

GETTING SMART

CHAPTER ONE: HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

INTRODUCTION

The manual is primarily aimed at assisting gender activists in Southern Africa put their message across more effectively. However, it contains invaluable resources for any activist group that seeks to sharpen its communications skills and strategies, and can be adapted for use in other regional contexts.

Written with communications trainers and facilitators in mind, the manual can be applied directly within an institution, or in a training setting. For example, an information officer within an NGO could use the manual for a strategic communications workshop for the organisation. The manual will, however, also be of interest to:

- Media and communications training institutions;
- Independent communications trainers;
- Senior managers of activist organisations who are concerned about being more effective in their outreach.

By the end of this chapter you should have a clear understanding of:

- How adults learn;
- The different tools of adult learning;
- The specific methodology used in this manual.

SOME PRINCIPLES OF TRAINING AND FACILITATION

Adult Learning

Training adults differs from teaching children in that adults have vast life experiences on which they draw. Most of the answers are within them. The role of the facilitator is to help "surface" those answers.

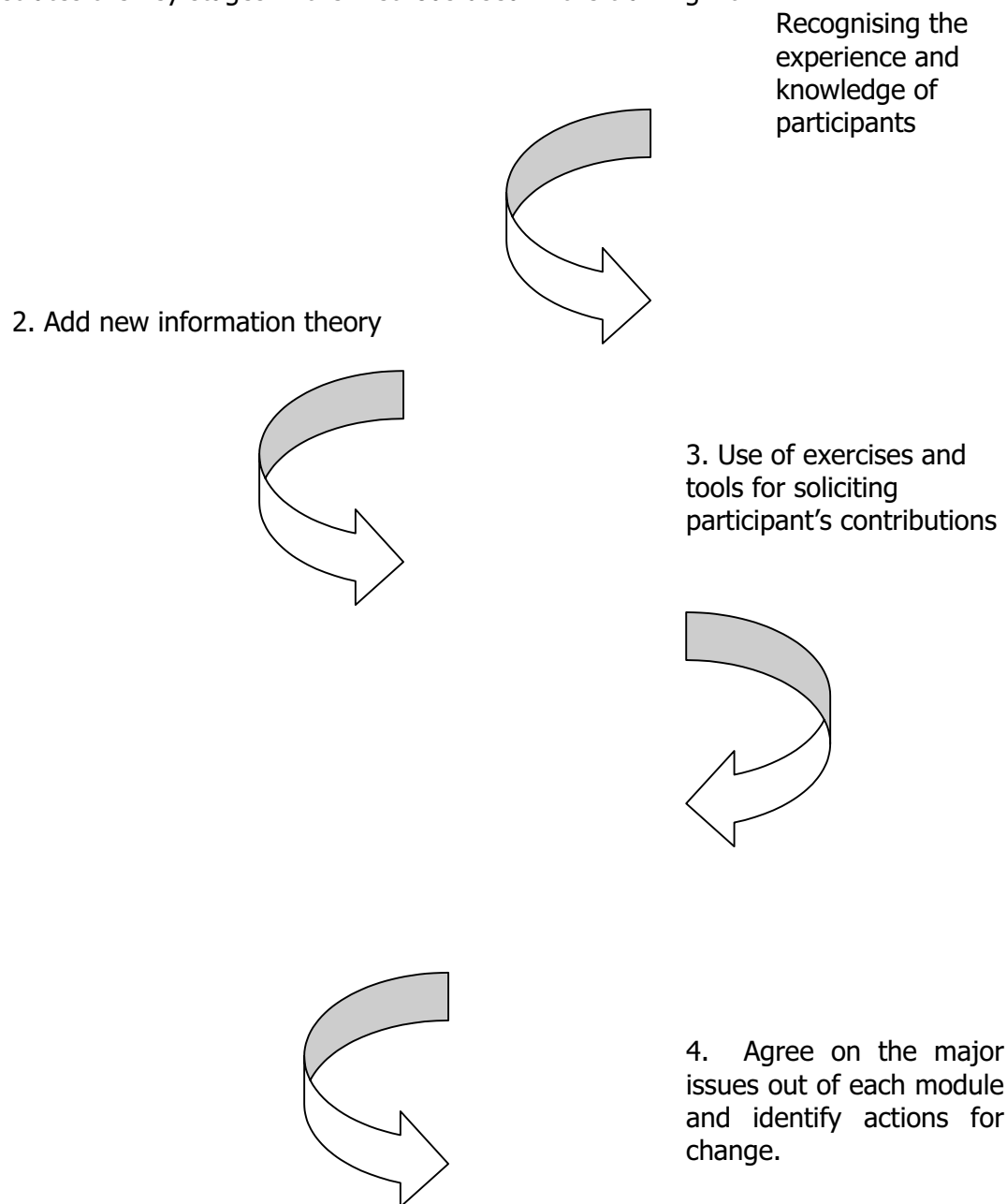
Learning by doing

*"I hear, I forget
I see, I remember
I do, I learn"*

This training manual is about learning by doing. The training starts from the premise that participants have valuable experiences and contributions to make. As adults, much of what we learn is from each other or from our peers. The role of facilitators is to validate these experiences and to add new information/theory to the experience-based knowledge.

With this principle in mind, the facilitator needs to create an environment based on two experiences: hers and those of the participants. That is the springboard, a situation where they learn and build experiences together, and where learning

involves a high level of active participation by everyone. The spiral shown below illustrates the key stages in the methods used in the training kit:



Good facilitation

The following are some reminders of the do's and don'ts of facilitation:

Do's	Don'ts
Prepare	Pre-empt
Be sensitive- make sure all group members participate and have a role; watch around bring out the quiet people.	Dominate; leave shy people out
Take account of language barriers	
Bring conceptual clarity to bear	
Read, know your subject, and be knowledgeable.	
Supervise group work	
Check documentation, make sure nothing is missing	
Focus	Allow the discussion to lose focus.
Control/ guide	Allow everyone to talk at once.
Offer a concise summary at the end	Leave the discussion open-ended
Manage time. Reduce number of groups. Cut length of presentations. Plan the programme well. Each case is given a time limit.	Get too involved yourself.
Be flexible	Be prescriptive
Crisis management; innovation, creativity.	
Use VIPP cards- refresher course on participatory methods.	

Resources

The manual includes three different kinds of resources:

- *Exercises:* Each module provides a number of exercises for soliciting participants' contributions and participation. In the process, their understanding of the concepts and key issues will also be enhanced.
- *Background relevant material:* As handouts for participants and/or as preparation for the facilitation.
- *Facilitator(s) experiences and the experiences of participants in the training are an invaluable resource.* Be sure to make notes of stories or experiences you can use to help illustrate different points issues in the training.
- *Additional examples:* The examples given are merely designed to spark the imagination of the trainer. Communications is a fast moving field. It is alive and real. Where appropriate, substitute the examples in the kit with more relevant and recent examples.

Different communication tools

There are a variety of communication tools that are used or can be in this training manual. Communication tools are often used together: for example a written tool like recording points on a flipchart can be used during a debate or panel discussion. They

can also be used to give variety and help maintain interest: for example group work, plenary discussions, debates, panels etc. can be used at various times to achieve interaction, but in different formats, throughout the workshop.

Writing and written tools

- VIPP cards (need to have some rules at the beginning: one thought per card; visible writing; colour schemes; how to cluster).
- Assigning different readings to different participants- asking them to report back on these in a simplified form in their groups. This helps to ensure that the readings get done but in a way that is not overwhelming
- Use of the overhead projector
- Summaries on flip chart at the end of each session
- Word games- associations

Visual tools

- Art- for example, ask participants to draw instances in which they felt powerless, and those in which they felt powerful rather than voice these. This exercise is often humorous. At community level people can draw pictures in the sand.
- Pictures- asking participants to interpret pictures- from the media, popular culture etc. This is particularly effective where there are low levels of literacy.

Audio- visual tools

- Films
- Video
- Drama
- Street theatre

Interactive tools

- Pairing participants
- Group work- seating arrangements that encourage group work
- Team facilitation
- Panels
- Quizzes
- Facilitators allowing participants to facilitate
- Plenary discussions
- Story telling
- Role play
- Miming
- Testimonies- lived experiences
- Debates (these can be made even more interactive by a controversial statement being made, a line being drawn and then people being asked to stand on different sides of the line, but to explain/justify which side they have taken).
- Word games (flashing up/ saying words, asking what associations come to mind).
- Case studies/ problem solving
- Songs
- Brainstorming

Icebreakers and energisers

Some people are not comfortable with big groups. So 'breaking the ice' means being the first person to talk. The Facilitator should break the ice and help everybody to relax. Several possible icebreakers and energizers are provided with each module. These are not new exercises and some of them are used mostly as energizers. They are short with the objective of having people use their bodies and minds in order to combat fatigue and boredom during the sessions.

Facilitators are also encouraged to draw on music as a means of motivating the team. This seems so obvious! However, despite the importance of music in inspiring and documenting social movement struggles, we often forget to draw upon music as a source of energy and leadership building.

What you need to do is:

- ✓ Invite participants at different times to lead a song-with words that are easy for people to follow.
- ✓ Encourage all the participants to join in.

Body, soul and mind

Ancient Greeks believed that learning should involve the body, mind and soul or to put it differently, learning should be physical, spiritual and intellectual. This will ensure that training is fun, leads to new learning, new friends and networks and most importantly, new ways of doing things.

Seating arrangements

It is recommended that the room should have round tables with five to six per table, and not more than 25 participants in total. This makes it easier to break into groups for group discussion and then back into plenary for the sharing of group discussions. This method will be used throughout these modules. Such an arrangement also makes for greater interaction and "bonding". It is a visible and practical way of ensuring that learning moves from experiences to broader concepts. Decision-makers will then apply those concepts in their daily work.

THE SPECIFIC APPROACH USED IN THIS MANUAL

Aim

To build the strategic communications capacity of gender activists in the Southern African region through practical training that enables participants to develop an actual strategy as part of the course.

Content and sequence

The manual contains eight chapters:

- I. How to use this manual
- II. What is communications?
- III. Getting started on your communications strategy
- IV. Messages and Materials
- V. Personal and Traditional Media
- VI. Mainstream Media
- VII. Community Media

VIII. New Media

IX. Managing your communications strategy

Process

- Start by grasping the general principles of communications (Chapter two).
- From the beginning, the facilitator should ensure that participants choose a topic for a communications strategy that they will develop throughout the course.
- Ensure that participants gain a thorough understanding of the different types of media: letter- box, personal, traditional, mainstream, community, new-media (Chapters four to nine).
- At the end of each module, participants should use what they learnt to design their strategies.
- At the end, they should bring all pieces of the plan together in one communications strategy and learn how to manage and cost it (Chapter Nine).

Format of each Chapter

Each chapter consists of an introduction, objectives, cases studies, exercises, tips to the facilitator, handouts and worksheets that can be photocopied and given out to participants. Wherever possible, facilitators are encouraged to gather relevant local articles and materials that can be given out for discussion.

Time management

The amount of time required will vary greatly depending on the background and experience of participants, as well as the specific objectives to be achieved. Each module could potentially take a few days, or it could be compressed into one day. A communications training and strategy workshop can take place over five days, or it could take place in eight modules over a period of time. The facilitator should view the various exercises as a basket of options that can be combined in different ways for different audiences and different specific outcomes. Here are a few examples:

EXAMPLE ONE: NGO holds a communications workshop for key staff to draw up a campaign strategy on a specific subject.

Day one: Key communication concepts; framing the message and objectives;

Day two: Personal and traditional media;

Day three: Mainstream and community media;

Day four: New media;

Day five: Drawing together the strategy.

EXAMPLE TWO: NGO specializing in communications designs an in-depth, two week course on strategic communications for information officers of women's groups.

Day one: Key communication concepts.

Day two: Messages.

Day three: Developing materials.

Day four: Personal and traditional media.

Day five to eight: Mainstream media.

Day nine: Community media.

Day ten- twelve: New Media.

Day twelve-fourteen: Action planning.

EXAMPLE THREE: The above course is offered in modular form over six weeks.

These examples are by no means exhaustive. The modules can also be used individually. For example, a particular NGO might feel that it needs to improve its skills on new media, or on mainstream media, and to make use of just these modules. We encourage trainers to use the resource creatively. But we also emphasise that communications is a holistic process. Individual initiatives must always fit into a broader vision involving a multi-dimensional approach that seeks to achieve the maximum impact in the most cost effective way possible.