Appendix 1

A Brief Guide to Adult Learning

Learning is not usually an outcome of formal teaching. Instead it comes from a process of self-development through experience.

How Adults Learn:

- Adults are voluntary learners. They perform best when they have decided to attend a training session for a particular reason. They have a right to know why a session is relevant or important to them.
- Adults have usually come with an intention to learn. If this motivation is not supported, they will switch off or stop attending.
- Adults have experience and can help each other learn through an atmosphere of sharing.
- Adults learn best when they are actively involved.
- Adults learn best when the content of the training is relevant to their own lives and experiences.

Learning occurs best through active involvement. This implies that the process of learning matters more than the actual subject. Adults have a particular problem with learning. As we grow older, our short-term memory becomes less efficient. We find it harder to translate what we see or hear to long-term memory. Any method that relies too heavily on short-term memory, such as lectures, and lessons, is doomed to fail.

For learning to take place, new ideas and practices must be internalized. Unless trainees or participants are motivated, they will not and cannot learn. Throughout any course, workshop or session, you must tap into and keep stimulating the motivation of participants. A key element of motivation is strong self-esteem in participants so it is important to seek ways of building on this.

Trainer’s Motivation Checklist:

- Do you know why the participants are present?
- Have they been asked to state their personal goals and what they hope to achieve by the end of the course?
- Do you have a system of feedback on motivation during the course?
- Is there provision for feedback at the end of the course on whether they have achieved their goals?
- Do you have a system for guiding participants whose motivation or goals are not well matched to your or the group’s?
- Do you have a system for monitoring and controlling latecomers, poor work, and inattentiveness?
Good Communication for Adult Learners

Good communication and the free exchange of information is at the heart of all training. However, there are many barriers to communication in groups of adults. When involved in a learning process, which requires behavioral change, many adult trainees become embarrassed and feel threatened or vulnerable. Many responses that we, as trainers, may give in such situations might seem helpful but can increase the feeling of pressure and isolation. For example, providing a solution or advice can imply that the trainee is too stupid to figure out the problem. When we moralise or lecture, we imply that our values are more important than their feelings.

Many observations are sent as non-verbal cures (e.g. posture, eye contact). A sensitive trainer will pick up both verbal and non-verbal indications of strong emotions. Remember that what people say is not always what they mean: try to read behind what is being expressed.

Techniques:

Passive Listening: remain silent and let the person talk. Communicate interest through non-verbal behavior.

Acknowledgements: use brief expressions that communicate understanding and acceptance, such as “I see” or “aha”.

Door Openers: instead of direct questions, use expressions, which invite the person to expand on or continue expressing their ideas. For example, “I’d like to hear more about that.”

Content Paraphrase: repeat what you’ve heard to confirm accurate understanding, such as “So you’re suggesting that….”

Active Listening: help the person to understand both the thoughts and feelings of the communication by describing your impressions of what has been said, such as “Her response has been disappointing to you.”

Provision of Support: respond to legitimate needs of support by providing information.

By listening carefully to feedback you can gauge how well the issues under discussion are being understood. But do not let you emotions get in the way. When faced with criticism it is easy to become defensive. Be careful not to block participants’ free expression by showing your impatience or skepticism. Try to understand the opposing perspective and try not to over-react.

What Makes a Good Trainer/Facilitator?

- A warm personality, an ability to show approval and acceptance
- Social skill, an ability to bring the group together without dominating it
A teaching manner that generates and uses the ideas and skills of participants
Organizing ability, so that the session flows without logistical problems
Skills in noticing and resolving participants’ problems
Flexibility in responding to participants’ changing needs
Knowledge of the subject matter

How you communicate with participants will depend on whether you are manipulating the group or facilitating it. There is a big difference between the two approaches. Manipulation is trainer-centred. You are in charge and everyone knows it. While it is essential that you are clear about the learning objectives, facilitation is a more learner-centered approach. You are helping others to learn and you will be learning too.

**Giving Feedback**
Giving constructive feedback and encouraging self-reflection are critical skills in a facilitator. If you do not let participants know when they are doing things well, they will not be able to reinforce the good things they are doing. There are five simple rules to giving feedback:

- Give the feedback as soon as possible
- Limit comments to two or three aspects of good or bad performance.
- Don’t immediately correct mistakes yourself, such help creates dependency, let the trainees learn through helping themselves.
- Give praise first before offering negative comments. Build trainees self-esteem.
- Criticise the performance, not the person.

**Facilitator’s Checklist to Adult Learning:**

- Is the atmosphere friendly and inviting?
- Have you made plans to relieve anxieties that trainees might feel?
- Will your teaching methods build on and use the skills of participants?
- Will learners be “rewarded” for their contributions?
- Does the work allow participants to measure their own progress?
- Do you make it clear that you are available for additional support, if required?
- Are the first few minutes of your sessions attention-grabbing or do you lose people from the start?
- Do you build in regular opportunities for feedback, reinforcement and practice?
- Are you avoiding lectures or at least limiting them to 10-20 minutes?

Appendix 2

A Brief Guide to Facilitation Techniques

What is facilitation?
It is the art and science of managing group processes. It involves guiding group discussions while using a special set of tools. Facilitation has three basic principles:

- A facilitator is a guide to help people move through a process together, not the seat of wisdom and knowledge. That means a facilitator isn't there to give opinions, but to draw out opinions and ideas of the group members.
- Facilitation focuses on HOW people participate in the process of learning or planning, not just on WHAT gets achieved.
- A facilitator is neutral and never takes sides.

How does one facilitate?
Skilled facilitators smooth the way for group members to brainstorm options, identify viable solutions, and develop and implement action plans. They create an environment in which the group members share ideas, opinions, experiences, and expertise in order to achieve a common goal.

A facilitator’s role involves some of the following tasks:

1. Manages process for the group
   - Helps group work more effectively
   - Group still owns process and outputs
   - Stays out of content, manages process
   - Offers variety of process options
   - Watches time & monitors progress
2. Advocates fair & open procedures
   - Describes processes
   - Treats everyone the same (status, talkative)
   - Uses techniques that foster equity (paraphrasing, stacking & tracking, chart-writing)
3. Encourages full participation (not just the vocal few)
   - Varies participatory formats
   - Makes “space” to get thoughts all the way out
   - Uses the clock – to limit or encourage speaking
   - Uses balancing - draws out opposing points of view
   - Helps group outgrow old patterns
4. Responds to group dynamics
   - Involvement drawing out potentials & gifts
   - Monitors/responds to group concerns, energy level
5. Promotes clarity & understanding
   - Promotes mutual understanding
Overview of Facilitation Skills
Group facilitation skills are the things that a leader says or does to promote experiential learning within a group. These skills enable a leader to guide a group through the complex stages of group development, creating a cohesive team that learns from experience. These are the "process" skills we use to guide and direct key parts of our organizing work with groups of people such as meetings, planning sessions, and group sessions. Strong facilitation skills enable one to foster positive group interaction and individual learning.

Qualities and skills of good facilitators
Being a good facilitator is both a skill and an art. It is a skill in that people can learn certain techniques and can improve their ability with practice. It is an art in that some people just have more of a knack for it than others. Brooks-Harris and Stock-Ward (in press) identify four types of facilitation skills. They are referred to as engaging, informing, involving, and planning skills. 

Engaging skills promote imaginative learning. These skills are used to invite members to be a part of a group. They encourage a member to feel included and valued within the group context. These skills help individuals make the transition from their past experiences into a new context. They help group members reflect on what they already know and prepare them for interactive learning. Engaging skills are used to create curiosity, interest and energy. They encourage the discovery of personal meaning and interpersonal connections. E.g. support group for HIV positive individuals

Informing skills promote analytical learning. These skills are used to provide a group with information from outside the group and to help the group learn about itself. These skills include teaching factual information and allowing group members to gain new knowledge. Two types of information are relevant to a group-learning format; first, content information from outside the group and, second, process information from within the group itself. E.g. information and education talks by outside experts

Involving skills promote common sense learning. These skills encourage positive interaction and learning between group members. These skills create an opportunity for active experimentation and encourage learning by practice and allow group members to put new knowledge to practical use. Because involvement occurs when group members themselves practice and gain hands-on experience, these facilitation skills require a shift
in focus away from the leader and toward the group and the members within the group.
E.g. role play during support group session-disclosing HIV status to spouse or family

**Planning skills** correspond to dynamic learning. These skills focus on planning for the future and applying learning from the group to other contexts. These skills encourage members to work together to make specific plans to accomplish group or individual goals. Planning skills prepare group members to move from active experimentation within the group to concrete experience beyond the group.

An effective group leader should develop all four types of facilitation skills. Some of the qualities are part of one’s innate traits as being able to recognize one’s own biases while remaining neutral, enjoying interaction with diverse groups, and inspiring trust. It is also important to note that, although some people possess a natural talent for facilitation, most develop the skills through experience and with guidance from experienced facilitators.

**Facilitation Skills and Tools:**
This section identifies seven (7) major skills and lists some of the tools for each skill. These skills include the following:

- Making everyone feel comfortable and valued
- Encouraging participation
- Preventing and managing conflict
- Listening and observing
- Guiding the group
- Ensuring quality decisions
- Ensuring outcome-based discussions

1. **Skill: Make everyone feel comfortable and valued**
Most people will not participate fully in discussions unless they feel comfortable with other members and believe their opinions will be heard. You, with members’ support, must create an environment in which members value the potential contributions of those with different perspectives.

**Tools:**
- **Use body language**
  You send messages with your movements as well as your voice, so be aware of what your body language is saying. By using your body language to show warmth and acceptance, you encourage others to relax and respond in kind.
- **Thank participants**
  By thanking participants, you validate and legitimize their comments and contributions.

2. **Skill: Encourage participation**
Some members are outspoken and energetic. Others are quiet and reserved. As a facilitator, you should balance these extremes so that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate.
Tools:

- **Encourage silent members**
  If members are silent or disengaged, catch their eye or ask them (or even an individual) to share their expertise.

- **Use open-ended questions**
  Ask questions people can’t answer with a yes or no. Question beginning with when, what, or how usually encourage members to provide detailed answers, which can spark additional ideas from other members.

- **Divide into small groups.**
  Speaking in front of large groups intimidates some members. When feasible, divide the members into small discussion groups and then have them report to the entire group.

- **Consult the group.**
  When a group member addresses a question to you, prompt participation from other members by consulting the group. This is also an effective technique for shifting the focus of discussion from one member to the whole group.

- **Use visual aids.**
  Most people process information better if they see it, so write it on newsprint, an overhead, handout, etc.

3. **Skill: Prevent and manage conflict**

One of the best ways to deal with conflict is to prevent it, but some conflict is inevitable and even helpful to the process. Use it to develop options the group would not have considered otherwise.

Tools:

- **Use team-building activities**
  Help members to get to know each other better and develop a better understanding of each other’s motivations and intentions. Their rapport lessons tension when conflict does arise.

- **Set ground rules**
  Members’ agreement on these makes your job easier when conflict arises. Basic ground rules may be that the group will hear all views and no one will make personal attacks.

- **Search for agreement.**
  Drawing attention to points that group members agree upon helps create an atmosphere of positive collaboration and forward momentum.

- **Use conflict to improve decisions.**
  Conflict can be used to clarify individual points and to underscore how strongly people feel. Disputes don’t have to mean disrupted sessions.

- **Agree to disagree**
  Although you would like to resolve all conflicts, you may not be able to. Urge members to treat each other with respect even when they disagree.
4. Skill: Listen and observe
Throughout a meeting keep your eyes and ears open and stay attuned to the group. Pay attention not only to the group as a whole but also individuals.

Tools:
- **Listen actively**
  Apply the basic skills of one-on-one conversation. Truly listen before speaking.
- **Scan the room**
  While maintaining eye contact with the speaker, note how other members are responding to the person.

5. Skill: Guide the group
At any point in a meeting you may have to guide the group to move along or to stick to the topic.

Tools:
- **Delegate a timekeeper.**
  It’s easy to lose track of time when facilitating a session, so ask someone you help you stay on schedule.
- **Refer back to the meeting objectives and agenda.**
  When the group strays, remind members of their decision to accomplish specific objectives in an agreed upon period.
- **Stray from the agenda when necessary.**
  Recognize that an agenda is a tool to reach an end, not an end into itself. If your group is having a particularly useful discussion, consider straying from your agenda, but ask the group’s permission before doing so.
- **Use a parking lot.**
  If members bring up important topics or questions unrelated to the current discussion, put these in the “parking lot,” which may be a sheet of newsprint taped to the wall. Don’t end the session without discussing or otherwise disposing of these topics.

6. Skill: Ensure quality decisions
Quality decisions are based on agreed-upon criteria backed by sound information that decision maker consider thoroughly. They use an agreed-upon process that all understand and, at a minimum, they agree to accept the outcomes. They make decisions in time to support the group’s work, and the group records and disseminates those decisions.

Tools:
- **Remind the group of decision deadlines.**
  Provide a calendar that details key dates in the planning cycle when members must make decisions.
- **Review criteria and supporting information.**
  Remind the group of the criteria it is using to make a decision and of the information the members received related to those criteria.
- **Review the decision-making process.**
Make sure everyone understands what processes the group is using in this situation.

- **Poll the group before a major decision.**
  Avoid surprises. The group should know before a big decision that different perspectives exist. Poll the group before the official decision making to clarify the different points of view and to work toward compromises.

- **Review the decisions.**
  Ask that a group member restate the decision while someone else writes it where everyone can see it.

### 7: Skill: Ensure outcome-based meetings.

Information sharing sessions may encompass many related topics, and members may at times try to discuss all of these at once. As the facilitator, you bear primary—but not sole—responsibility for focusing discussion on accomplishing the objectives of the session and of the planning process.

**Tools:**

- **Review objectives of each agenda item.**
  Keep group members focused on the task at hand by providing objectives for each presentation, discussion, or other activity on your agenda. Remind members of the objectives as you take up each item.

- **Record decisions.**
  Your group must record activities and decisions. While taking minutes is not the facilitator’s responsibility, you can assist by writing key decisions on newsprint, flip chart, a chalkboard, etc. that members can see.

- **Develop an action plan.**
  For each decision, write down when action steps need to occur and who is responsible for these.

**Facilitating the Opening of a Group Session**

This section discusses some common facilitation tasks and tools you may use at the beginning of a group discussion or meeting. Remember that some of the skills and tools you use in opening a group session also work well throughout the discussion.

**NOTE**: Before you go to the sessions, prepare carefully for your role as facilitator. Refer to Pre-Meeting checklist

#### 1. Welcome Participants

Before beginning the main agenda, take a few moments to welcome participants

**Tools:**

- **Formally start the session**
  Some facilitators use a gavel, gong, or some other instrument to signify the start of a session. (Only use this technique if it is culturally appropriate)

- **Welcome everyone officially**
Acknowledge that participants are contributing their valuable time to attend the session and thank them for coming. By doing so you validate and legitimize their contributions.

➤ **Use body language and tone of voice to show your comfort level and encourage others to relax. Also do the following:**

- Lean forward slightly to signify interest.
- Smile, when appropriate, to help you look and sound receptive
- Do not cross your arms. This can send the message that you are “closed off.”
- Do not clutch items (pen, paper, microphone, gavel, back of chair, etc). Clutching something indicates that you are tense.

2. **Introduce participants and yourself**
This helps participants feel welcome and reminds them who their team members are. Introductions also give you an opportunity to clarify your role as facilitator for the session and to explain the role of any outsider. Ask everyone to say a few words, even if only just one sentence. Once people have heard their voices in a large group, their feel more inclined to speak up again later. If you have limited time or numerous attendees, find ways to ensure that introductions are brief.

**Tools:**

➤ **Consider an icebreaker**
You may ask people so say something light and personal but non-threatening as they introduce themselves. Icebreakers, if chosen well, allow group members to relate to each other on a personal level.

➤ **Give precise instructions**
Orally or on flip chart, list the information you would like members to give as they introduce themselves, e.g., name, and relevant identifying information (location, marital status, etc.). Ask them to limit their introduction to 10 to 20 seconds.

- Allow brief announcements

This is an opportunity to build a sense of community and collaboration and to break the pattern of name, rank, and serial number

➤ **Check in**
If your group has the time, consider inviting participants to expand their introduction by briefly talking about their expectations for the session. This helps members focus on the session.

3. **Set the tone and pace**
It’s important to establish a spirit of collaboration, tone, trust, and respect early in the meeting, especially if you expect conflict. While some conflict can promote the airing of different perspectives and increase the options being considered, hurtful or angry conflict can impede the process. One of the best ways to deal with negative conflict is to prevent it from happening.
Tools:

- **Help the group develop ground rules**
  Having the group set and agree on certain ground rules makes your job as facilitator a little easier, and may help when conflict arises. Review the rules briefly before discussion begins. Elaborate if several new members are present or if you expect contention. Always post a copy of the rules.

- **Set the stage for agreement**
  If you have agenda items that could cause conflict (e.g. reviewing the budget, voting out a member who rarely attends), remind the members of their past successes in working together and agreeing on similar issues.

- **Clarify the role of members**
  It may be helpful to remind members of their mission: e.g. to give each other emotional support.

4. **Go over and approve meeting objectives and agenda**
Focus participants on the desired outcomes of the group session.

Tools:

- **Post meeting objectives**
  Distribute a handout or write on a flip chart the objectives of the meeting so that members can see these throughout the meeting. Review these objectives with the members.

- **Ask for input on the objectives and agenda**
  It is better to know up front if members want to discuss any other issues than to let these percolate as hidden agendas throughout the meeting. Ask, “Is there any other topic that you feel we need to discuss today?”

- **Point out any changes to the agenda**
  This fosters an open and trustful environment and lessons chances members will assume you have a hidden agenda.

5. **Review minutes (if it is group practice to take minutes of discussions)**
The minutes remind group members of what has gone before. Reviewing the minutes will also help your role as a facilitator.

Tools:

- **Allow adequate time to review and approve minutes**
  If possible, distribute the minutes prior to the meeting. At the opening of the meeting, members can offer their additions or corrections prior to approval.

- **Address follow-up items**
  If there were questions at a previous meeting, acknowledge when and how these are being addressed. Continuity ensures trust in the process.
Facilitating Discussions and Decisions

As a facilitator, your main tasks during this portion of the meeting are to:

- Keep the group on task
- Assess the group’s concentration and engagement
- Clarify feedback to the group
- Enforce ground rules

Keep the Group on Task

To ensure that the group meets its objectives, you must focus attention and energy on the objectives for that session or meeting. Review the objectives for each agenda item. If you are running out of time because you have more agenda items than the time allocated for the meeting, choose one of the following options:

- Determine if you have enough time to complete the agenda and the closing tasks
- Extend the meeting
- Help the group set priorities and decide which remaining agenda items to address in the time remaining.

Tools for encouraging participation

- **Use open-ended questions**
  Ask questions so members will give detailed answers that spark other’s ideas. For example, “What are some of the reasons we are afraid to disclose our HIV status to the family?” may yield more discussion than “Are we afraid to disclose our HIV status to our family members?”

- **Encourage silent members**
  A few increasingly intense methods follow.
  - Smile and nod at members who want to speak but are hesitating.
  - Ask the group indirectly. “Let’s get a few comments from some of the members we have not heard from yet.”
  - Ask a member directly. “Jane, you look like you are about to say something.”
  - Be aware of factions who aren’t speaking and invite them to address the group. “I’m noticing that we haven’t heard comments from men in the group. What opinions do you have on this topic?”

- **Consult the group**
  After one person has given his/her input, ask the group for comment: “What do other members think about Tom’s suggestions?”
  Another example: “Whom are we sending to the meeting with the village elders?”
  You consult the group by asking: “Who does the group think we should send to represent us at the village elders’ meeting?”

- **Probe for agreement**
Measure the group’s feelings about a few members’ comments: “Do other members share Sally and Mary’s concerns?”

- **Thank members for their contributions**
  People like to feel you and other members value their input. However, don’t thank everyone who says something. Members may view repeated or effusive (overenthusiastic) thanks as lip service. Tell the person exactly why you are saying thank you.

  - Thank members individually. “Peter, thanks for sharing that information about your HIV status.” “Martha, we appreciate your telling us about your bad experiences at the health center.”
  - Thank group members collectively. “Thank you for returning promptly from the tea break. This will help us stay on schedule.”

- **Post key points**
  To help members follow the discussion, put key points where they can see them.

- **Divide into small groups**
  Small groups are particularly useful if your group is brainstorming options or solutions or if new members feel uncomfortable expressing their opinions to the entire group. Each small group should choose its own facilitator, recorder, and a person to report back.

**Tools for Listening and Observing**

- **Pay attention not only to the group as a whole but also to individual participants. Who is actively engaged? Who is falling asleep? Who has been dominating the discussion? Who has yet to contribute?**

- **Be responsive**
  - Let speakers know that you are listening to them by making eye contact with them.
  - Nod your head in agreement to encourage members to continue talking.
  - Seek clarification of statements you do not understand.
  - Summarize lengthy comments into focused points that everyone can understand.

- **Scan the room**
  Note how members are responding to the speaker

- **Guide the Group**
  Guide the group through the agenda and keep it focused on the business at hand.

- **Delegate a timekeeper**
  Set a time limit for discussion on each topic and ask someone to help you stay on schedule.

- **Refer back to the meeting objectives and agenda**
When the group strays, remind members of their decision to accomplish specific objectives in an agreed upon period. “It seems like people want to discuss some things that are not on the agenda today. Am I right? Should we re-assess what we want to accomplish today?”

- **Allot extra time if needed**
  Don’t cut short a valuable discussion or let a conflict fester because the allocated time is up. Ask the group to approve the departure from the schedule.

- **Postpone non-agenda topics**
  Use a parking lot (usually newsprint taped to the wall) as a tool for staying on topic, not as a way to ignore comments on other topics. “John, that is definitely an issue we will need to discuss. Would it be all right to place it in the parking lot for now so that we can refocus on what we are discussing at the moment?”

- **Restate the question**
  If the discussion loses focus and drifts on to other topics, summarize key points that members have made and state the question again. “We have heard the pros and cons of this issues and we should definitely keep these in mind for discussion later. At the moment, we need to answer the question of membership.”

- **Speed the group**
  At times, members may prolong a discussion because of their interest rather than new ideas. To push the group to wrap it up and come to a decision, summarize the main points. Then you may say, “Did I accurately summarize the issues regarding a membership? To keep on schedule, should we make a decision now?”

- **Slow the group down**
  At times, members may be tired or uncomfortable and rush through an issue. Say something like, “I know that we are almost at the end of the session, but it seemed to me we rushed through that last discussion. This is a fairly important decision. Let’s step back and make sure we’ve identified all the potential problems.”

### Tools Ensure Quality Decisions

- **Poll the group**
  Polling helps when you are trying to build consensus because it allows the group to assess the amount of support for a proposed decision, i.e., asking members to raise their hands to signify approval.

- **Record decisions**
  Before the beginning of the session or meeting, delegate someone in the group to record all or particular decisions made. To help members keep track of what they have decided, write summaries of key decisions on newsprint and post these where all can see.

- **Assess the group’s concentration and engagement**
Monitor the group as a whole and as individual participants.

- **Read the group’s energy level**
  Assess the tone in members’ voices as they speak. Are they energized? Are they tired? What is the group’s body language telling you?

- **Check involvement**
  How involved is the group? What are people asking? How are people responding to you as a facilitator? How are people responding to each other?

- **Avoid presentations after lunch**
  Schedule something that requires participation by the entire group if possible. A presentation with dimmed lights is deadly after lunch.

- **Give them a break**
  If you sense the group is losing energy or the ability to concentrate, take a stretch break. Use energizers, quick exercises, or games that last no more than five minutes. “How many three-to six-letter words can you make out of a word ‘community’ in the next two minutes.” (Find appropriate games and exercises)

- **Provide snacks**
  These can give a slow and steady boost of energy for the group.

- **Clarify confusing discussions**
  As a discussion twists and turns, it’s easy to lose a couple of members. You can do several things to make sure that all stay with you and participate fully and equally.

- **Listen for unfamiliar terms**
  When members use acronyms or terms that others may not know, clarify these by asking the speakers to explain them or use them in context.

- **Restate the issue before a decision**
  Summarize key points yourself, ask speaker to clarify (I’m not sure we all understood that. Do you mind clarifying that point?”), or ask someone to write the points on newsprint. Be sure that the group agrees on what the issue is.

  Before the group decides on an action, make sure that everyone present has had the opportunity to comment.

- **Provide feedback to the group when necessary or appropriate**
  While maintaining an objective perspective on the group’s discussion, provide feedback to individuals and to the group to support and encourage positive group behaviour and address unconstructive behavior.

- **Check your personal biases**
Be aware of and manage your own personal biases. Stay as objective as possible, evenly distribute your feedback. Do not favour or disfavour any individual or group.

- **Be specific in describing what you observe**
  This helps group members to focus on a specific behaviour or comment. “I have noticed that every time we have said the word ‘sex’, our youth members have winced.”

- **Describe or probe the impact of what you observe**
  Let the group members express their feelings. “Can one of our youth members explain their reaction to the word ‘sex’?”

- **Ask for and summarize suggestions**
  Request suggestions from the group and then summarize these. “Perhaps we should all use the word ‘intimate’ instead of ‘sex.’”

- **Point out consensus**
  Consensus requires that all members accept (although they may not fully agree with) the group’s decision. “We all seem to agree that we should ask an expert to come and talk to us about good nutrition.”

- **Point out similarities between members’ statements**
  Use this technique when you sense that people are close to agreement but may not understand or recognize their common ground. “Helen, both you and John expressed concern over the lack of information about nutrition for members living with HIV.”

- **Use conflict to improve decisions**
  Conflict can be used to clarify individual points of view and to underscore how strongly people feel. “Ben, you feel really strongly that we need to consider allowing family members to attend the group sessions. Tony, you feel that this might breach member’s confidentiality. Is there a way we can address both concerns?”

- **Enforce ground rules**
  Ground rules help maintain a comfortable, productive environment for all participants. Often the group sets these rules to address past or anticipated problems. Ground rules are only effective if they are enforced. The entire group is responsible for monitoring and pointing out when group members violate any of the rules and lessens the chances of accomplishing the group’s objectives. As facilitator, you can support this process.
Know the ground rules
To monitor the bylaws, ground rules, and operating procedures, everyone needs to be familiar with them. Renegotiate, or at least revisit, ground rules each time new members join the group. Groups find it helpful to post these rules.

Create non-threatening mechanisms to enforce the rules
One of your ground rules should include ways to address violations. These can range from one person being the primary "rule watchdog" to the whole group playing a lighthearted role. For example, give all members a red flag to wave or a noisemaker to blow to note a rule violation. Lighten it even more by choosing a humorous code word or phrase to call out or supplying softballs to toss at violators. If handled in the right spirit, these techniques can take the initial sting out of being called a “violator.”

Note: Ensure that techniques used to address violations are culturally appropriate.

Correct Violations the first time – and as soon as – they occur
Be gentle. Simply address the behaviour and move on. "Mary, what you just said could be taken as a personal attack, something our ground rules try to guard against. Would you or anyone else like to reframe what you said so we understand your concern about the issue? If not, we can move on with the discussion.

If possible, don’t embarrass as you enforce. Remember you or your designated watchdogs don’t have to call the group’s attention to every violation. For example, it two members are carrying on a side conversation; someone sitting close by can quietly ask them to stop.

Be fair and consistent in enforcing rules
Take great care to be evenhanded in pointing out violations. Follow the rules consistently throughout all sessions/meetings, not just those in which you anticipate disagreements.

Note: Managing Conflict: Six Steps
Facilitating the Conclusion
As a facilitator, you can help the group tie everything together and outline the next steps. Your primary tasks are to:

- Identify the next steps
- Evaluate the session
- Adjourn on a positive note

You have laid the foundation for success in your next session if members leave the session feeling that they have had their say and the group has accomplished its goals.

Tools Identify the next steps

- Complete an action plan
  Keep a sheet of newsprint on the wall throughout the session and add to it whenever the group identifies a “next step.” At the end of the session, review the items on the sheet and develop an action plan that specifies what needs to be done, who will take each action, and when each action is to be completed.

- Visit your parking lot
  This is your last chance to review the topics you put in the parking lot. If time doesn’t allow the group to discuss all these items, propose adding some topics to the next meeting’s agenda, or assigning them to a small group or committee.

- Update the group’s meeting schedule
  Remind the group about upcoming discussion sessions or meetings, exchange visits, etc.

Tools Evaluate the meeting
The group sessions need to be evaluated just like any program or intervention.

- Do a group evaluation
  This can be written or oral. One way is to conduct a simple session evaluation with the entire group. Quickly poll the group on the things they liked about session and the process. Write these on a sheet labeled “Positives.” On a sheet labeled “Changes,” record the group’s suggestions of what to do differently at the next session/meeting.

- Debrief after the meeting
  After the group session, the facilitator should meet with the core-group members (i.e., sub-committee) to evaluate the session from their perspective. Debriefings provide an excellent opportunity for a facilitator to receive feedback from a mentor and other experienced facilitators.

- Adjourn on a positive note
  Before adjourning, take a few minutes to acknowledge the positive
➢ Thank members for their perseverance and hard work

➢ Recall agreement
   Remind participants of decisions that received strong support.

➢ Make it official
   Close the session by using a gavel, gong, or other instrument just as you did when you opened the session. (Only if this is culturally appropriate at your specific site)
DEALING WITH CHALLENGES (Techniques)

Occasionally, as a facilitator, you will face challenging behaviours and situations as you facilitate group sessions or meetings. Your goals are to promote positive behaviours and encourage full participation in the process.

General Guidelines

 **Always look for the positive**
  Usually a person’s negativity comes from a deeply felt concern. For instance, most people are terrified about their HIV positive status. Tap into those fears.

 **Go easy**
  Begin with the most subtle and least threatening option because that is less likely to provoke an unnecessary confrontation.

 **Put prevention before intervention**
  Do what you can before or at the opening of the session to reduce potential challenges. For example, remind members of the groups’ objectives, roles, decision processes, and ground rules.

 **Look to the group for support**
  Share responsibility for the group’s behaviour with the members.

 **Seek outside assistance**
  For especially difficult situations, you may want to get technical assistance or an outside mediator. Often an objective outsider can help to ease tensions.

 **Convene a retreat**
  If budget permits, consider retreats to discuss openly any ongoing facilitation challenges and to solicit ways the groups can assist in addressing these challenges.

Challenging behaviours and situations you may encounter as a group facilitator include:

- Side conversations
- Conversation domination
- Repeaters, parrots, and ramblers
- Verbal attackers
- Disruptive audience
- Absolute silence
- Inability to reach consensus
- Revisiting of decisions
➤ Charges of being culturally incompetent

Side Conversations
You are facilitating a group session and you notice two members whispering loudly to each other and those sitting near the pair are glaring at them.

➤ Why is it happening?
- The conversations relate to the subject
- The conversations are personal
- The members are bored because the meeting is dragging on
- They always do that

➤ Call for courtesy
You can correct this behaviour more easily if you ask members to be courteous to speakers during the opening or following a break.

➤ Catch their eye
Making eye contact with the whisperers may be enough to get them to stop

➤ Bring them into the discussion
Call one of the pair by name, restate the last remark made by the group, and ask them for an opinion on that topic.

➤ Walk towards the whisperers
If you move around during meetings, saunter over and stand casually behind them.

➤ Approach them during the break
Inform them that their side conversation is distracting and ask them to either refrain or share with the group.

➤ Confront them
As a last resort, confront them in front of the entire group. Try to do so without being accusatory.

➤ “Is there something you’d like to share with the group?”
  “Do you need a moment to settle something?”
  “Shall we wait for you?”

Conversation Domination
While leading a discussion on sharing one’s HIV status with family members, one member repeatedly interjects opinions on stigma and discrimination in the community. He has already offered several comments even though many other members haven’t spoken.
Why is it happening?

- He feels compelled to share his knowledge
- He wants to make sure he conveyed his points
- He feels he is not being heard

Set the ground rules on recognizing speakers
Remind the group that the facilitator must recognize members before they speak.

Invite others to comment
Balance participation by asking others to respond to the dominator’s comments. Hearing that other members share his views may diminish his need to repeat them.

Propose a time limit
Set a reasonable time limit for each person’s comments. Ask an official timekeeper to enforce it or operate a timer that sounds when time is up.

Record key points
Record each point or suggestion members make on newsprint or an overhead so that they feel the group has acknowledged their perspective.

Use a round-robin
Go around the room and give each person an opportunity to comment briefly

Establish a speaking order
Assign someone to keep track of the order of hands being raised and follow that order when calling on speakers.

Hear all first
Propose that no one speak a second time until everyone else has spoken (or passed on the opportunity) at least once.

Repeaters, Parrots, and Ramblers
A member continuously raises her hand to speak. When called on, she repeats others’ comments, sometimes almost verbatim. At other times, she rambles for a minute or two to make the same point a previous speaker made in five seconds.

Why is that happening?

- She may be naturally wordy
- She may want to make sure a point is conveyed
- She may want to endorse a good point
- **Suggest brevity**
  Say, for an example, “If you agree with something someone else has said, don’t repeat it. Just say ‘I agree.’”

- **Point to similar comments**
  Record the gist of comments on newsprint. When someone begins repeating others’ comments, point out that you have already noted that, mark it on the list, and move on.

- **Thank the speaker**
  By doing so, you acknowledge that the member has contributed to the discussion.

- **Demonstrate your understanding**
  Acknowledge the person’s point by summarizing what you have heard. “So your point is_______. Did I hear that correctly?”

**Verbal attackers**
In the middle of an intense debate on membership to the group, one member begins to insult the intelligence of another member.

- **Why is it happening?**
  - Attackers may feel that they have been attacked and retaliate
  - Attackers may lack the skills or confidence to make their point
  - Attackers may be trying to distract the group

- **Enforce ground rules**
  Define in your ground rules what constitutes a personal attack. This enables you to be specific in rejecting a member’s behaviour.

- **Use body language**
  Position yourself physically between the verbal combatants as a way of disrupting their ability to argue back and forth.

- **Check in**
  Give each member an opportunity to say how she or he is feeling so that the group can process the situation.

- **Talk privately with the attackers**
  During a break, speak to the individuals involved in order to defuse the situation. Acknowledge their passion and ask that they use a different method for expressing their point of view. If necessary, remind them of the consequences of further attacks.

**Disruptive audiences**
The group has invited a guest speaker from your local institute of higher learning to speak about nutrition for PLWAs. During the presentation, one member repeatedly
challenges the presenter’s knowledge and expertise in front of the entire group. That person also whispers snide comments about the guest to those sitting nearby.

- **Why is it happening?**
  - The person may feel the speaker, or the meeting is not addressing an issue
  - The person may want to disrupt the presentation
  - The person may dislike either the speaker or the speaker’s point of view

- **Enforce ground rules**
  Do not allow personal attacks on anyone at any time

- **Schedule a Q&A**
  Before a presentation, ask the speaker to tell the group whether he/she prefers to take questions at the end of or during the presentation.

- **Refer to the agenda**
  Point out opportunities when members can make comments

- **Give other options**
  Respectfully inform the participants of additional opportunities and venues to make comments, such as during the next group session and written submissions to the group.

**Absolute silence**
When you ask for comments on a new ground rule that you are proposing, no one responds. A few group members are staring down at the table. Others are glancing about the room.

- **Why is it happening?**
  - They may not understand what is going on
  - They may be tired or indifferent
  - They may be angry

- **Allow some silence**
  Give them time to process what is happening

- **Acknowledge the situation**
  Check in with the group by saying, “I noticed that everyone is being quiet. Can someone tell me what you’re thinking?”

- **Take a break**
  Perhaps the group is emotionally drained or tired and could use a rest. Or perhaps someone should conduct an energizer exercise to get people motivated.
Inability to reach consensus

The group has been discussing their grant application for income generating projects from the Ministry of Health. Members have contributed to their differing opinions, and the group seems to be split.

- **Why is it happening?**
  - People may feel strongly about their positions
  - Some may want to disrupt the process
  - People may feel their perspectives have not been adequately expressed or acknowledged

- **Emphasize agreement**
  Restate all of the points that the group agrees on in order to isolate the specific points of disagreement.

- **Attempt a compromise**
  Ask the people who are not in agreement, *“What would it take for you to agree to this decision? What aspect would need to be changed?”*

    Go back to the full group and see if this new proposal is acceptable. If not, determine what changes must be made for it to be acceptable.

    Continue going back and forth with each site, and continue probing to understand the true nature of the disagreement

- **Predetermine a fall back decision-making process**
  Your group’s rules or constitution should be specific about decision making. Go to your alternative if the group can’t reach a consensus. For instance, the committee can meet and decide, or a subgroup of the committee members can decide, or the full group can vote.

Revisiting decisions

Near the end of your meeting, a member argues for including family members that the group had decided to exclude on a planned retreat.

- **Why is this happening?**
  - The person may not have been paying attention
  - The person may be trying to stall the process
  - The person may not accept the group’s decision

- **Post decisions**
  Refer to the newsprint/flip chart where the group’s decisions have been recorded.
**Review decisions**
When making decisions, make sure everyone understands what the group has decided. Ask members to articulate the decision.

**Charges of being culturally incompetent**
During a discussion on criteria for selecting new committee members, several members become very upset. They voice the concern that the group discriminates against their demographic or ethnic group.

**Why is it happening?**
- The process itself may not be respectful of diverse cultures
- Some group members may be culturally incompetent
- Individuals may not feel part of the process
- Individuals may not understand the decision-making process
- Individuals may not feel that the process is fair
- Individuals may be trying to disrupt the process

**Use team-building activities**
Increase trust with and among group members by using team-building activities. Consult the group. Ask those who are upset for suggestions on how to make the group meeting and process more culturally competent.

**Solicit feedback**
Use such methods as:
- Small group report-backs
- Written comments submitted in advance
- Structured discussions in which everyone speaks at least once before a decision is reached
- One-on-one conversation with members

**Acknowledge the concerns**
Let the group members express their concerns, but work to build consensus on when to address these. Will the groups address the cultural problems at the time of the incident, later in the meeting, or at another meeting?

**Consider diversity training (If applicable)**
Many groups have found it useful to set aside time to address this important issue directly.

**Obtain technical assistance to improve your process**
Do not hesitate to use outside help if it is available.
References

3. *Group Facilitation Skills: A Toolbox for Effective Meetings*, Ohio Watershed Academy, Running Effective Meetings Library Module [download pdf](#)

Sources:

A. *Group Facilitation and Problem-Solving*  
   [http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/EN/chapter_1016.htm](http://ctb.ukans.edu/tools/EN/chapter_1016.htm) Community ToolBox (ctb)
B. *Effective Meeting Facilitation: The Sine Qua Non of Planning*,  
   [http://www.nea.gov/resources/Lessons/DUNCAN1.HTML](http://www.nea.gov/resources/Lessons/DUNCAN1.HTML)
C. *Group Facilitation Skills: A Toolbox for Effective Meetings*, Ohio Watershed Academy, Running Effective Meetings Library Module [download pdf](#)
D. *Effective Meeting Facilitation: Sample Forms, Tools and Checklists*  
E. *Consensus: Tap Into a Powerful Decision-Making Tool*  
F. *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making*,  
Appendix 3: Strategic Planning Documentation Form
(suggested, to be revised/refined during ToT)

Name the Challenge:

Set the Goal(s):
1. __________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________

Forces working in favor:

Forces working against:

Action Steps:
1. __________________________________________________
2. __________________________________________________
3. __________________________________________________
4. __________________________________________________
5. __________________________________________________

Timeline:
Each action step to be completed by:
1. ______________________
2. ______________________
3. ______________________
4. ______________________
5. ______________________

Each Goal to be completed by:
1. ______________________
2. ______________________
3. ______________________

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Describe How Progress will be Checked:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Describe what resources will be needed:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________
Appendix 4: CM Activity Matrix (draft)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description of Activity</th>
<th>Objective(s)</th>
<th>Who will do the activity?</th>
<th>When will it be done?</th>
<th>How will it be documented?</th>
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