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Facilitating Social Mobilisation

Almost all development programmes today have turned increasingly to participatory approaches to get work done better and faster. With this change toward greater use of community groups and committees, has come an increased demand for skilled social organisers who can help groups be their most productive. One approach to facilitation involves the social organiser in a very limited role--serving as the community organisation's timekeeper, "traffic cop" when discussions heat up, and recorder of the community decisions. The active facilitation approach sees the role of the social organiser somewhat differently, that is, as a temporary community or team leader. This leadership role has a very significant impact on community organisation's effectiveness, despite the fact that the social organiser does not get involved in the content of the community organisation's work. The social organiser employing the active facilitation approach enables the community members to focus their work on the task at hand knowing an unbiased professional is providing the structure, processes, and the push--this is probably the most distinguishing characteristic of the approach--to help the community organisation get where it is trying to go. To make implementation of the rural development model proposed in this book, the social organisers need to play the role of active facilitators. This chapter highlights the areas and tools that would help the field workers make the process of community mobilisation more easy and effective.

Social Organisers as Active Facilitators

The social organiser in the active facilitation approach to group mobilisation has a strong attachment to the community organisation, its members and its task. Unlike conventional Social Mobilisation approaches, in this approach, the social organiser shares responsibility with the community organisation for getting their task accomplished or its failure and drop out. The roles and responsibilities of the social organiser can be summarized as:

Neutral Servant of the Community Organisation--As in all community organisation facilitation, the social organiser in the active facilitation approach has an unbiased service role. He or she is bound to be neutral, that is, to treat all participants and all ideas in the community organisation with the same respect. The social organiser has no interest in what decision is made, but has a strong interest in a decision being made; no preference for one outcome over another, but a strong preference that an outcome be reached; no preference that one community organisation member or another being heard, but a clear interest in all participants having a chance to be heard.

Process Advocate--The social organiser proposes processes for helping the community organisation get its work done, invites ideas for process alternatives from community organisation members, and ensures that the agreed-upon process is used so long as it is working. The responsibility of the social organiser is not to advocate one particular process, but to advocate whatever process the community organisation has agreed to use. In this way, the social organiser helps the community organisation stay on a productive course.

Progress Advocate--The social organiser is responsible for helping the community organisation establish and maintain forward movement. It is this push factor that frequently earns the social organiser using the active facilitation approach the undying appreciation of community members. As progress advocate, the social organiser is continually assessing the community organisation's progress toward its objectives and considering and proposing not only: Community organisation processes, for example, ways to manage VO members interactions or optional decision making methods, but also Task processes, for example, breaking the community organisation into different sub-committees to get several tasks done concurrently, proposing a planning step be inserted before the community organisation launches into a discussion of an issue, or eliciting commitments to follow up assignments by individual members of the community organisation.

Compared to conventional social mobilisation methods, the social organiser in the active facilitation approach has a more extensive role in planning for, facilitating, and following up on a communities progress. What the social organiser does includes:

1. Before The Community Meeting

Purpose and objectives for the meeting--The social organiser meets with the office bearers of the VO before hand to find out what the meeting is expected to accomplish and thoroughly plans as to what does he want to achieve from this meeting.

Develop an understanding of the agenda points--Through such means as review of related materials or advanced surveys or interviews of the VO members, the social organiser becomes knowledgeable about issues affecting the community organisation and the meeting. In meetings of significant duration and complexity, the social organiser often presents what he or she has learned to the community organisation at the beginning of the meeting to check for accuracy and to be sure the right issues are before the community organisation. Especially important is the role of the social organiser in putting issues before the community organisation that members may be reluctant to bring up themselves in the community setting or before the social organiser.

Design the meeting--Ideally the office bearer/activist should be involved in a meeting from the initial planning so that he or she can design the whole meeting. The SOs must assist the community members in conducting effective meeting- particularly if the meeting is with or within new organisations. Without the social organiser's input, meeting planners can develop agendas that may not make the best use of the members' time and abilities. Whereas planners tend to focus mainly on the topics of a meeting, the social organiser, focuses on the process and task aspects of the meeting and will be sure to include time for work to be done in the most participative and productive ways.

Preparation and circulation of the agenda--To make it a habit and part of the new organisations system, the social organiser ensures that the agenda contains key information and is circulated before the meeting to all VO members. The minimum information to be included on an agenda is: Date and location of the meeting; Names of person(s) convening the meeting; Names of VO members expected to take part in the meeting. (With larger community organisations or community organisations where VO members come from different organizations, a separate roster of VO members showing names and organisations is prepared and distributed to VO members along with the agenda.); Purpose and/or objectives of the meeting; Planned agenda items; Estimated times at which items will be handled. (Sometimes social organisers do not show the times for each meeting segment on the agenda, for example, in long and highly interactive meetings or in situations where the social organiser wants to maintain flexibility regarding time frames. Always show start, stop, and lunch times if any.); Person(s) responsible for introducing or presenting each item; and Processes to be used in handling each item (presentation, community organisation discussion, consensus decision, etc.).

2. During The Meeting

Facilitate the community members -- To make sure that the community learns the proper way to conduct its meetings, the SOs have to conduct the initial meetings as demonstrations. The broad category of activities that an SO needs to keep in his mind at such meetings includes:

- Manage the agenda and progress of the community organisation:
  Adjust time, tasks, and processes
  Give the community organisation feedback on progress
  Encourage the community members
  Keep the meeting objectives before the community organisation.
- Ensure that all VO members and ideas have a chance to be heard.
- Help the community organisation reach consensus and make decisions in other ways.
- Help the community organisation resolve differences.
- Track ancillary issues (issues raised at a time when the community organisation can't productively deal with them).
- Track follow up or action items.

Help the community organisation plan for follow up--Ensure that next steps, who's responsible for doing what, and due dates for follow up are clearly established before the meeting ends.
Help the community organisation evaluate the meeting--Offer evaluation questions for the VO members to answer, covering both task and process aspects of the meeting.

3. After The Meeting

Ensure that meeting registers are properly maintained -- Often the Secretary or President of the community is the best person to take responsibility for quick preparation of the meeting minutes in the meetings register, including at a minimum: Date; Objectives; VO members; Decisions or outcomes; and Follow up assignments. The ways in which the active facilitation approach is carried out and techniques for social organisers to use are described in the sections that follow.

Designing A Meeting[1]

Social organisers work very closely with the office bearers of the VOs throughout the process of designing a meeting particularly if it is an important meeting like the first and third dialogues of the Rural Support Programmes of if it is a Manager Conference. The amount of time and effort that goes into meeting design varies according to the duration, complexity, and size of the meeting. The time invested in careful meeting design has a high payoff: a meeting, which enables VO members to achieve their objectives, appreciate the outcomes of the meeting, and often, actually enjoy the experience.

It is important to understand what makes meetings work. The most important consideration is the needs and interests of the VO members, the social organiser's key customers once the meeting is underway. For meetings to be most effective, VO members need to have:

- A clear understanding of the objectives and intended outcome.
- A clear understanding of the process(es) to be used and confidence in the social organiser who will manage the process(es).
- A clear understanding of the role of everyone in the room (including themselves).
- Confidence in the utility of the meeting; belief the goal is reachable.
- The opportunity to participate substantively.
- The opportunity to have input to process changes.
- Confidence that follow up will occur and be managed.

Virtually everything an activist/office bearer does in designing and preparing for a meeting is intended to address one or more of these standards. A number of steps and factors are involved in designing a meeting. How elaborate the design phase is depends on how complex a meeting is planned, but the social organiser is always interested in client input, community organisation process and task requirements, and human physiological and psychological needs when designing a meeting.

1. **Learn VO members objective**--The SO must know about the objectives and expectations of the community members from a specific meeting and needs to address those concerns during the meeting to avoid any grievances or discouragements. This can be done through meetings with the activists, the planning committee, some or all of the VO members, or from other sources such as a survey of VO members or review of written materials.
2. **Gathering basic information**--Find out, or help the office bearers decide: how many people are expected to attend the meeting, how much time is available for the meeting, and when and where the meeting will be held. Also, the SO should convey this information to the persons who will accompany the SO to such a meeting.

[1] The terms, work session and meeting, are used interchangeably through this Guide. While the term, work session, helps focus on the purpose of the community organisation being convened, the term, meeting, is both efficient and familiar.

3. **Learn about issues impacting the meeting**--Again, in meetings with the initiating communities, the office bearers/activists, some or all of the VO members, or from other sources, the SO should focus on such issues as:

- The history of the issue and/or the community organisation.
- Relationships within the community organisation or between the community organisation and others.
- Feelings within the community organisation about the task or the community organisation.

4. **Consider the complexity of the meeting**--Although most of the community meetings are not that complex and the SOs take them for granted. But this becomes their habit and they start taking some serious meetings for granted as well. Determining the complexity of the meeting and its facilitation requirements involves analysis of the following considerations:

- Length of the meeting--The longer a meeting is, the more complex the facilitation challenge.
- Nature of relationships among the VO members -- If, for example, VO members have a history with one another that is characterized by personality differences or difficulty reaching agreement, the facilitation requirements for a meeting of the community organisation are greater. If VO members know each other and do not have a history of difficulties, the facilitation task is not so complex. The same is true if VO members have no past experience with one another; the facilitation challenge is not as complex as for a community organisation with problems in its past.
- Difficulty of the subject matter and the task--Clearly, a meeting to propose a redesign of the agency by a consensus of the VO members is more complex than meetings to exchange information on the status of State consolidation efforts. Issues with direct bearing on VO members' work and work lives are higher intensity than meetings on subjects that have less direct impact on VO members' well-being. Likewise, meetings in which the task is not too challenging, for example, sharing information or brainstorming ideas are considerably less complex than meetings in which a community organisation is asked to do a more difficult task such as problem solving or reaching consensus agreement.

Any one of these considerations can dramatically affect the complexity of a meeting; for example, if a community organisation has had difficulties working together in the past, even the simplest task may prove a real challenge for community organisation members and for the social organiser who is trying to help them. A long meeting may wear down the tolerance among community organisation members who generally get along well and cause surprising difficulty in accomplishing tasks at the end of the meeting. The social organiser's task is to develop an understanding of the meeting's likely complexity during the preparation phase.

5. **Reviewing meeting materials**--It is important that you be familiar with any materials that will be presented or discussed at the meeting particularly when there are guests invited, who are not regular members of such meetings, such as programme officers or a chief guest etc.

6. **Developing a draft agenda**--The SO must learn and try to impart the same to the community activists and office bearers how to include not only topics and times, but also processes to be employed in the meeting. The SOs must be guided by a number of design considerations as they develop the agenda of any important meeting, whether that be with the community or the programme planning. There may be unique considerations regarding any particular meeting, but at a minimum, they will produce the best meeting designs if they incorporate as many of the following considerations as apply:

- Maximize interaction--this is paramount.
- Be sensitive to the organizational or community organisation culture--propose tolerable processes, not too "soft", not too structured, etc.
- Put issues and tasks in logical order.
- Consider the nature and difficulty of the tasks or processes:
  - i. Schedule less interactive segments early in the day, when people can listen with greater efficiency.
  - ii. Schedule more difficult topics early in the day, when people have more energy.
  - iii. If conflict is anticipated, create opportunities to agree before having the community organisation undertake the tough issue(s), for example, before asking a community organisation to identify problems they are encountering, ask them to summarize the progress they have made up to now; before addressing what's not working well, ask the community organisation to identify what is working well.
  - iv. Do NOT plan to handle difficult topics by eliminating or reducing time to discuss them.
- If more is planned for a meeting than time will allow, try:
  - i. Reducing the agenda, for example, by scheduling a second meeting to handle some topics.

ii. Setting and enforcing short time frames for certain meeting elements, for example, presentations of information.
iii. Structuring work on several topics concurrently using small community organisations; providing small community organisations with clear time limits and discreet discussion points to keep them on track.
iv. Making the meeting a planning session rather than a working session, with tasks to be assigned to follow up sub-teams after the meeting is held.
v. Do not deal with time shortages by eliminating or severely restricting discussion time!

- Remember that interactive processes take longer, so allow enough time:
  i. It takes time to discuss and time to agree.
  ii. Small community organisation processes must always include time for reports from small community organisations about what was discussed.
- Provide for review of the content of any pre-readings within the meeting if knowledge of the content is necessary to the community organisation's task (don't count on VO members' having read pre-reading material).
- Always allow for stretch/bathroom breaks at least every one and 1/2 to two hours!

7. **Review draft agenda with community**--It should be the community to draft and share the agenda with the Social Organiser, but in the initial stages, or some extremely important meetings in which outsiders are involved, depending on the circumstances, the SOs should review the draft agenda with the meeting planners from the community, and, if time is available, circulate it to VO members for comment. One should never consider an agenda final until someone involved with the meeting besides him/her has reviewed it. Even so, when the agenda is introduced at the beginning of the meeting, it is often necessary to make changes based on new developments or new VO member input. An agenda is essential to a good meeting, but it is important to be flexible about what it says.

Opening A Meeting

Meetings often open with welcoming and other introductory comments by the convener or other significant player in the organization initiating the meeting. At a stage when the community is going through a learning process, once the meeting is ready to get underway, the social organiser in the active facilitation approach generally assumes the role of meeting leader, and in various ways proceeds to guide the community organisation through its agenda and its various tasks to its desired outcomes. The objective is to demonstrate how to open a meeting to the community members. The main objective of opening a meeting is to begin the process of creating an environment in which VO members:

- Know what to expect and what is expected of them.
- Believe the meeting is a good investment of their time and energy.
- Develop trust in the social organiser and the other VO members.
- Have confidence that a product will result from the meeting.

It has often been observed that the activists or office bearers dominate the meeting proceedings and don't give opportunity to other community members for effective participation. To avoid losing interest of the general members of the VO, the social organiser must begin addressing these prerequisites to active participation at the very beginning of the meeting using the following techniques for inculcating them in the regular practice of the meeting procedures.

1. How To Welcome VO members To The Meeting

The first words of someone who opens a meeting give him a chance to set a positive tone and begin to demonstrate how he will conduct himself. The best advice is: "be yourself, a difficult goal when you may be a bit nervous about the task ahead of you." The speaker should speak informally, in a friendly tone, and in the same way he/she would speak to a friend, for example[2]:

[2] *Throughout* this handbook, sample language is offered in italics and quotations marks. This wording is intended to illustrate the points being made in the text and not intended to be used verbatim by social organisers. When you are applying this guidance as a social organiser, you should feel free to use your own words.

2. How To Introduce Yourself

The community meeting should be facilitated by the office bearers or the activist. However, if it is a meeting in a new community organisation or you are needed to facilitate the meeting, you need to follow the following guidelines for better results. If you are certain that everyone in the meeting knows you, then, of course, introducing yourself is not necessary. But, if there is anyone in the room who does not know you, or does not know you well, it's a good idea to introduce yourself so no one is reluctant to call you by name. When you introduce yourself, do it before you begin VO member introductions. Give your name again, write it on a flip-chart, and post the flip-chart on the wall. If you are unknown to anyone in the room, explain in two or three sentences your qualifications to be facilitating this meeting, especially your experience in this organization or similar ones and your experience doing this kind of facilitation. Whenever you are the social organiser, explain:

- How you will be working with VO members--for example, whether you will facilitate the community organisation during the whole meeting or only certain parts of it.
- That you will be proposing processes for the community organisation to use in getting its work done, and that you are open to any suggestions VO members may have along the way.
- (If the meeting is very long or outsiders are present) Then you can talk with VO members outside of the normal meeting hours (and when) if they have questions or comments.

3. How To Have VO Members Introduce Themselves

If all VO members know each other well, then VO member introductions are not necessary. If you're not sure how well they know each other, ask one or two of the VO members before the meeting begins. If VO member introductions are needed, there are three recommended ways to conduct them, depending on:

- How well VO members know one another, or are they from the same organisation.
- How well VO members need to get to know each other, for example, is this the first meeting of a team that needs to develop close relationships? Is this a community organisation of people with adversarial views who need to develop enough personal rapport to be able to work collaboratively? Or, is this a community organisation who will meet just once, with a light task?
- How much time VO members will be spending together; longer meetings generally have more in-depth interactions and require VO members to know each other better from the start.
- How much time is available for introductions.

Option 1:

As usual, if most VO members already know each other or if the meeting is short, ask each VO member to introduce him or herself by giving: Name, Organization or office, and Nature of current work assignments. This method takes about three to five minutes per VO member, but is a good investment of time because it helps VO members, (a) feel that their expertise and frame of reference is understood in the community organisation, and (b) understand the expertise and viewpoints of the other VO members.

Option 2:

If most VO members do not know each other well and/or need to develop strong relationships within the meeting, for example, community members from different organisation that are expected to become a team for cluster or networking purpose, a more extensive set of introductions is useful. Ask each member to work with one other person he or she doesn't already know and have each person take five minutes to interview his or her partner to find out: Name, Organization or office, Nature of current work assignments, One interesting or important thing about him or herself NOT related to work.

After the interviews, each person briefly introduces his or her partner to the whole community organisation. This method takes about 15 minutes to instruct and carry out the interviewing step plus about three minutes per VO member for the introductions. If each interviewer is asked to create a flip chart about his or her partner, add another few minutes per VO member to your calculations.

If the community organisation is small enough, 15 or fewer CO members, you may wish to create a flip chart as introductions are made showing each VO member's name and office. If you make such a flip-chart, post it on the wall as a ready reference for you and the VO members.

4. How To Introduce A Meeting

If the office bearers have important information to be conveyed about the meeting at the beginning, it is helpful that they have the key points you want to make on a flip-chart. There is flexibility regarding the order in which they or the social organiser present this information and the particular information you cover, but, at a minimum, do the following:

Step 1:
Review the meeting schedule -- Usually the community meetings do not last more than two or three hours. But there are occasions when there is a need to conduct some kind of orientation workshop for the community or the newly inducted staff at the field unit. For such workshops of longer duration, the SOs need to tell the participants the start and stop times of the meeting/orientation, and, if it is more than one day long, the complete daily schedule for each day. They must be sure to indicate that lunch and stretch breaks will be taken each day, how long each will be, and about when they will occur.

Step 2:
Explain the purpose of the meeting -- That is, the outcome it is intended to accomplish, in one statement if possible, for example:

> "Develop the groundwork for a strategic plan to guide the VO's work over the coming year," or,

Step 3:
Present the objectives for the meeting -- After the initial demonstration by the SOs, this should become regular feature of the community meetings to describe what specifically VO members are expected to accomplish, in three or four statements at the beginning of each meeting, for example:

(1) To assess where things currently stand in each key program area.
(2) To develop broad strategies for moving the program forward over the coming year.

Step 4:
Review the agenda--What is planned to happen when, and how each agenda item will be handled. Since agendas have to be somewhat flexible, make the following points:

> "I may not stop an interesting discussion to take a stretch break precisely on schedule, but if I wait too long, just let me know. Also, the agenda times may change if a topic requires more or less time than originally estimated. I will, however, be sure we break for lunch on time and open and close the meeting on time."

5. How To Gather VO member Expectations

For meetings that are less than three hours long or where the agenda is a straightforward one which VO members have had a chance to review or with which they are at least familiar, it is often not necessary to collect VO member expectations. In more demanding meeting situations, or orientation workshops, however, it is very helpful for the SOs to collect VO members' expectations so that:

- A positive message is conveyed to VO members that this is their meeting and that their interests will influence how the meeting goes.
- You can tailor the work session to meet their interests and needs to the extent possible.
- You can align the occasional expectation that is not in concert with the meeting's objectives or is not realistic given the time frame or other constraints.

Four ways to collect VO member expectations are recommended, depending on the complexity of the meeting. If in gathering VO member expectations the SO finds that one or some VO members want something from the meeting that is not likely to be covered, this is a time to help align expectations with reality. If a VO member does not want to have something happen in the meeting that is likely to happen, for example, that VO members not disagree with each other, the SO can address the concern at this time as well. If significant numbers of VO members want something different from the meeting than what was envisioned, the SO shall discuss the original objectives with the community organisation, and change them if there is a consensus. Once VO member

expectations are gathered and aligned, they become additional objectives for the meeting. The SO shall post the flip charts on which expectations are recorded and return to them from time to time to be sure all interests that can addressed are being addressed in the meeting.

How To Lead Community organisation Discussions

Discussions can be a creative and productive way to develop a shared understanding of a subject within a community organisation and to explore a subject in some depth. Discussions are a critical precursor to a community organisation developing a consensus decision where that is a goal. The reasons for having community organisation discussions in a meeting are several:

- Help VO members get interested and involved in a subject.
- Enable VO members to fill in information gaps and to clear up misunderstandings.
- Enable VO members to review and analyze subject matter that has been presented to the community organisation verbally or in writing.
- Identify areas of agreement and disagreement in the community organisation so that differences can be understood and resolved.

1. How To Prepare For A VO Discussion

An SO must think through what his objectives are for a community organisation discussion in advance of the session, and decide the key outcomes he would like to see the discussion produce. With his objectives in mind, he shall develop and write down two or three open-ended questions to help start and guide the discussion and plan to begin with a very general, open-ended question (one that cannot be answered by, "yes", or, "no"), and follow with more targeted open-ended questions.

First ask: "What do you think of this approach?"
Then ask: "What do you consider the most valuable aspects of it? What are the most challenging?"
Then ask: "If the members were to recommend this approach, how do you think local program people can be convinced of its utility?"

2. How To Start A Discussion

The SOs shall introduce the discussion topic and objective(s), and pose the first, general, open-ended question. For example, if they are conducting a community organisation discussion on a proposal to train VO members in surveying techniques: "Let's take the next 15 minutes or so to discuss the proposal on training VO members. Let's start with the question, `What do you think of this idea?'"

The SOs must be ready to wait for the first response and be patient. They shall also try counting to 15 silently. It often takes time for the first person to organize a thought and decide to express it. If no one comments, the SOs shall try the question in a new way. "Any thoughts on the idea to provide VO members with training on surveying techniques? Anything you want clarified?", or "Anything you particularly like about this proposal? Don't like about it?"

Once the first person speaks up, others will generally follow without delay. When comments begin, each one must be treated with respect. To speak up in a community organisation session involves at least a little bit of risk for VO members. If they feel the SO may dismiss or criticize their comments, they may prefer not to speak up at all.

3. How To Encourage Continued Discussion

The first rule for social organisers is to listen carefully to each comment. Restate or paraphrase comments from time to time to show VO members that the SO is listening and subtly reaffirm the value of VO members' points. It is very important that the social organiser not evaluate comments either positively or negatively; rather he should acknowledge them supportively, but neutrally. The SOs should definitely NOT criticize VO members or cast their comments in a negative light. **Do say**: "I see what you are saying -- it will take a lot of resources." OR

"So, you found that the last training from that contractor was very valuable." **Don't say:** "That doesn't sound like a very fair evaluation of the Commissioner's comments." OR "You're probably the only person who would look at this subject that way."

The social organiser also has a role in reinforcing the community organisation's efforts in the discussion, saying, for example: "This discussion has brought up some interesting points; I can see that there are a lot of opinions about State teams' role in conducting surveys in this community organisation. Does anyone else have a comment?" OR "This topic has proven more complex than it appeared to be; your discussion raises a number of issues about system building. Are there any more ideas?" It is helpful to the VO members if the social organiser restate the initial topic of the discussion from time to time to help them stay on track, especially if a sub-point or related but different topic has absorbed the community organisation's attention for several minutes.

4. How To Record The Discussion

It has been observed that the social organisers shy away from using the flip charts and other tolls for facilitation. They believe that it is something related to training and HRD. However, they need to write VO members' comments on flip charts during the discussion. This will encourage further comments, allow them to be sure all comments are considered, and allow VO members to review or summarize the discussion as needed. The SOs must be sure to:

- Write their actual words (not every word--just key words); do NOT change their comments to make a particular point. It's better to introduce your own thoughts directly if needed, rather than change VO members' thoughts.
- Write down all comments, even those that are not exactly on the subject. If comments seem very unrelated to the subject, you may want to start another page titled "Ideas to Discuss Later". Just be sure to return to the list at a later point.
- Write down any action items for follow-up that may come out of a discussion. Start a separate flip chart that can be added to throughout the meeting and reviewed at the end to be sure no follow-up assignments fall between the cracks.

5. How To Get more VO members Into the Discussion.

Your goal is to ensure that everyone has a chance to participate to enable the community organisation to have the benefit of everyone's thinking and to help the community organisation form a common view of a subject. It is not important that everyone speak up a certain number of times or that all VO members contribute at the same rate. Some people naturally talk more, others less. It is desirable for most VO members to join in a discussion for it to be of greatest interest and value to the community organisation, but it is most important that everyone knows that he or she can contribute at any point they choose to.

a. How To Engage Quiet VO members

The SOs shall welcome comments from quiet VO members, but must not call on people by name or be too insistent: **Do ask**: "Does anyone who hasn't spoken up yet have any thoughts on this?" **Don't say**: "What do you have to say, Arshad?" The SOs must also respond to quiet VO members' unspoken, but apparent concerns (a quizzical look, a furrowed brow), but must not try to interpret them. Rather they shall invite questions or comments in a general way: **Do ask**: "It looks like there might be a few questions or comments...." **Don't say**: "You look confused, Akram."

b. How To Get The Views Of all members.

If the SOs wish to elicit the views of all VO members on a topic, they can poll the community organisation, and ask each person to respond briefly. When they poll the community organisation, they shall give people the option to pass and not speak; it's best not to force VO members to speak, but rather say something like: "Will each person please give us your thoughts about the issue of drinking water supply scheme? Those who don't have a comment at this time may just say, `I pass'".

6. How To Handle Problem Behaviour Constructively

The SOs goal is to ensure that the behaviour of some people does not reduce the value of the discussion to the whole community organisation. Often "problem" behaviour can be avoided if the SO establish clear ground rules and ensure that everyone has a chance to participate. If that is not enough, they shall try these techniques:

a. How To Respond To Challenges

Don't over-react, just acknowledge the points the VO member makes. If possible, find merit in what he or she has said, agree with what you can, then move on.

b. How To Respond To Unanswerable Questions Or Unresolvable Concerns.

If a VO member asks you a question you cannot answer, check to be sure you understood the point, and if you don't know the answer say so openly and see if any others in the room know the answer or offer to get it: "I don't know the answer to that question, Javed. I'll check on it this evening and give you the answer tomorrow." "I don't have the figures you are asking about; does anyone in the community organisation have them?"

If a VO member expresses a concern or argument you cannot resolve to his or her satisfaction, ask if someone else in the members would like to give it a try. If no one can persuade or reassure the VO member adequately, acknowledge the concern, the SO shall write it on a flip chart if it seems significant, and move on. "Let's continue with the agenda, Akram, and if you are still concerned by the time we get to the planning step, we'll revisit your issue then." OR "I appreciate your concern, Jamil, but we need to go on with the meeting. If you'd like, you and I can talk about this issue some more after the meeting today."

c. How To Handle Side Conversations

The SOs must not cause embarrassment to the VO members. The best tack is to talk with persistently disruptive people during a break. If you feel you need to do something during the meeting, do it gently, for example, you might try:

Option 1:

If only two people are engaged in a side conversation, you can glance at them, or if that doesn't help, walk toward them if the seating arrangement allows (without changing your own behaviour continue making your points or facilitating the discussion); once you get their attention they will usually stop talking on their own.

Option 2:

If two or more side conversations start up, the SO can refer the community organisation as a whole to the ground rules (assuming you have a germane one), or if no ground rule looks appropriate, the SO can say something like: "We need to have just one conversation at a time!" If the community organisation does not have a ground rule you can use to reduce side conversations, for example one addressing side conversations or one on the importance of listening, you might suggest that the community organisation add one. If your relationship with the community organisation is a close one, this situation can sometimes be dealt with humour.

d. How To Respond To People Making The Same Point Repeatedly

If a VO member brings the same point up over and over, acknowledge it the second time (Yes, I heard you say that...), paraphrase it the next time (It sounds like you are saying you're very concerned about the Link road issue...), and write it down on a flip chart if it's brought up again. If the VO member still persists, which would be very unlikely, offer to talk with him or her about it at the break or after the meeting.

e. How To Handle Non-Relevant Comments

Sometimes a VO member makes a comment that does not appear to be on topic, or that introduces a sidetrack you'd rather not have the community organisation pursue. If that happens, wait for the point to be made, acknowledge it, write it on the flip chart if you are recording other ideas, integrate it if possible, and restate the intended subject of the discussion before you ask for the next comment from the members.

7. How To Handle A Person Who Makes Too Many Comments.

If one VO member seems to speak up too often for others to have a chance to talk, look around for others who want to talk and call on them for a while. If needed, give the too-talkative VO member a special job that will give him or her another way to contribute to the session. For example, you can ask a VO member to make discussion using either of the following techniques.

Option 1:
Get VO members To Identify Key Points--Ask the VO members to summarize what points stand out to them from the discussion by posing such questions as: "What key points have emerged so far in this discussion?" "What are ideas you will take away from this discussion?" "What should we conclude from this discussion?"

Option 2:
Identify Key Points Yourself--You may wish to suggest additional summary points to those made by VO members, or at times, summarize the discussion yourself to ensure that certain points are highlighted. Be sure when you do that you restate the key points as the VO members stated them. Refer back to the flip charts for the right language if you have recorded discussion points. It is important not to mischaracterize VO members' comments. Check with the community organisation to be sure you have captured their main ideas accurately and completely.

9. About Brainstorming, A Form Of VO Discussion.

Brainstorming is a tool used to gather information or generate ideas. In a brainstorming session, VO members offer as many ideas about a particular issue as they can think of, as quickly as they can. What distinguishes brainstorming from other community organisation discussions is there is no give and take, that is, ideas are put out and not actually discussed, just listed. Because ideas are not challenged, brainstorming promotes openness and creativity. Because ideas are not discussed, it allows a community organisation to generate a lot of thoughts in a very short time. Social organisers use brainstorming for a number of purposes, including:

- To elicit VO members' views on a subject about to be dealt with in greater depth, and thus build their interest in the discussion topic, for example: "What are the main problems associated with transition planning?"
- To define a problem, which is more appropriately defined by VO members than by the social organiser, for example: "What does the report suggest about how traditional voc ed-type programs are viewed by the public?"
- To stimulate new or creative thinking, for example, "What are some ways to respond to this problem that have never been considered or tried before?"
- To get VO members to consider an issue from a new point of view, for example, "How would this issue look to you if you were all working in the Governor's office instead of working in the STW system?"
- To get VO members involved in a topic.
- To enable VO members to contribute a great deal to the meeting with a very small investment of time.

10. How To Conduct A Brainstorming Session.

The main roles for the social organiser in a brainstorming session are: to get it started, to document ideas, and to enforce the ground rules. Otherwise, there is very little direct involvement of the social organiser during brainstorming.

a. How To Get Brainstorming Started

Explain the process to VO members before you start. To ensure that the brainstorming stays on track, start with a brief explanation of the process, a clear question to be responded to, and a few ground rules, for example:

"Let's set some ground rules for brainstorming:

- Think of as many ideas as you can.
- No debate, discussion or evaluation of ideas.
- All ideas have value, however unusual they might seem."

b. How To Get Diverse Ideas

The SOs should encourage VO members to toss out ideas spontaneously and ask them not to edit their thoughts. The VO members need to be reassure them that all ideas are welcomed, none is too insignificant or too unusual to bring up. Sometimes very substantial or practical ideas emerge from seemingly trivial or unrealistic ideas.

c. How To Get Many Ideas

The SOs shall ask for and encourage VO members to offer a lot of ideas. When people are free to give their imaginations a wide range, useful ideas eventually result. Quantity often breeds quality. Restate ideas as they come forward and continually encourage many ideas. **Say**: "One idea is 'more demonstration plots'; O.K., let's get as many ideas as we can on the flip chart." OR "So far we have, 'communication', 'teacher training', and 'joint education/business leadership workshops'; what are some other ideas to change the relationship between CBOs and the schools?"

d. How To Get Ideas Fast

Do not allow evaluation, debate, or discussion of any ideas brought up. If people judge, challenge, or even expand on ideas, two things can happen: (1) VO members may become reluctant to speak spontaneously, and (2) the development of ideas will end and a discussion will begin. All commentary should be ruled out so the process can move quickly and remain true brainstorming.

e. How To Record Ideas

Write VO members' thoughts on a flip chart. It is important not to interpret or change people's ideas; it might cause a meaning to be lost or discourage further participation by inadvertently giving people the impression their ideas are not valued. Review the recorded ideas quickly for the community organisation if brainstorming slows down; this helps to help generate new ideas.

f. How To Manage The Time For A Brainstorming Session

Set a specific time limit of no more than five minutes or set an approximate time limit, for example, a few minutes. Tell VO members when the brainstorming starts and finishes. Stop the community organisation when the time is reached or, if an exact time has not been set, stop when ideas start to come more slowly. If VO members aren't finished when the time limit has been reached, extend the brainstorming for one minute at a time as long as ideas continue to come in quick succession.

An alternative technique that can be used in brainstorming is the "round robin" technique, which is similar to polling the community organisation.

Helping A VO Reach Consensus

Consensus decision-making is the heart of what makes community organisations more effective than individuals. Its special value is seen in the quality of decisions reached and the acceptance of and relative ease of implementation of decisions. While the process of reaching consensus varies depending on the complexity of the issue, the composition and size of the community organisation, a few general principles apply to the consensus-forming process:

- Consensus reaching takes time -- Members of the community organisation need time to discuss an issue thoroughly, work out their differences, and find areas of common agreement. The process can take less time with the help of a social organiser, but can be counted on to take longer than decisions made alone or between only a few people.
- Consensus requires a commitment to decide by consensus--Consensus decision-making is difficult if all members of a community organisation are working in good faith toward agreement; it is impossible if one or some members of the community organisation are not committed to the consensus process. Some community organisations are skilled at consensus reaching; for example, most mature members have learned how to reach consensus with little difficulty in most situations. However, when the community organisation is inexperienced with consensus decision making, or the composition or history of the community organisation alerts the SO to likely difficulty in reaching consensus, the SO

may want to consider conducting an exercise to illustrate beyond question the value of consensus before the actual decision making process begins. Many such exercises exist.

- Each element of the consensus reaching process must be facilitated with great care--From defining consensus, to agreeing on ground rules for consensus-reaching, to laying out the decision to be made and the decision making process, each element of the consensus process must be given attention to improve the prospect of a successful decision. Where the community organisation is small, collaborative and experienced with consensus-reaching, the consensus process may be reviewed quickly as a refresher. But where the community organisation is large, adversarial, or inexperienced with consensus, the up-front preparation for the decision making is critical. For all consensus decision making processes, put all information, definitions, instructions, etc. pertaining to the decision on flip charts to ensure the community organisation is considering precisely the same information at each point along the way.

1. How To Define A Consensus Decision

It is important to have a written definition of consensus so that all members of the community organisation understand the task in the same way. A good, workable definition of consensus is: "A decision in which everyone participates and which everyone can live with and support."

When reviewing the definition, it is helpful to reinforce the points that everyone participates, and that everyone must be able to live with and support the decision for it to qualify as a consensus. In defining consensus decision making it helps to distinguish it from other forms of decision making. Explain to the community organisation that what consensus does not includes:

Voting: In voting, participation in discussion may be cut short, affecting the quality of the decision, and all members may not support the outcome.
Trading off: "You can have your idea included if you include one of mine". Trading off is efficient, but people don't generally support an idea that was included only as part of a bartering process.
Steam rolling: Arguing long enough to wear others down and have your idea prevail works, but discussion is suppressed and people almost certainly don't support an outcome achieved this way.
Withholding: It may help keep the peace, but when VO members do not speak up, their ideas do not get a hearing, thus full participation of all doesn't occur.

The SOs may also want to remind the community organisation that consensus is not:

Perfect agreement-: A consensus decision represents the common ground in the community organisation's thinking; it is what each member of the community organisation could live with and support--that is not the same as perfect agreement.
Easy or fast--Consensus is difficult and takes time, but is worth the effort for important decisions because it ensures both quality and support of the decision.

2. How To Facilitate Consensus-Reaching

Consensus decision-making involves these steps:

Step 1:
Define consensus and explain the consensus reaching process -- The SOs need to be sure that everyone in the community organisation is operating with the same understanding of consensus. The SOs should write the definition of what consensus is and what it is not on a flip chart, and explain the process to be used, for example, lay out the steps described below, and refer VO members to the ground rules relevant to consensus reaching. If no such ground rules were established at the beginning of the meeting, the SOs should suggest some ground rules that will help consensus work, for example:

"Express your experience, opinions and logic openly."
"Be open to others' experience, opinions, and logic."
"Use `I' statements vs `You' statements to express differences."
"Express differences in terms of `concerns' and `interests'.
"Actively seek agreement--look for common ground."

"When we have agreement, we will stop! (No revisiting a consensus decision unless the whole community organisation decides to.)"

Step 2:
Agree on the issue to be decided--With the help of the community organisation, write the decision task on a flip chart and adjust the wording as needed until everyone understands and agrees on the decision to be made, for example:

"Decision: How the community organisation will approach the task of engaging stakeholders. `Stakeholders' includes the government departments, education and business associations, line agencies, and local school systems and businesses. For the purpose of this decision, we are not considering government employees, members of the provincial parliament or other un-interested community organisations and individuals."

Step 3:
Explore the issue--Facilitate an open discussion of the issue to be decided. VO members may comment on such aspects of the issue and the decision as: previous experience with the issue, problems constraining decision options, or information pertaining to the issue. This discussion may be lightly structured with open-ended questions from the social organiser, but should be free-ranging enough to get each VO member's information, concerns, and insights before the community organisation. Sometimes it is helpful to ask the VO members not to respond to others observations, but simply to make whatever points they want to in support of their point of view.

Step 4:
Develop guiding principles for the decision--As the community organisation discusses the issue, points may be raised affecting the decision that seems to have general support in the community organisation. If the SOs hear such points, they may begin a flip chart on guiding principles. Or, they may wait until the discussion is finished, that is, when the key points seem to have been explored and comments from the VO members are waning, to suggest that the community organisation identify guiding principles for the decision, for example:

"Our design effort must involve no new travel or other significant costs."
"No one involved in preparing the grant should be excluded from participation in the design process."
"All structural options should be considered, however radical a change they may represent from past ways of doing things."
"All decisions of the design team will be communicated openly with all stakeholders."

Step 5:
Solicit a proposal--Ask VO members if anyone would like to make a proposal that integrates key points raised in the discussion and conform with the guiding principles. Write the proposal on a flip chart so everyone can consider it exactly as it was proposed. The SOs may themselves be able to make a proposal (based entirely on what VO members have said during the discussion and the development of guiding principles), but it is usually best for the proposal to come from one or more of the VO members. The SOs may wish to take a preliminary poll of the community organisation at this point to see how close they may be to consensus.

Step 6:
Refine the proposal--Ask VO members to raise any concerns or ideas they may have about any aspect of the proposal. Explain to VO members that the goal of this step is to make adaptations to the proposal so that all VO members can support it.

Step 7:
Ask for a show of consensus--It is important in consensus reaching that each VO member makes an affirmative statement or gesture showing his or her agreement with the decision. It is not adequate to informally check for agreement, for example by saying something like, "Does everyone agree...we'll take

no response as implied approval of the proposal." Each person must make a personal commitment to the consensus decision. Some community organisations use a poll of the community organisation--each VO member stating his or her concurrence. Others use a show of thumbs up or thumbs down. It is useful to provide VO members with three options: (1) agree, "I support the decision as written,", (2) disagree, "I do not support the decision as written", or (3) agree with reservations, "I can live with the decision as written". Thumbs sideways indicates the latter when the thumbs-method is being used to ascertain consensus.

If the step of refining the proposal has been handled thoroughly by the community members, consensus is often achievable on the first request for a show of sentiment. However, if one or more VO members have continuing reservations and do not support the proposal as written, go back to step 6, and request further refinements to the proposal, then repeat step 7.

3. How To Help A Large Community organisation Reach Consensus

If the community organisation is too large for discussions to take place fruitfully in the whole group, then the social organiser can use small group process. How large is "too large" depends on the social organisers' skill and the community organisation's readiness to reach consensus. Certainly a community organisation of 20 or more should be broken into small groups for consensus reaching on a subject of any difficulty. When using small groups process to achieve consensus in a large community organisation, use the following guidance:

a. Do Front-End Preparation With The Whole VO

Steps 1, 2, and 4 should be done in the whole community organisation: explaining the decision making process, defining the decision to be made, and establishing guiding principles. (Discussion, Step 3, takes place in small groups rather than in the whole community organisation.)

b. Make The Small Groups Representative Of The Whole VO

Be sure that each small group has within it representatives of each of the roles or points of view represented in the large group so a consensus reached in the small group is likely to be supported by the whole community organisation.

c. Provide Discussion Guidance To The Small VO

Offer discussion points to the small community organisations to help guide their discussions along similar paths to increase the likelihood of comparable proposals being developed among the small community organisations. For example: "What are constraints bearing on this decision? What will make it difficult to reach the objective the decision addresses? (In the previous example, `What constrains our ability to involve stakeholders?')" **OR** "What are supports--resources, opportunities, players--affecting this decision? (`Our ability to involve stakeholders'" **OR** "What are possible strategies for resolving this issue? Brainstorm options for what <u>could</u> be proposed as a decision on this issue." **OR** "Which of these options best conforms with the guiding principles established for this decision?" **OR** "What option(s) can we all agree on and support?"

d. Set A Time Limit

Be sure to allow enough time for substantive discussions. Propose a time limit and check with the community organisation to get concurrence. You may offer a time at which you will check with the small groups to see how they are doing, for example, 30 minutes, at which point, based on the input from the small community organisations, you can determine how much time to give for completion of the task by all community organisations.

e. Have Small Groups Report And The Whole VO Seek Consensus

If the small groups are all working on the same decision task, the chances are great that their proposals will have common elements. Usually the whole community organisation can see right away that certain decision ideas were proposed repeatedly and quickly agree on them. If small groups were working on different decisions, the whole community organisation will usually accept their proposals with minimal changes, as long as the composition of the small groups reflects the composition of the whole VO (that is, as long as small groups contain people with the range of views found in the larger group).

f. Have A Sub-group Develop A Consensus Proposal For The Whole VO's Consideration

If a satisfactory or complete consensus is not achieved during the small groups report out period, set up a very small but diverse group (representing the range of views of the whole community organisation) to work up a proposal for the whole VO to consider. Have the whole community organisation propose the membership of this sub-group so the right, truly representative composition is assured. Ask the small group to work outside of the meeting framework (outside of the room during a session, or outside of session hours). When the whole community organisation is committed to seeking consensus, VO members will almost always respond positively to a proposal from representative delegates. This method is also useful when the whole community organisation agrees on elements of a decision but wants to generate a detailed statement, memo, or other precise treatment of the decision.

How To Manage Conflict In a VO

Conflict is inevitable when people work in community organisations to develop, explore, expand, and make decisions about subjects that matter to them. It is not only a natural human behaviour, but in its positive form (differing, as opposed to arguing) it is also an important part of the creative process. Without the freedom to differ, community organisations may find themselves limited to only the most conventional accepted kinds of thinking and problem solving. Furthermore, conflict is essential to critical thinking. Community organisations in which members do not effectively express their differences can fall into community organisation think, a mode of community organisation behaviour in which ideas, even ideas which are not well thought through, may prevail despite the individual community organisation members' ability to know the ideas are not useful, or worse, actually harmful to the community organisation's goals.

Conflict is of at least three kinds: based on emotional responses, based on cognitive differences, or based on a combination of the two. The ideas that follow can help community organisation members understand and work through conflict in a constructive way, regardless of its source(s).

1. Rational Sources Of Conflict

People differ for many reasons, but the rationally based conflict generally stems from people operating with: different facts; different experiences; different values; different assumptions; and different constraints. When it becomes apparent to you that a conflict is emerging, these areas are a good place to start in figuring out how to resolve the difference. Check with the differing individuals to see if:

- Facts need to be clarified; our product is due at the end of the month, not at the end of this meeting.
- Experiences need to be compared and sorted out, It's true that the meeting of the planning team wasn't as productive as they had hoped, but the meetings you had before that were very good; let's give the process one more try in this meeting and see what happens.
- Values need to be aligned, As you point out, Jamal, the community organisation has agreed that open communication will be a guiding principle, but Ray is saying that the value of confidentiality also needs to be considered. Why don't you agree to decide by consensus at the end of the meeting what can be shared with your offices and what should not. That way you can talk freely during the meeting and know that only what everyone agrees to will be shared later. Let's also agree that the bias at that point will be to share as much as possible.
- Assumptions need to be aligned, if some of you are assuming the Superintendent does <u>not</u> really want a solution and others are assuming she <u>does</u>, we need to agree on how to proceed. Shall we decide that as a community organisation you want to work in good faith, even though some of you have your doubts, or would you like to ask Jehanzeb to join us and talk to us some more about what she really wants from you?
- Constraints need to be understood, so the issue is that you only have two staff people and cannot spare anyone for this follow-up team. Perhaps rather than give up the follow-up plan, one of the other programs' representatives could agree to represent your community organisation as well. If that's possible, you could meet with that person and explain your program's interests.

Conflict deriving from these sources can generally be resolved with little difficulty, particularly if it is addressed as soon as it appears.

2. Emotional Sources Of Conflict

It is important to understand the emotional responses that may be called forth in meetings, and to have some ideas about how to respond to them in a positive and supportive way. People remain eminently human at work, and emotions do play a part in people's behaviour. Social organisers need effective ways to recognize emotionally-based conflict and to ensure that it can be managed. Most important, social organisers need to learn to resist their own emotional responses when VO members have reacted emotionally, a reaction that may be expressed toward the social organiser, regardless of the real focus of the VO members' frustration.

a. Dinosaur Brains

One model for understanding human emotional responses that can cause conflict and be triggered by the prospect of conflict is described in the book, Dinosaur Brains, by Albert J. Bernstein, and is summarized as: ...Inside each human brain lurks the brain of a dinosaur--irrational, emotional, easily enraged—waiting to take control....Humans don't always act like humans. One minute they're normal, rational people; the next, they're little better than reptiles. Trouble comes when they use the Reptile Response--their primitive thinking patterns--instead of the rational part of their brain.

b. The Construction Of The Human Brain

Put simply, the human brain has three parts. One part is the "new" brain of relatively recent evolution and is the centre of thinking and logic. It sits on top of our "old" brain, which controls instincts and emotions. The third part is the limbic system, which lies between and connects the two brains, allowing us to move between one brain and the other.

c. Lizard Logic

When people operate out of their dinosaur brain, they appear, and sometimes are irrational at least temporarily. The problem is that the dinosaur brain is programmed in a very limited way. Like the Dinosaur for which it is named, it acts in accordance with seven rules of instinctual response known as "lizard logic":

1. Get it now! (Impulsive)
2. Fight, flee, or freeze (Threatened)
3. Be dominant (Competitive or controlling)
4. Defend the territory (Defensive)
5. Get the mate! (Sexually competitive)
6. If it hurts, hiss! (Complaining)
7. Like me, good; not like me, bad! (Intolerant)

Sometimes--especially in stressful situations--a short-circuit occurs and people have difficulty rechanneling their response from their dinosaur brains to their reasonable brains, and to shift from instinctual, emotional behaviour to thoughtful, rational behaviour. It is important that social organisers understand and accept that everyone reacts from his or her dinosaur brains sometimes. Although it is easy for one dinosaur brain to bring forth other dinosaur brains (for one person's emotional reactions to stimulate others' emotional reactions), social organisers must avoid the temptation to respond to impulsive, threatened, defensive, or other emotionally based behaviour in like emotional ways and to respond instead in rational ways.

3. Strategies For Managing Conflict

Regardless of the source of the conflict, strategies can be employed with community organisations, which will resolve conflicts constructively in almost all instances. They include:

- Acknowledge conflicts as they emerge--The SOs should guide the community members in understanding that when differences of a cognitive nature arise within a discussion or while working on a task, the community members should recognize them openly at the time they occur, before frustration has a chance to grow and create an emotion situation.
- Use ground rules--Written, posted ground rules in the meeting place can help community members manage their own dinosaur behaviour. The first point of return when the community organisation experiences difficulties, whether of an individual or community organisation nature, is the ground rules.

It's a good idea for one of the ground rules to make it O.K. to differ and for another to call for all ideas to be treated with respect. A review of the ground rules may help community members get back into control when emotional behaviour arises. If the SOs know in advance that a subject for community organisation discussion or an assignment within the community organisation is likely to prompt emotional reactions, it is useful to discuss that fact ahead of time, and how discuss to avoid emotional conflict before it happens.

- Have community members explain and listen to conflicting views--When different points of view cannot be readily reconciled, it is helpful for (1) a proponent of each point of view simply and objectively state the point, while (2) others are asked to listen and vice versa. Remind the speakers to use neutral language in their statements. Often a clear restatement will help the community organisation see that the views are not mutually exclusive and can be accommodated into the community organisation's discussion or decision.
- Look for common ground or compromise--If differences are not resolved once restated, the individuals or the community organisation then look for commonalities, opportunities for merging different ideas, or ideas for a compromise.
- Identify alternatives--If differences cannot be accommodated or a compromise cannot be reached by the VO members, try to come up with an alternative idea one that all can agree on which is neither of the contested ideas.
- Review options--If an alternative cannot be identified, then review the options available to the community organisation. Should neither idea be pursued or considered? Should both? Any other alternatives?
- Postpone the issue--Sometimes it is useful to allow a cooling off period and postpone dealing with a difficult issue until later in the meeting or until another time. Often a combination of the chance to have positive experiences in the community organisation on other subjects and the passage of time make it easier to deal with a problem area later on.
- Help individuals resolve conflict. If conflict between individuals is affecting the community organisation's ability to do its work, you can try to help the people who are in conflict by gently asking them to work out their differences:
    - Express concerns in terms of the community organisation's need to do its work.;
    - Ask the individuals for ideas to resolve the problem; have them meet in a sidebar (a meeting outside of the meeting) to work it out, alone or with one other person;
    - Offer alternatives that do not force a loss of face;
    - Ask the individuals to meet with you or with a volunteer from the community organisation in a mediator capacity outside of the meeting to resolve the conflict.

How To Facilitate Team building in the VO

Considerable research shows that people working in teams can be far more productive and produce better quality of work than people working alone. Yet, working in teams is a challenge for most of the community members because most of them work in a system that support and reward individual accomplishment, favour time-oriented measures of efficiency (faster is better), and have a hierarchical view of authority and accountability, especially regarding decision making. So, while the community members generally like the idea of working in organisations, the actual experience of it can prove frustrating.

1. Advantages of VOs working as Teams

It is important first to understand the differences between a group of people got organized for the purpose of getting an infrastructure scheme from a community development programme and an organisation of people who happen to be working together or participating in a meeting as a team. Because of these differences, facilitation plays an even more important role in the success of teams than it does in the success of a group of opportunists. Compared to most so-called community organisations of the opportunists, teams:

- Work together as a community organisation for a longer time--Temporary teams generally work together for periods ranging from six months to a year or more; standing teams, whose members perform their jobs in a team configuration, may work together for several years. Both temporary and standing teams generally meet more often than other community organisations, usually on a regular basis, for example, weekly or monthly.

- Make more decisions by consensus--To be most effective, all significant decisions made by the team need to be consensus decisions. Consensus decision making in teams requires a lot of patience, open-mindedness, and interpersonal skill. The need to repeatedly confront and resolve differences and the constant pressure to reach agreement on issues and decisions can strain team relationships.
- Work with greater autonomy--The role of a social organiser working with a community willing to go ahead as a team, is subtly different than when working with a community organisation convened once or a few times. If the willing-to-work-as-a-team VO is new, the social organiser works to help them develop a charter, which includes goals, ground rules, and operating methods. The expectations are that the team members will internalise the capacity to use these frameworks to manage themselves. Over time, community organisations working as teams develop preferred ways of presenting information and ideas, discussing issues of interest to them, making decisions, and producing work. The social organiser coming into an established VO needs to learn how the team operates and adapt to their established processes.
- Feel a more acute responsibility for producing results -- VOs working as a team arrange and conduct meetings, which are product-oriented. They often have a sense of their visibility and accountability, and feel the pressure to move forward with greater intensity than most other community organisations formed to get a one time benefit.
- Need to develop and maintain stronger relationships--A community organisation meeting once or a few times, or even regularly, can tolerate unresolved differences among members and limited personal relationships. The VOs working as teams need to maintain strong working relationships which involves much more effort to get to know each other personally, to understand each others' orientations and capabilities, and to work out differences among each other.
- Require greater attention to VO dynamics and process--Teamwork is more than just pooling the efforts of several people. In teams, it is often said that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts; this is actually true and is responsible for the greater productivity of teams compared to conventional work organizations. Because of the importance of the positive interplay of people's intelligence and experience to team effectiveness, community organisation dynamics and community organisation process play a far greater role in determining team success than they do with more casual community organisations.

2. Understanding Team Formation

Social organisers need a sound understanding of community organisation dynamics in order to be of real help when working for their team building. Like all good teams, the community organisations have an especially challenging task in the early stages of their development. Five stages of development have been identified:

Stage 1: Forming

In which the members of the VO meet one another and begin exploring their roles in the team, their relationship with one another as team members, and ideas about how the team will operate. Even if the team members already know each other, if they are just beginning to work in this team, the forming stage still occurs. This stage is generally characterized by uncertainty: members' tentative sharing of information and ideas, polite exploration of options, and careful scrutiny of other members of the VO.

Stage 2: Storming

In which members of the VO begin to understand their differences, encounter divergent ideas about their task, their roles, and the processes by which they will do their work. This stage is generally characterized by disharmony: competition of individuals, ideas, and approaches; conflict among members about differences; frustration about the lack of cohesion; sectionalising of the team into differing camps, and threat of the community organisation breaking down.

Stage 3: Norming

In which the members of the VO begin to recognize a common interest in the team and its task, develop common goals for the team, clarify roles of individuals within the team, and develop strategies for working together smoothly. This stage is generally characterized by optimism: relationships in the team deepen, tensions ease, members' concerns are resolved, and the team's task and process are clarified, the formation of a team is underway.

Stage 4: Performing

In which the members of the VO work productively to achieve their goals and carry out their work. This stage is generally characterized by productivity: a sense of progress and achievement on the part of the team develops, bonds are formed between members, and enthusiasm and creativity for the team's work are high.

Stage 5: Adjourning

This is the real testing time in which members of temporarily established VOs, having completed their task, prepare to disband. This stage is generally characterized by reluctance to part. The VOs where the team spirit is alive, after completion of one project, the team members review their experiences together, evaluate their accomplishments, and restart the process for a new development project and also arrange to stay in touch.

3. Functional And Dysfunctional Behaviour In VOs

Functional behaviours keep the community organisations working on the task or project at hand. They also help to maintain constructive working relationships among the community members, and allow diverse individuals to work effectively as a team.

Functional VO displays the following behaviour:

- Initiating--Team members proposing tasks or goals, defining VO problems, suggesting a procedure or idea for solving a problem.
- Seeking information or opinions--Requesting facts, asking for expressions of feelings or concerns, soliciting expressions of values, seeking suggestions and ideas.
- Harmonizing--Reconciling disagreements; reducing tension; getting people to explore differences, finding common ground.
- Listening and encouraging--Being responsive to others, indicating by verbal or non-verbal behaviour interest in the views of others, supporting others' points.
- Compromising--Offering or accepting a compromise, admitting error, modifying position in the interest of team cohesion or growth.
- Consensus testing--Asking to see if the team is nearing agreement on a decision, sending up "trial balloons", proposals.

From time to time, people behave in ways that do not help, and sometimes actually harm the team and the work it is trying to do.

Dysfunctional VO behaviour includes:

- Being aggressive--VO members assert their own interests, views, and rights above those of others; showing hostility toward other members or an individual within it; demeaning the contributions of others.
- Blocking--VO members interfere with the progress of the team by arguing points at length, rejecting ideas without consideration, refusing to work toward a consensus of the team.
- Competing--VO members polarize discussions, create win-lose alternatives, seek to have one's point of view adopted by the team and have others' views rejected by the team.
- Lobbying--VO members introduce or argue for ideas related to personal or parochial interests, biases, or feelings.
- Horsing around--VO members regularly disrupt discussions or work sessions with clowning, joking, or other behaviours that interfere with the concentration of the members (as distinct from appropriate and even helpful amounts of spirited good humour that can be very constructive in maintaining team morale and energy).
- Withdrawing--VO members act indifferent or passive about participation in the VO or in discussion of issues raised by the members, enter into side discussions, and resort to excessive formality.

4. How To Help A VO Through The Forming Stage

The social organiser can help a team during the Forming stage by:

- Ensuring VO members really get to know one another -- The SOs shall provide a process for in-depth introductions if VO members don't know one another's behaviour. If they do know each other, but

have not worked in the team situation before, the SO shall offer a process by which they can begin sharing their values about the work at hand, for example:

> "As you introduce yourselves, please explain the reason or reasons why you signed up as a team member for this organisation."
>
> "As you introduce yourselves, please describe what you would like to see come out of working as team member of this community organisation."
>
> "After you have introduced yourselves, please develop a joint statement--a few sentences--about what you will be able to accomplish as a team that might not have been accomplished or accomplished as well if you were doing this work as individuals.

- Establishing ground rules--When the SOs first begin working with a new VO, for example, they have to facilitate the VO members as a team through development of a series of ground rules.

  Operational ground rules, for example, to:
  - Meet once a week.
  - Hold meetings to one hour unless all VO members agree to extend the time and can stay.
  - Rotate recorder and timekeeper roles among VO members.
  - Have one person (rotating) collect agenda items from VO members and circulate agenda by two days before meeting.
  - Have recorder write down meeting minutes on the spot or at the most circulate record of decisions made to VO members within one week of meeting.

  Process ground rules, for example, to:
  - Make decisions by consensus.
  - Write consensus proposals on flip chart before polling for consensus.
  - Where consensus cannot be reached timely, assign a sub-team to develop a proposal (working outside of the whole team).
  - Take consensus poll by a showing of: thumbs up for agree with, thumbs to the side for can live with, thumbs down for cannot live with.

  Behavioural ground rules, for example, to:
  - ❖ Listen to and respect others' experiences, ideas, concerns, insights.
  - ❖ Be candid--put real issues on the table, including areas of disagreement.
  - ❖ Actively seek consensus--look for common ground, be open to compromise, offer consensus proposals.
  - ❖ Deal with issues affecting the team <u>in the team</u>--don't complain about the team outside of the team.
  - ❖ Speak one at a time; raise your hand to be called on if discussion gets heated.

- Creating feelings of inclusion -- The SOs and the community leaders shall use non-judgmental, supportive language and behaviour, for example, they shall: **Acknowledge** and reinforce different thinking, and working styles in a positive way vs. expecting all team members to adopt a particular, narrow set of beliefs, or practices; **Respond** to challenges in a receptive, non-defensive manner, establishing an open dialogue with all members of the team vs. demeaning or closing off discussion of concerns expressed by some members; **Support** each person in the team, especially when outlying views are expressed or special needs or problems emerge vs. allowing any individuals to become isolated in the team.

5. How To Help A VO Through The Storming Stage

As a social organiser you can help a VO to work as a team during the Storming stage by:

- Dealing with differences openly--Bring differences out into the open; use the ground rules to encourage different points of view being expressed, listened to, and respected.

- Handling issues affecting the VO, in the team--Help the VO members explore differences in team members' background, so differences in point of view can be understood in context. Involve all VO members in resolving issues, for example, when issues about the team's work are raised by one or a few people, encourage the whole team to help define, analyze, and resolve the issues. Encourage the VO members to work out their issues together, and not to bring up complaints or disagreements outside the team.
- Having team members work together in mixed and changing sub-community organisations--Provide opportunities for team members to work with each other in various combinations, for example regroup them for different activities. This will give everyone a chance to get to know and trust all other members of the team.

6. How To Help A VO Through The Norming Stage

The SOs can expedite the VO's progress toward and through the Norming stage with these approaches:

- Get the team to agree explicitly on what it is trying to achieve--The SOs must facilitate in way to have the community members develop a consensus statement of the organisation's vision, mission, or common purpose early on in their work together. Social organisers must instill the habit of having team members discuss what the objectives are for that specific situation at the start of each meeting or each new task.
- Help the VO develop common values--For example, the activists should lead a discussion on the importance of the project at hand, possible positive outgrowths of their efforts, or what would make this project or effort the biggest possible success. The VO may also benefit from a discussion of what is a team, so that they can establish common values about themselves as a team.
- Create opportunities for shared experiences -- The SOs should provide chances for community members to (a) develop their understanding of issues together, for example, making exposure visits, or attending expert presentations, etc., (b) perform tasks together, make assignments to sub-community organisations rather than individuals, or (c) evaluate team progress together.
- Offer opportunities to take risks together--For example, if the VO is to make a presentation to higher management about the community's work, the SOs shall encourage them to do it together. Or if a particularly difficult project has to be undertaken, the SOs should have them do it, or at least plan it, together.