

## GUIDELINES

### Using this Manual to Facilitate a Human Rights Workshop<sup>2</sup>

These guidelines are to help you facilitate discussions and exercises in this manual. As a facilitator, you are responsible for monitoring and steering each session's learning process. Unlike a traditional teacher or trainer, you are not responsible for leading the group to any specific conclusions or understandings. Rather, your responsibility is to create a comfortable, trusting, safe space for workshop participants, and for you to learn from the ideas and experiences of others, keeping an open mind and working together to form consensus, and a shared vision of human rights.

You will create that space through careful pre-planning of the room and materials set-up and by engaging in facilitation tactics that promote mutual respect, thoughtful discussion, and an atmosphere of collaboration and active participation.

### Role of the Facilitator

An effective facilitator listens and learns along with the workshop participants. Your role is to organize the meetings and guide the participants through the workshop exercises. You do not need to know all the answers or agree with every participant.

Discussions will be most successful when all the participants provide input on what they believe human rights are and what the role of international human rights and human rights advocacy is in their own community.

### Directing Conversation

Sometimes you may wish to steer the group's conversation in a new direction through thoughtful inquiry. Your responsibility is to guide the direction of the discussion while keeping in mind that there are no correct or more valid opinions (except, of course, where there are established, documented facts). Your goal is to help the participants establish a shared vision of human rights that they can integrate into their personal lives and that they can advocate for in their family and community.

A good facilitator creates a trusting, neutral environment in which everyone feels safe to express her honest opinion without being judged or attacked. This includes helping participants feel comfortable enough to disagree with others in a thoughtful and respectful manner. Do not be concerned if there are lengthy silences between comments. These periods are moments when participants can pause for reflection and summon the confidence to speak up.

### Stimulating Discussion

Throughout the manual's sessions, questions are posed to stimulate discussion and debate. The questions are meant only as guidelines, to lead the group to explore their responses and strategies to human rights advocacy. As long as the group is engaging in relevant and valuable discussions, feel free

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from "Communicating in a Workshop Setting: Guidelines for Facilitating," *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women*, (Women's Learning Partnership, 2001).

to let conversations deviate from the posed questions. Moreover, you may decide to use different methods of setting up the exercises or wish to pose different questions than are presented in the workshop sessions.

If you have identified individual participants who may be shy or lack the courage to speak up, suggest your own opinion and ask one of them to comment on what you said. So long as you remain sensitive to the needs of the individual participants and to those of the group, are tactful and affirming, and share the responsibility of learning, you are partaking in effective facilitation.

### Keeping to the Agenda

At times, a facilitator can best guide a discussion by being an effective time-keeper and reminding the group of the session's agenda. Although workshop group sizes will vary, it is almost always helpful to encourage participants to keep their comments relatively short, not letting one person or a few people monopolize the conversation. This is particularly necessary for exercises that involve interventions or storytelling from every participant. A diplomatic way to remind participants to keep their comments relevant to the topic being discussed is to direct your suggestions and instructions to the whole group, rather than singling out an individual. Also, consider encouraging participants to listen to what the others are saying and to build upon previous comments.

### Sharing Responsibility

Although you are responsible for guiding each workshop session to completion, you do not need to be in charge of every activity or facilitate every discussion. Sharing responsibility can and should be part of organizing the workshop sessions. A simple step is to encourage participants to volunteer to take notes for the group, to read aloud instructions or narratives from the manual, or to facilitate the discussions. Reassuring a participant that she need not worry about spelling when taking notes, or pronunciation when reading aloud, can go a long way toward making her feel comfortable and inspiring others to volunteer.

### Joining In

It is up to you whether you join in the discussions. However, keep in mind that because you are organizing each session and are to some extent "in control," participants may give added weight to your opinions and suggestions. Therefore, it is important that you limit your interventions and that when you do express an opinion, you qualify it as *your own* perspective and not *the only* perspective.

### Enjoying Yourself

Remember that you are also participating in the workshop to gain knowledge. Enjoy yourself!

## Role of the Participants

Participants come to workshops for a variety of reasons, with a wide spectrum of preconceptions and expectations about what will take place. Regardless of their level of experience or professional status, the participants' role is to be both student and teacher, to learn as well as to share knowledge. Workshop sessions are most successful when participants listen attentively, ask questions, and challenge assumptions. Participants are responsible for contributing to discussions, working collaboratively in partnerships or as part of a larger team, and evaluating the process and progress of the sessions. Everyone participating in the workshop will benefit by contributing to a respectful atmosphere during the workshop.

## Setting Up the Meetings

It is important to come to the meeting sessions prepared. *Review the material* to be covered beforehand to make sure that you understand the manual's intended objectives and your own objectives for the workshop and for each session. Determine what materials you will need and make sure you plan to have enough of everything. Sessions can take place in an office, public facility, private home, or anywhere there is *quiet and privacy*, and where participants will feel comfortable. You may instruct participants to bring their own pens and paper, or supply them yourself. Depending on the room and supplies available where the workshops take place, you may wish to bring chalk or marker pens for a chalkboard or white board or markers for writing on a flip chart.

Alternatively, you may bring large sheets of paper and tape or tacks to secure them to the walls. The chalkboard, flip chart, or sheets of paper are useful for note-taking in front of the group members so that their ideas and concepts can be easily referred to throughout the session. Recording the discussion highlights on paper is particularly helpful because you can keep the written notes for future reference, referring back to the group's earlier ideas in later sessions.

This manual includes some exercises in which the group is asked to break into teams to carry out an activity. If not all participants have a copy of the manual, you may choose to make photocopies of the instructions for each team. Alternatively, you can write out the instructions in large letters on a piece of paper and tack it to the wall so that everyone will see them.

Most sessions should last approximately two to three hours, but you are free to shorten or lengthen exercises as you feel appropriate for your group. You may wish to supply something to drink or a snack to make participants feel more comfortable. If you are unsure about what the participants would like or expect, ask them about their preference at the first session. Most importantly, *plan ahead* so that you know in advance what will be needed and how the sessions will be organized.

### **Some Supplies You May Need**

- Pens and/or pencils
- Paper
- Large paper for highlighting key points
- Tape or tacks
- Flip chart
- Colored markers
- Chalk
- Large white board or chalk board to write on
- Copies of instructions in the manual
- Clock with visible face and minute hands
- Drinks and snacks for a break
- Cups, plates, napkins

### **At the Conclusion of the Workshop Sessions**

Depending on the group, participants may wish to end the workshop with an informal party or some other group activity. During the ninth or tenth session, you may wish to ask the group to begin thinking about how it would like to mark the workshop's conclusion. It is important that participants leave the workshop feeling that their needs and expectations have been addressed.

Before participants leave after the final session, ask them to fill out the **Workshop Evaluation Form** provided at the end of the manual. This form is useful for understanding what participants learned and for improving future WLP workshop programs. It is helpful for you to explain the purpose of the form and to assure participants that any information they provide is confidential. Participants do not need to put their names on their evaluations if they would prefer to be anonymous. Remember to collect the forms from all the participants before they disperse.