everyone involved

Taking notes

Always choose a note taker to record what people say or decisions that are made during Learning Circles. One person can do this or the role can be shared around.

It is also good for facilitators to note important points about the meeting and how activities went. This can be used as a guide for future meetings or as a source of reference for report writing and to monitor progress.

Recording the work of the Learning Circle can help people to stay focused and shows that the knowledge and experiences of members is valued. It makes it possible for the group to see how ideas have developed and to share experiences with other groups.

Written notes also make it easier to include any initiatives or activities undertaken by the group in a meeting report. Other communities can be made aware of activities and group members see a visible outcome from their Learning Circles.

Taking notes: Write down the -



- Topics discussed
- Key issues/ideas that arise from discussion
- Points of particular controversy
- Issues where members agreed to a decision
- Agreed action outcomes and activities, e.g. visiting speakers, videos watched by the group etc.
- Detail of who has responsibility for doing things and the scheduled date for it to be completed
- Lessons learned from each activity with values involved
- Observations on the body language and feelings of the group, especially if it does not really match the words that are being spoken



Community Comment: Taking notes and keeping records is like keeping the score in a rugby game. By keeping the score you are able to work out who is winning and whether you are winning at all. Or how well your group is making changes in the community, or if there are changes at all.

Monitoring and evaluating your progress

The aims of Learning Circles are to discuss, plan and take action so you need to monitor that change in knowledge, attitudes or beliefs, and action is taking place. Monitoring and evaluation is an important part of the Learning Circle process and can be carried out after each session or Learning Circles and/or as part of monitoring the implementation of a community plan.

Why Monitor and Evaluate?

- It provides an opportunity for participants to reflect on their work and their learning.
- As a facilitator, you also need to get feedback about what worked well and any changes that need to be made to the resource materials or how the Learning Circles are conducted and supported. You can prepare evaluation forms to be distributed to participants at the end of Learning Circles.
- Evaluation should be a time for group members to look back at what they have achieved and celebrate achievements.
- It should also be used to critically look at what didn't work, the reasons why and what the group wants to do about it.
- Also to gain commitment to pass on information, or facilitate activities with other groups and to take action.

The happy, not sure and sad faces! Draw this on a newsprint and get participants to evaluate the Learning Circle. They can place a tick under the face that best describes their response to the Learning Circle, or how much they have learnt or gained.



HAPPY



NOT SURE



SAD

Methods of monitoring and evaluation

- General verbal feedback at the end of the Learning Circle or workshop day by asking people to share their feelings and thoughts
- Go through the list of expectations and ask if these have all been met
- Distribute evaluation forms
- Use a monitoring and evaluation checklist
- Use newsprint with a happy face, not sure face and one with a sad face for people to tick on their way out to show how they feel about what they have learnt and meeting outcomes





Activity Guide



Community Dialogue



35 Minutes

Purpose: Encourage dialogue and participation.

Materials: Statement cards written on cardboard or recycle paper

What to do:

1. Divide the participants evenly into two groups. Ask the first group to sit in a circle facing each other. Ask the second group to sit in a circle around and outside the first group.
2. Let the participants know that you will place a statement card in the centre of the circle and explain the rule of the activity.

Rule of the activity:

- a. **Participants sitting in the inside circle are the only ones allowed to discuss the statement on the card. People forming the outside circle are NOT allowed to talk.**
- b. **If someone in the outside circle wishes to join the conversation in the inside circle, they must pat the person sitting in front of them on the shoulder. This person moves to the out side circle and the new person can join the inside circle to allow them to talk and discuss the statement.**

3. Encourage participants to discuss the statements loudly to allow participants in the outside circle to hear them well.
4. New statement cards will be placed in the middle of the circle whenever enough time has been spent talking about the issue or if there is not much discussion taking place.
5. Facilitate group discussion by asking participants the following questions;
 - How did it feel to be part of the outside circle where you were not allowed to talk?
 - How did it feel to be quiet when you knew that you had the right answer?
 - How did it feel to be part of the discussion group? What were your feelings about the people behind you when you were discussing the statement?
 - Which circle would you prefer to be part of?
 - Which circle is more important when making decisions in the community? Why?

Note to Facilitator:

These are examples of statements that can be written on recycle paper for discussion.

- Smoking is prohibited in the community hall.
- Building a bigger hall is good for the community.
- A young person has to be the water committee leader.
- Water is everyone's responsibility.
- A good community is determined by good leadership

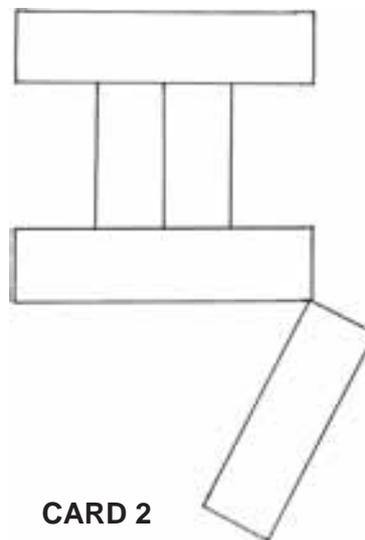
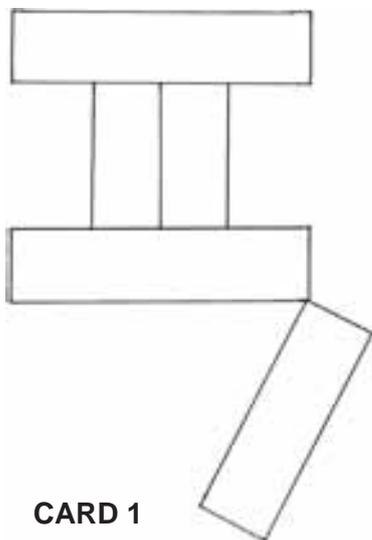
Drawing Bricks



30 Minutes

Purpose: Highlight the advantages and importance of good communication.

Materials: Paper, pens, cards 1 and 2



What to do:

1. Get group members to sit in a circle. Choose a volunteer from the group and ask that person to sit as part of the circle but with his or her back to the rest of the group (facing away from them).
2. Give the volunteer Card 1, and make sure no one else in the group can see it. Hand out pieces of paper to group members, each person should get two pieces.
3. Ask the volunteer to verbally explain to the group what he or she sees on the card. He or she is not allowed to make hand gestures or turn around.
4. Ask the group members to listen to the volunteer and draw what they are describing on a sheet of paper. They are not allowed to ask questions and must draw in silence. When the volunteer has finished their description and instructions, hand the second card to them. (It is the same picture but the others will not know this).
5. Ask the group to start drawing on a new sheet of paper. This time the volunteer faces the group and participants can ask questions. The volunteer is allowed to answer verbally but still not allowed to use their hands. Allow about 10 minutes for this exercise.

6. Ask all group members to pass their first drawings to the front once they have finished and group these on one side of the circle. Group the second drawing on the other side of the circle. Ask participants to stand around the drawings and compare the drawings with the originals.
7. Facilitate a group discussion with suggested questions:
 - How different or similar are the drawings from the originals? How can this be?
 - Did the group members have any difficulty doing this activity? In what way? Why?
 - What method of communication was better – the first or second way?
 - Why? What were the results of this?

Note to the facilitator:

You can use an object such as a leaf, a photograph or picture instead of the cards.

This activity is good fun. Often people will end up drawing something quite different than the picture cards. Use this opportunity to highlight the importance of good communication, understanding one another and getting the facts right.



Participants from the community concentrating on their drawing

Getting Acquainted



30 Minutes

Purpose:

- Get to know each other better.
- Identify expectations of the group.
- Develop ground rules and create a relaxed atmosphere.

Materials: Newsprint, marker pens, paper strips, sticky tape

What to do:

1. Instruct participants to identify a partner from the group to interview. Give out two pieces of paper to each participant.
2. Explain that this activity will allow them to set some ground rules for the meeting and for people to find out more about other participants.
3. Allow 5 to 8 minutes for participants to interview their partner and ask questions to find out more about them. Questions to ask include; their name, their favourite food, favourite drink, one hope and one fear that they might have for this meeting. Ask participants to write their hope on one piece of paper and fear on the other.
4. Paste two sheets of newsprint on the board or wall, marking one with the heading “Hopes” and the other “Fear” at the top.
5. After the time is up, ask each member to introduce their partner to the rest of the group. They are to read out what is written on both pieces of paper and paste them according to the heading on the newsprint.

This activity will take a long time if you do not give participants a set of questions for interview because they can either be shy to ask questions or they might be telling stories on the other hand.



6. From the list of “Fears” work with the group to develop some ground rules and list them on newsprint.
7. Facilitate a group discussion with suggested questions:
 - Were you able to find something new about your partner?
 - How did you feel about it?
 - Are there common hopes of the group?
 - Does the group have common ground fears?
 - Are there any problems that may be likely to occur during the Learning Circles?
 - How can these be overcome?

Note to the facilitator:

- Walk around the groups during paired interviewing to observe and encourage participation.
- Questions to be asked can be developed by the facilitator to suit the participants’ background knowledge of each other. It is important to be familiar with your participants so that you do not offend them with the questions you ask.
- Expected things to see in “Fears” can be ***‘I don’t want people to laugh at my mistakes’*** therefore one ground rule can be “we should not laugh at other’s mistakes”.
- What people would like to achieve or see happen in Learning Circles can be used to monitor the progress or outputs of the meeting.
- There should be some penalty if the members or facilitators break the ground rules they develop, like telling a funny story or singing



Getting Acquainted allows participants to know each other better by interviewing each other

Stepping Stones



Dependent on size of the group

Purpose: Understand and learn more about each other.

Materials: A4 size paper per participant and pencils

What to do:

1. Ask participants to work in pairs, interviewing each other. Each participant should choose three to four key important events or stepping stones in their lives that are significant to bringing them to this meeting. Stepping stones may include;
 - a. Childhood experience
 - b. Influence of parents, relatives and friends
 - c. Any formal training experience
 - d. Changes in career, job experience
 - e. Any improvement in traditional knowledge about own community
 - f. Or any other key event or stepping stone that is applicable for the participant.
2. Start them off by giving an example of your own stepping stones. By mentioning something funny or irrelevant you can show that this is not too serious.
3. Once participants are ready, ask them to stand up and introduce their partner and their stepping stones.
4. Facilitate discussion by asking participants the following questions:
 - How did you feel when you were sharing your stepping stones?
 - What were some challenges of sharing your stepping stones?
 - How can we use the information we have collected today?



Participants work in pairs interviewing each other about the stepping stones in their lives

Which Watch? Whose Shoe?



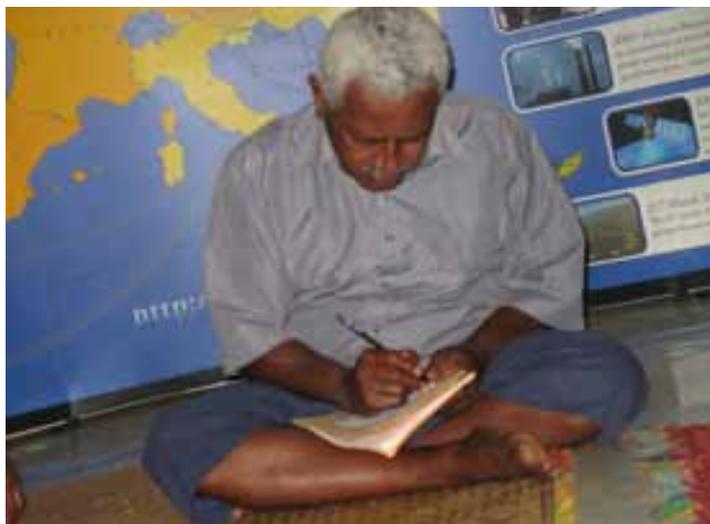
30 minutes

Purpose: Promote better observation skills

Materials: A4 size paper per participant and pencils

What to do:

1. Instruct participants to spread out in the room.
2. Distribute to each participant A4 paper and pencil.
3. Instruct participants to sketch quickly the main features of their shoes without looking at it, indicating the colour, way it is fastened, size and shape of heel etc. (NB. without looking at their shoes) The other option is for participants to put away their wristwatch and quickly sketch its main features, similar to the instructions given for the shoe.
4. After 5 minutes ask them to compare their drawing with their shoe or wristwatch.
5. Facilitate a group discussion with suggested questions:
 - How often in a day do you use the item you drew?
 - Is your drawing similar to your item?
 - In what ways was the drawing similar/ different from your item?
 - What are some of the things you use regularly each day?
 - Are you always observant about the condition of the things you use daily?
 - What message does this activity implies to you?
 - What do you think would happen if we are always observant about the things we use everyday?



A participant from Bulavou Community testing his observation skills by drawing his shoe

A's and B's



5-10 Minutes

Purpose: Energise the whole group.

Materials: Nil

What to do:

1. Clear the centre of the room or find an open space outside if the weather permits and invite everyone to stand in a circle.
2. Ask participants to look at everyone else and to silently choose one person to be their person 'A' and another person to be their person 'B'. Selection of the person is entirely up to them and they must not let the other person know that they have selected them.
3. Once everyone has identified their 'A' and 'B's, tell them to get as close to their respective 'A' person as possible while getting far away from their 'B' person as they can. Encourage them to move quickly BUT they must not grab the other person.
4. The only rule to this activity is NO PHYSICAL VIOLENCE.
5. After a few minutes ask participants to stop and reverse the process by chasing 'B' person and avoiding 'A' person.



Teachers getting ready to take part in the A's and B's activity

Fruit Salad



5-10 Minutes

Purpose: People energised before the beginning of another session.

Material: Chairs or items to identify chairs such as shoes, papers

What to do:

1. Arrange at least 8 or 10 chairs in a circle, depending on the amount of space available for the game. Ask some participants to sit on the chairs and one to stand in the centre of the circle. The rest of the participants can stand behind the circle and wait for a few rounds to be completed before changing participants.
2. Brainstorm with everyone on the type of fruit available in the community and ask participants to name two of their favourites. The people sitting in the circle will be named alternatively after these two fruits for this activity. For example banana, mango, banana, mango etc.
3. Once everybody is named, instruct the person standing in the centre to call out any of the two fruits identified.
4. When 'banana' is called all the people named banana will have to leave their seats and find another seat.
5. The person standing in the centre can also call out 'fruit salad' and then everyone has to move. Including the person in the middle to try to grab one of the vacant chairs also. When he successfully does this, the person left without a chair replaces him in the centre and calls out the fruit type.

You can use different colours, or fish or things that are relevant to the group Instead of using fruit.



Trust Game



20 Minutes

Purpose: Develop trust within the team.

Materials: Nil

What to do:

1. Let participants get into pairs and tell them that one will be the leader and one will be the follower. A few people can be observers.
2. The leader has to take the follower (with his eyes closed) around the room giving instructions on which way to walk.
3. Choose some participants to place some obstacles for the leaders who are guiding the followers around. The rest of the observers can study how the leaders manage to lead their partners around the obstacles.
4. Allow them to move within the training room or a certain area outside the room for about 10 minutes then call them in and facilitate discussion with the following questions:
 - How did you feel as a leader?
 - How did you feel as a follower?
 - What are some difficulties that you faced during the activity?
 - How can the obstacles be addressed to make your work as a leader very easy?
 - What lesson(s) did you learn from the activity?



Young children taking part in the Trust Game

Word Game



5 minutes

Purpose: Energise participants before a new topic or session.

Materials: Nil

What to do:

1. Ask the participants to stand somewhere where they can hear you.
2. Let them know that they will use their hands, legs and whole body for writing instead of pens and books.
3. Ask questions like: What is your favourite food? What is your favourite drink? Do you like watching rugby? (limit the questions to four or five)
4. Ask the participants to write the word using their right hand, then left, then right leg, then left leg and then the whole body

Keep an eye out for the need for energisers when people's attention starts to wander, body language shows lack of interest, or yawning after lunch or a long and intense session. Other options to re-energise or uplift participants may be to stand up and do a quick walk around and stretch or have a song.



Mapping our Mind



30 Minutes

Purpose: Allow participants to share their feelings about the activities or training.

Material: A piece of paper and a pen or a pencil

What to do:

1. Ask the participants to pair up with someone they are familiar with and give out a piece of paper and a pen to each participant.
2. Write the following questions on the newsprint and ask participants to discuss their answers and feelings with their partner. The responses from their partner are to be written on the paper.

Questions:

- What did you like about the session? Why?
 - What lessons have you learnt from the activities?
3. Allow 10 minutes (5 minutes each) for participants to write the responses before asking them to present it to the whole group.
 4. All responses from participants must be written on the newsprint and the whole group can discuss together any unanswered questions or queries about the issues discussed during the meeting.
 5. Facilitate group discussions from the responses of your participants. Collection of the written responses is useful for evaluation and reporting of the Learning Circle.



Participants from Vunibau community sharing their feelings about the training. (Mapping our Mind)

The Evaluation Wheel



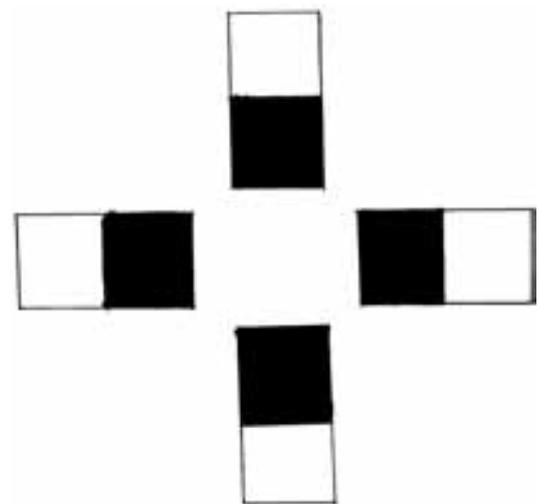
45 Minutes

Purpose: Encourage participants to share unanswered questions and actively seek experiences and suggestions from each other.

Materials: Chairs per participant or otherwise they can just sit on the floor

What to do:

1. Form an even numbered group of 12 – 20 participants and get people into pairs.
2. Make them form two circles, an inner circle and an outer circle where participants in the inner circle face their partner behind them.
3. Ask participants to reflect on a particular question they still have about the issues discussed. This can be focussed on the following topics:
 - a. Which topic was sensitive to discuss?
 - b. What challenges did you face during the meeting?
 - c. Which questions do you still have unanswered?
4. The people sitting in the inside circle will be the **solution suggesters**. The outside circle will be the **problem presenters**. Explain that they will be given 3 minutes to discuss the problems and potential solutions.
5. After 3 minutes, ask participants to change roles and seats. At the end of the session ask participants to write a summary of their problems and solutions. Participants can also be invited to share their problems and solutions.
6. You can generate discussion by asking the following questions:
 - How did you feel about your questions at the end of the session?
 - Did the solutions provided by your partner answer your questions?
 - How did you feel about your role as consultants?
 - Was it easy to be suggesting solutions? Why?



Black square – solution suggesters
White square – problem presenters

Graffiti Feedback Boards



None, participants can paste their opinion anytime of the meeting

Purpose: Provide feedback on Learning Circles.

Material: Newsprint to be pasted at the back of the room for comments, participants' pen

What to do:

1. Prepare newsprint to be the graffiti paper and paste it at the back of the room.
2. Explain to the participants at the end of the first day of the meeting that you have pasted newsprint at the back of the room for them to write their ideas and feelings about the meeting. Topics may be provided at the top of the paper like; "I did not like...", "Suggestions for course content", "I enjoyed..." This can be done anonymously and they can find their own time to write these feelings on the paper.
3. If the graffiti feedback is used for daily evaluation, you can analyse the comments and report or acknowledge your findings at the beginning of a new session.
4. Facilitate a group discussion at the end of the programme with the following questions;
 - What challenges do you normally face when you try to express your feelings and ideas?
 - What are your feelings about this type of evaluation?
 - How can this method of evaluation be improved?



Participants making use of the Graffiti Feedback Board

Evaluation of Session



30 Minutes

Purpose: Provide feedback and evaluate on issues discussed during meetings and improve facilitation methods.

Material: Large piece of paper and pens

What to do:

1. Divide participants into three groups of six (depending on the size) to evaluate the issues discussed and report back.
2. Specific questions can be given to the groups for discussion and the results to be written on the pieces of paper provided and pasted on the board.
3. Possible questions to ask can include;
 - a. "Things I liked"
 - b. "Things I don't like"
 - c. "Suggestions for improvement"
 - d. "What I found most difficult"
4. At the end of the session, ask individual groups to present their feelings and suggestions to the rest of the rest of the groups.
5. Facilitate group discussion from the responses from each group. This will allow you to clarify issues that are not clear to participants and also answer queries raised by participants.



Evaluation of Sessions allows the facilitator to clarify issues that are not clear to participants

Problem Hat



Depends on the size of the group

Purpose: Discuss problems constructively and highlight that everyone has valuable and relevant experiences.

Material: A piece of paper, an empty ice cream container to use as the 'problem hat' and a pen

What to do:

1. Invite all the participants to sit in a circle including you. Explain to them that you will be passing around pieces of paper where they must write down any question they have for the meeting. They can also express in the paper their feelings for the meeting and any suggestions for improvement.
2. Ask them to fold the paper and put it in the 'problem hat' when it is passed to them.
3. Pass the 'problem hat' around and wait for all the participants to put in their paper before facilitating the following.
4. Pass the 'problem hat' again and this time, ask participants to pick a piece of paper and read what's written on it. Give them time to reflect on the question or statement before attempting to briefly answer the question. He may pass the 'hat' to the next participant and this continues until everyone has read the statements and reflected on them.
5. As the facilitator your role would be to elaborate on the suggestions and ideas shared by the reader.



Participants discussing and reflecting on issues that were pulled out of the Problem Hat

Example Programme for a Community Learning Circle

A Learning Circle meeting can be facilitated anytime and anyplace as long as it is comfortable for the participants.

It is advisable to facilitate a three hours meeting consistently until your group have finally achieved your aims and objectives. The following proposed programme is developed for the women's group because of the nature of their role at home. Women are often available for meetings in the afternoon before they get ready to prepare dinner for their families.

Other groups in a community can develop a similar programme around the times that are best for them to have regular meetings.

| Time | Activity |
|---------------|--|
| 1:00 – 1:30pm | <p>Meet and greet your participants. You must have a registration form prepared to record the number of people attending this meeting. This registration form will be attached with your meeting report and be filed away for future reference.</p> <p>Welcome, introduction and overview of programme. This will allow your participants to be aware of the issues that will be covered and can also allow them to express any concerns or other issues they wish to discuss.</p> |
| 1:30 – 2:00pm | <p><u>Introductory Activity</u> An introductory activity before the session will create a relaxed atmosphere and highlight the value and importance of sharing among your participants. You may choose any one of the introductory activities you know but it has to be linked to the objective of the meeting to create a flow in the discussions and your working on the topic of interest. For example if you are trying to highlight the advantages and importance of good communication than you can facilitate the <u>Drawing Bricks</u> activity.</p> |
| 2:00 – 2:45pm | <p><u>Main Activity</u> This will be the main activity to prepare that will help you achieve the objective of your meeting. It is usually longer than the other activities because you will be getting your participants to sit in small groups, discuss and share ideas then present to the rest of the group. For example if you are trying to plan out strategies to solve community problems you can facilitate the <u>Developing a Community Management Plan</u> activity. The responses from this activity must always be documented and filed to help you plan development and for any future meetings with your group.</p> |
| 2:45 – 3:00pm | <p><u>Energizer</u> The objective of this activity will be to energize your participants especially after the main activity. This is because at this point of the meeting participants are sometimes drained from the intensive discussion and deconstruction in the last activity. Sometimes, you will also need this activity to get everyone focussed on the objective of the meeting before you conclude the session. For example you can facilitate the <u>Fruit Salad</u> activity for this session.</p> |
| 3:00 – 3:30pm | <p><u>Evaluation Activity</u> The activity you choose for this session must allow you to evaluate participants' feelings and ideas about the meeting. It can also help participants to identify areas that need clarification.</p> |
| 3:30 – 4:00pm | <p><u>Farewell</u> This is where you conclude the meeting by thanking your participants for their input and the ideas they shared. You must also thank them for sacrificing their time to sit with you in this meeting. It is always good to end your session by discussing with participants how the group will use the information shared and collected in this meeting and what the next steps are to be.</p> |

Template for Note Taking

| Reporting Form | | |
|---------------------------|---|--------------|
| Meeting Objective: | | Date: |
| Activity / Issues | Lessons learnt, action to be taken, responsibility, comments | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| Group Leader Name: | Note Taker Name: | Date |

Community Workshop Evaluation Form

1. Which topic(s) did you enjoy the most? Why?

2. What are some of the main lessons learned from that activity/topic?

3. List one or two activities that you will be able to facilitate with your own family, groups or community when you return?

4. Which topic would you like to spend more time on? Why?

5. How do you rate the facilitators? Please tick or circle.

Not good Good Very good Excellent

6. What do you think about the workshop venue?

Not good Good Very good Excellent

7. What are some of the things that can be improved?

8. Any other comments?

Thank you

Checklist for Monitoring and Evaluation

This is a checklist and activity for establishing evaluation of a project or action plan developed from Learning Circles.

| Problem / Issues | Solution identified | Action taken | What group responsible | Impacts or Changes | Next Step or action |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------|------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

- Draw out the above chart on newsprint and paste up on wall.
- Fill out the first few columns from the project or action plan that was developed in Learning Circles.
- Add as much information about what are the impacts or changes have been so far and what the next steps should be.
- Discuss how the group can continue to carry out this checking process in the future with questions such as:
 - o How should we measure the progress being made?
 - o How often should the progress be measured?
 - o Who should be responsible for measuring progress?
 - o How can we involve other members of the community in checking progress and helping us to achieve our goals?

Ask the group to set a date for project evaluation.

Note to facilitators:

It is good to keep these newsprint, or re-write on A4 paper to file for record of the groups progress and to use for future review.

A large, stylized graphic of a plant stem with several leaves, rendered in a light yellow color against the background. The leaves have a detailed vein structure.

Linking Knowledge To Change



LIVE & LEARN ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

