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Community-Based Resource Management Workshop: Some Effective Methodologies

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Introduction

The Program Planning and Learning Unit (PPLU) conducted a workshop on Community Based Resource Management (CBRM) that explored multi-lateral links to Trade and Livelihood issues; and to Development Finance and Participation for Equity. The South America Regional Office hosted the workshop, which was held at Cabanas de Lago in Otavalo, Ecuador from March 24th to March 31st, 2001. Participants of the workshop were mainly Oxfam America (OA) staff from Boston and Regional Offices around the world. Non Oxfam participants included two guest speakers who joined the workshop for 2 days and representatives of an Oxfam partner, SIGA, who assisted in the logistical components of the workshop.

The main purpose of this paper is to document the methodologies used in the workshop because mid and final workshop evaluations clearly indicated it was one of the most successful learning events in recent OA history. We hope that this documentation of best practice within OA will contribute to future innovations in OA gatherings.

Why was the workshop such a success?

There are numerous factors for the success of the workshop. They include:

- Insightful contributions on cross-regional learning and sharing from workshop participants;
- Informative presentations by workshop presenters;
- A peaceful and serene physical environment combined with comfortable accommodations provided by a professional hotel;
- Some fun, laughter and dancing;
- Excellent logistical arrangements by the South America Regional Office and our partner SIGA;
- Field visits to project sites arranged by the South America Regional Office;
- PPLU's ability to work as a team both in the design and facilitation of the workshop;
- Several new workshop methodologies - problem solving, facilitation and scenario simulation - that engaged participants favourably.

This paper will focus on the last two factors; PPLU's team work and workshop methodologies that include the Six Thinking Hats, Open Space Technology and simulated negotiations.

Original Workshop Design and Useful Modifications

PPLU began designing this workshop in May 2000. Workshop ideas and topics of interest were solicited from Regional Directors during their annual visit to Boston in May 2000. David Boyer, CBRM specialist, lead coordinator for the workshop, worked closely with the South America Regional Team and SIGA to

determine location, logistics and other administrative details to ensure the structural details of the workshop were in place from May 2000 to March 2001. The content and methodologies of the workshop were developed through various brainstorming sessions held by PPLU in Boston. PPLU drafted six workshop proposals and each iteration was enriched with feedback from Regional Directors and Regional Office staff attending the workshop. The final design was further modified during the workshop as we determined that there was insufficient time allocated for certain sessions. We were flexible in adjusting and changing sessions as appropriate and this flexibility created an environment where workshop participants felt their issues of interests were being addressed. Please see Appendix A for final workshop design.

It is important to note that each member of the PPLU planning team had a clear idea of their role and responsibilities and this resulted in clear divisions of labour within the team. The CBRM specialist was responsible ensuring overall coordination of content and workshop infrastructure.

One lesson in the planning of this workshop is that it took almost one year to organize –there is a negative and a positive to the lengthy planning process. Positively, a long planning frame is useful in ensuring appropriate consultation and enabling numerous iterations of the workshop design to be shared with workshop stakeholders. Conversely, a long planning framework in designing an in-house workshop for thirty people with a diversity of agendas means that the coordinators can not satisfy all demands and extra efforts will be focused on developing many iterations of the workshop design – to a point of too many. It is important to determine what amount of time can be allocated to planning and workshop design and how many iterations of the design will result in a final design at the beginning of the planning process. The lesson is that process is important but it must be planned and has deadlines.

Using Six Thinking Hats to Address the Adventures of a Program Officer

The invitation to this session is included in the CBRM workshop design (Appendix A). “Adventures of a Program Officer” was designed to address puzzles or dilemmas challenging OA program officers in their day to day work. It was a problem-solving session. In this session the facilitator used a parallel thinking approach called *The Six Thinking Hats*. Dr. Edward de Bono invented the Six Thinking Hats approach. The six hats represent six modes of thinking and are directions to think by promoting fuller input from more people. The six hats system encourages performance rather than ego defense –people can contribute under any hat even though they initially support the opposite view.

The six metaphorical hats are used by participants to indicate the type of thinking being used. The facilitator ensures that the putting on and taking off of each hat occurs to represent shifting the mode of thinking. Everyone in the group wears the same hat at the same time. As a rule of thumb, Blue hat before deliberate

use of other color hats; White hat and/or Red hat at the start of discussion; and Yellow hat and/or Green hat before Black hat.

White Hat – this is the information hat. When this hat is in play, people give data, facts, and other information that can help participants develop options and alternatives, evaluate them and make decisions.

Red Hat- this is the feeling hat. When this hat is in play, people give their gut reactions, their feelings about the facts or ideas on the table. The Red hat allows the thinker to put forward an intuition without any need to justify it.

Green hat – This is the creative hat. When this hat is in play, people should brainstorm new ideas, alternatives and creative leaps from the ideas and facts on the table. No judgements should be made here.

Yellow hat – This is the logical positive hat. When this hat is in play, people should take an idea or ideas and say what they find positive about them. When will something work and why will it offer benefits? It can be used in looking forward to the results of some proposed action, but it can also be used to find something of value in what has already happened.

Black hat- this is the logical negative hat, the caution hat. When this hat is in play, people should take a suggestion and show how it does not fit the facts or the available experience or the system in use or the policy practice. Remember to constructively criticize the idea, not the people.

Blue hat – This is the process hat. This is the hat the facilitator uses to change the other five hats.

During the workshop session, the facilitator introduced the hats and used the White hat to solicit dilemmas from the group. Participants then selected the first dilemma they wanted to address. The other five colored hats were used to guide the session and explore the selected problem. Program Officers really got into the spirit of the hats and by the end of the session everyone was well versed in how the hats work. There was also a request to run a second “Adventures of a Program Officer” session later in the week – which took place during the last day of the workshop.

Field Visits

Full day field visits to partner projects during the second formal day of the workshop help contextualize the discussions of the first day and spark new issues for discussion during the rest of the week. During the morning workshop participants visited the work of CEPCU, a partner that works on all three of OA’s themes of CBRM, Development Finance (DF) and Participation for Equity (P for E). The workshop participants visited projects that focused mostly on integrated

CBRM/DF/P for E strategies in the mico-cuencas around Lake Pablo. The projects visited showed the cultivation of natural fertilizer using plants from the lake, a tree nursery, diversified vegetable growing, and wastewater treatment. During the afternoon, participants visited the FICI office and were given background on the work of FICI before going to visit the area where the federation has successfully negotiated with a cement factory to mitigate the adverse effects of its presence. The field visits were instructive in helping workshop participants not familiar with the indigenous situation and issues in Ecuador to get connected to the passion of the social, economic and environmental justice work in Ecuador. It was also useful in facilitating some reflections on cross-regional similarities and difference.

Using Open Space Technology to Facilitate Lessons Learned from Field Visits

Open Space Technology was used as a facilitation tool to explore learnings, questions and issues resulting from background discussion of the field visits and the field visits to CEPCU projects and FICI projects.

Open Space is about 'inclusive facilitation' and a transparent design process. It is based on four principles:

1. Whoever comes are the right people
2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
3. Whenever it starts is the right time
4. When it's over, it's over

Achievement in terms of content and outcomes in Open Space sessions is totally dependent upon individual and collective responsibility to make it happen. The content is what each person shares and the outcome is what all participants create.

During the CBRM workshop, Sandra Ng, Program Planning and Evaluation Specialist (PPE Specialist) facilitated a three hour Open Space Session. The methodology used is as follows:

Pre-session preparations:

Invitations – a brief background on Open Space was integrated into the workshop design. This served as an invitation to the Open Space event.

Determining Appropriateness – Open Space is effective in situations where a diverse group of people must deal with complex and potentially conflicting issues in an innovative and productive way. The facilitator determined that Open Space was perfect for the workshop.

Site preparation – finding space that the facilitator was comfortable with a few days before the session. An outdoor location was selected with the help of hotel staff. There was a circular seating area that would sit thirty people comfortably that hotel guest used for evening bonfires. The facilitator felt this was a space she was most comfortable facilitating the session.

Physical Arrangements – Open space happens in a circle, or as close to a circle as possible depending on space availability. The space selected by the facilitator included a circle bench so no re-arrangement of chairs was necessary (if the group of people is comfortable sitting on the ground – try it). In the middle of the circle there should be only the essential materials: paper, markers and adhesive. Work with hotel management to ensure all the physical arrangements and material needs are prepared before the start of your session.

Personal Preparation – The unique and critical role of an Open Space facilitator is determined by two functions – her ability to create time and space and to hold time and space. This is all about mental preparation. Put some thought into how you can create a safe time and space that encourages the group to feel free to explore new options.

Morning of the Session

Personal Preparation - The facilitator took a long walk and mentally prepared for the session, ensuring she will be ‘authentically present’ at the session.

Relevant Materials – The hotel had arranged flip charts just outside the circle. The facilitator brought large index cards, colored post-it notes, colored markers and reusable adhesive for participants to use. These materials were placed in the middle of the circle.

The Open Space Session

Introduction – After all participants who selected to come were seated, the facilitator ask everyone to take a deep breath and close their eyes for thirty seconds. After thirty seconds the session began with “Welcome to Open Space”

Stages of Open Space

- State the Theme: to explore learnings, questions and issues resulting from background discussion of the field visits and the field visits to CEPCU projects and FICI projects.
- Describe the Process: Open Space runs on passion and responsibility. The responsibility is that participants are the conveners of issues they are passionate about. The role of the facilitator is to create time and space and hold time and space by providing a safe space for everyone to express their ideas.
- Outline The Four Principles:
 - 1) Whoever comes is the right people - focus on the quality of the interactions and conversations. For a good conversation, you only need one other person who shares your passion.
 - 2) Whatever happens is the only thing that could have – this is a reminder that real learning and real progress will only take place when we move beyond our original agendas and convention-bound expectations.
 - 3) Whenever it starts is the right time – the real impact of this principle is to serve important notice about the nature of creativity and spirit.

- 4) When it's over, it's over – if you finish in 30 minutes, don't try to stretch it out longer.
- Outline the ONE LAW:
The Law of Two Feet states “ If during the course of the gathering any person finds him or herself in a situation where they are neither learning or contributing, they must use their two feet and go to some more productive place”
This Law creates bumblebees that cross-pollinate, creating richness and variety to each of the discussions. It also places responsibility on individuals for the quality of their learning.

Getting To Work- The facilitator explained the Open Space is like swimming; you can read all the books but you've got to just jump in. Participants were then invited to identify some issue or opportunity related to the theme of the session. They were informed that by identifying a topic they became responsible for leading the session. Those interested were asked to think of a short title and go to the middle of the circle and take an index card. On this card, they should write the issue title, their name and the location of the gathering. The participants then posted their index cards on the flip charts with adhesive.

Organizing the Sessions – The facilitator read aloud each index card and based on suggestions and agreements by participants some index cards addressing common issues were merged. Those persons who submitted an index card must be consulted and agree to the merging of issues. Following these process five key issues emerged. Leaders for each session were agreed upon. Participants were asked to write their names on a post-it note and select the session they would like to begin their participation with. Before participants convened their small groups, the facilitator informed them that each group is responsible for notetaking. The small groups would convene for 2 hours and re-gathered in the circle to share their discussion and recommendations.

Bumblebees – During the small groups, some participants moved from group to group and as a result created some cross-fertilization of ideas.

Reporting Back – After approximately 2 hours, the participants re-gathered in the circle for feedback. The sun was hot and some participants wilted so the facilitator suggested a location change – still outdoors but in the shade. Participants instinctively reorganized the furniture into a circle-like formation. One representative from each group presented the group discussions. Other group members were invited to add their comments and then bumblebees were invited to give their insights.

Documentation – The discussions are documented and will form part of the workshop proceedings (forthcoming).

Open Space allows for organic human interactions to flow, following the passions of the individual rather than constraining those passions. After all, one has a circle of friends, not a square or rectangle – the usual design of meeting rooms.

Using a Simulated Negotiation Exercise to Show Complexities of Multistakeholder Initiatives

PPLU designed a hypothetical negotiation simulation that addressed tourism development on San Pablo Lake in the Otavalo region. The purpose of this exercise was to create a better understanding of the power dynamics of multi-stakeholder processes and show how OA can use this learning to better develop projects/initiatives that reflect the realities of local conditions. There were several steps to the negotiation exercise:

1. PPLU drafted a hypothetical situation based on facts and figures of the Otavalo region. The document included background information on the region, the issues at stake, the tourism development proposal and purpose for the negotiation with the names, titles and interests of stakeholders. Two key questions were to be negotiated over – 1) What land changes, if any, should there be in the San Pablo Lake shore 2) Should Bigger is Better Hotel Development Corporation be allowed to develop the site, and if so, under what conditions? The negotiation was designed for the group to seek consensus.
2. Each participant was given a role. There were two simulations happening concurrently - English and Spanish group. The roles were: Mayor of Otavalo, Bigger is Better Hotel Representative, Executive Director of the Caranquis Women's Development Association, Executive Director of the Center for Advancement of Otavalos' Culture and History, Representative from the local cabildos presenting the voice of local farmers, Otavalo Business Owners Association, Oxfam America Program officer, Oxfam America PPLU team member. The OA roles were observation roles.
3. Participants were given confidential information regarding each role, including the purpose of the role, the person/organization's interests and the minimum they can leave the negotiation table with.
4. David Boyer facilitated the Spanish group and Sandra Ng facilitated the English group. Participants were given their roles the one-day in advance. During the simulation session, participants were given 20 minutes to read the background information that outlined issues and other stakeholders involved. There was 15 minutes for clarifications. The Mayor of each group chaired the negotiation, which was allocated 60 minutes (group negotiation and caucusing). Finally, there was a 20-minute feedback session for each group to share their process and indicate if they managed to come to consensus.
5. OSCARS- Awards were given for Best Actor/Actress and Best Supporting Actor/Actress.