

# Participation:

**group facilitation  
methods that work....**



# What is group facilitation?

- The process of helping groups to learn, find a solution, or reach a consensus, without imposing or dictating an outcome
- Used in a variety of contexts including
  - Identifying/solving problems
  - Planning
  - Learning/training

# Group processes: different approaches to leadership



- **Hierarchical leader  
(control model)**
  - Low level of participation



- **Leader as facilitator  
(mutual learning model)**
  - High level of participation

# UNHCR:

tendency towards limiting participation in decision-making and learning...

- **Hierarchical decision-making**
  - Information bottom-up
  - Decisions top-down
- **Lecture style learning**
  - Facilitators as providers of knowledge or skills
  - Long verbal presentations
  - Limited interaction of participants

# Assumptions behind “hierarchical leadership”

- Truth comes from higher up
- One perspective rules
- Right and wrong answers
- Group diversity is a problem
- Create ideas for others to implement
- Decisions made by a few
- Obedience to superior orders
- Power and control games



# Has the hierarchical leadership been effective?

- Hierarchical decision-making
  - Does not identify the root causes of problems
  - Does not lead to creative solutions
  - Lacking ownership/commitment of group
- Lecture style learning
  - Limited absorption of information by participants
  - Focus on “knowledge” rather than skills/attitudes
  - Lacking ownership of group
  - Does not necessarily improve performance



# From “control” towards “participation”

## Barriers to change...

- Managers are afraid of losing their power/control
- They are unclear about how to put participation into practice
- Participative methods require preparation and thus are considered “time-consuming”
- Hierarchical leaders have been burned by earlier unsuccessful attempts at participative management

# The “mutual learning model” assumptions....

- Everyone has wisdom
- Truth comes from multiple perspectives
- Every experience contains learning
- Diversity enriches process & content
- Moving forward together
- Direct participation in making decisions
- Awakening passion, involvement, commitment





# Benefits of participation

- More effective way to identify problems and define new directions
- Greater commitment – and ability – to implement decisions and strategies
- More innovation – a larger portfolio of ideas
- A common framework for decision-making, communication, planning, and problem solving
- Encouragement of initiative and responsibility



# Two types of participative facilitation

- **Facilitative leader**
  - Helps group resolve a problem, make decisions and plan forward
- **Facilitative trainer**
  - Helps group develop knowledge, skills and attitudes



# Levels of communication in group facilitation

## Characteristics

What a group is working on

How roles and norms are defined in the group

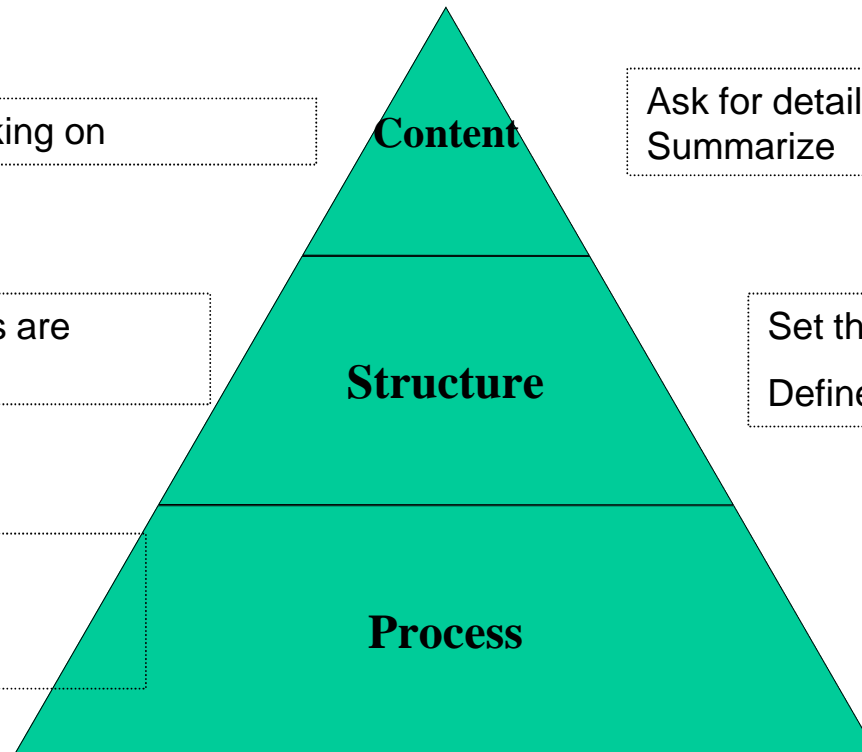
How a group works together (communication etc.)

## Intervention by Facilitator

Ask for details (who, what, when, how)  
Summarize

Set the rules  
Define roles

Create atmosphere  
Provide feedback  
Reflect on emotions



# Stages of Group Development

- **Forming**
  - Coming together, getting to know each other and the facilitator
- **Storming**
  - Group members open up to each other and confront each other's ideas and perspectives. Developing a group spirit, trust in each other and in the facilitator
- **Norming**
  - Group members adjust their behavior to each other, begin to trust each other and agree on rules, values and methods
- **Performing**
  - Carrying out the tasks and striving for the objectives

# Learning Styles

- **Visual** (“learning by seeing”)
- **Auditory** (“learning by hearing”)
- **Kinaesthetic** (“learning by doing”)
- **Print** (“learning by reading”)
- **Social** (“learning with/through others”)
- **Individual** (“learning by yourself”)

# The menu of facilitation methods...

- Structured warm-up activities
- Presentation
- Reading
- Demonstration
- Video
- Discussion
  - Learning discussion
  - Brainstorming
  - Fishbowl
- Note-taking
- Questionnaires/Test
- Case-study
- Card sort
- Role Play/Simulation
- Games
- Instruments
- Structured closure activities

# Visual Aids

- Flip Charts
- White Board
- Overhead transparencies
- PowerPoint
- Handouts

