

# Introduction

## What are facilitation skills?

Facilitation skills are essential for anyone seeking to guide a group of people through a process of learning or change in a way that encourages all members of the group to participate. Each person has a unique viewpoint and valuable knowledge to share. Without their contribution, the group's ability to understand or respond to a situation is reduced.

The facilitator's role is to draw out knowledge and ideas from different members of a group. They can help them learn from each other and think and act together. Facilitation is about empowering others. It involves letting go of control over the outcome of a process and giving that responsibility to the group.

### PILLARS GUIDES

PILLARS (**P**artnership **I**n **L**ocal **L**anguage **R**esource**S**) Guides provide practical, discussion-based information on community development issues. These include food security, micro-credit, nutrition and community mobilisation. (See chart 5 for details). The Guides are designed for use in small community groups such as youth groups, women's groups, farmers' groups and literacy groups. Ideally, one or two double pages should be used each time a group meets, allowing plenty of time to discuss the issues raised and carry out some of the practical ideas suggested. The Guides aim to increase the knowledge, skills and confidence of group members by drawing out and building on existing knowledge and experience, and by encouraging a practical response.

The discussions should ideally be facilitated by an existing group member who is confident about sharing new ideas with others. This person should be committed to helping the group achieve its aims more effectively through learning together.

Those facilitating the discussions do not need special training or knowledge. However, skills in facilitation are very important in order to encourage

full participation within the group. It is also recommended that people leading the discussions first read through and understand the purpose of the Guides that they are using. They should be fully literate in the language in which the Guides are to be used, and should be comfortable with the concepts and terms used.

### FACILITATION SKILLS WORKBOOK

This Workbook is specifically designed as training material for people who are using or intend to use PILLARS Guides in their local communities. It seeks to improve participants' facilitation and informal training skills, so that they are equipped to lead discussions in a way that encourages the sharing of local knowledge and new ideas. It also seeks to provide participants with the opportunity to become familiar with several PILLARS Guides so that they can select the most appropriate materials for use in their work. It uses participatory methods and involves many practical sessions and role-play so that participants learn by doing.

The training material is designed to be adapted to the specific training needs of the users. It can either be delivered as a workshop or as part of other, on-going training activities (see *FORMAT OF THE TRAINING*, page 4). It can also be used alongside the PILLARS Workbook, which takes an organisation through the PILLARS process, whereby people are trained not only to use but also to translate and write PILLARS Guides in their local language.

However, the skills outlined in this Workbook will be useful in many different areas of people-centred development work. Parts of it are therefore useful for training people who are leading any kind of participatory learning or change process.

## OUTCOMES OF THE TRAINING

By the end of the training, it is anticipated that participants will have:

- understood the origins and aims of the PILLARS Guides and production process
- become familiar with the content of various PILLARS Guides and of how they can be adapted for use with different target groups to achieve specific aims
- understood the difference between teaching and facilitating
- understood the role of a facilitator and identified qualities and skills of a good facilitator
- identified barriers and incentives to people's participation in a discussion or learning process, and strategies for overcoming those barriers
- practised using participatory learning and action tools to draw out the knowledge of a group
- practised and gained confidence in using PILLARS Guides with community groups
- identified how PILLARS can be integrated into ongoing work.

## Format of the training

The Workbook can be adapted to suit the specific needs of those using it. Though the focus is on training people to use PILLARS Guides, the skills and techniques will be useful in many different contexts and areas of work.

This training can be delivered in a number of ways.

Some organisations may wish to integrate the training into other work activities. It is recommended that two sessions are given at a time. This is because a theoretical session is often followed by a practical session and it is more effective if trainees participate in these sessions together. Should this option be chosen, the complete training course could be given over a period of 11 weeks, covering two sessions per week. Alternatively, one session could be covered each week, taking 22 weeks in total.



Photo: Isabel Carter, Tearfund

*Encourage participants to support each other in developing facilitation skills.*

Other organisations may prefer to organise a five day training workshop, and work through the content of this Workbook according to the timetable given in APPENDIX B, page 61.

Extra sessions that provide participants with further opportunities to practise using the Guides can be added as necessary. Staff of other organisations can be invited to facilitate or participate in the training so that the learning can be shared more widely.

This initial training should be followed by a period of six to twelve months in which the participants apply the learning and work through a PILLARS Guide with a local community group. The participants could work in small groups of two to four so that they can support and encourage one another in their role as group facilitators. Where possible, a mentoring scheme, which provides further support for the trainees in their role as facilitators, is recommended. This time of practical experience should then be followed by further training, several months after the initial training has been completed. This will provide trainees with an opportunity to reflect together on their experience as group facilitators, and to develop further skills and techniques which will better equip them for this role. It could also help them train others to facilitate. See MENTORING AND FOLLOW-UP TRAINING, page 57, for more details.

# Planning the training

## SELECTING THE TRAINING PARTICIPANTS

Participants should have experience in community development. Experience and commitment to sharing information and to adult education or literacy work is desirable. They should be people who want to see positive change in their community. They need to be able to commit themselves to using PILLARS Guides with community groups on a regular basis over a long period of time.

If possible, the participants should come from different organisations or local communities and should bring a range of skills and experience. They should come in groups of two to four, so they can easily meet to work together and support each other after the initial training. Participants could include teachers, health workers, church workers, development workers and leaders of existing community groups. A balance of men and women of different ages should be sought. They need to be people who have time to apply what they have learnt and pass on these skills to others. This may often mean that they are not the people with the most experience or responsibility within an organisation. They need to be literate in the language in which the PILLARS Guides will be used and should preferably speak this language as their mother tongue.

## THE FACILITATION TEAM

The organisation providing the training will need to provide two to three people to help with the administration and facilitation. The training sessions are intensive and hard work (but also good fun!). Their success will depend on good organisation and a clear definition of responsibilities. The training facilitators need time in their work schedule to plan and prepare. They should also have time to provide on-going mentoring and support to the participants in their new role as PILLARS facilitators. Those leading the training should model facilitation skills and encourage each participant to contribute fully to the different training activities to the best of their ability. They should help and encourage participants to work together and learn from each

other. They need to support and challenge the participants to take responsibility for their own learning.

## EQUIPMENT

The following materials are required for the training: plenty of flipchart paper, marker pens, writing paper, coloured card, ballpoint pens and masking tape (for sticking flipchart sheets to the walls). It helps to have lots of wall space for flipcharts and posters. Participants should be provided with a pen, pencil, rubber, folder and notepad. Movable tables and chairs are needed. An overhead projector can be useful for presenting new material.

Tearfund has produced a number of PILLARS Guides that may be relevant to those participating in the training and to the communities they work with. However, many of the training activities are based on double pages of *Mobilising the community* or *Building the capacity of local groups*. These provide a good introduction to group working, which is central to PILLARS. They include many different activities that are useful to community facilitators. References to the appropriate Guide and double page are listed next to each activity described. Where possible, alternatives are given so that activities can be made relevant to the needs and priorities of the group.

At least one of these two Guides should be available in the local language. In some cases, Guides will need to be translated prior to the training. There should be enough copies for each participant to use during the training and to take away with them. Copies of other PILLARS Guides should be circulated during the training so that participants can see the range of issues covered.

Most sessions involve the use of flipcharts and handouts. These are listed under the 'Materials' section of each session and are found in boxes in the text. The handouts are repeated in Appendix C, pages 62–72, where they are laid out in such a way that they can be easily photocopied.

The charts are designed to be used in different ways:

- Some of the charts will need to be copied onto flipchart paper in advance.
- Other charts are intended to summarise or supplement ideas put forward by the participants. These charts do not need to be copied. The training facilitators can simply refer to them and add ideas as relevant.
- Some of the longer charts are also provided as handouts. If the facilitating organisation has access to an overhead projector, these charts can be made into acetates and presented on the overhead projector. This avoids the need for copying large amounts of text onto flipchart paper.

These different methods of use are referred to at relevant points in the training material. Charts and handouts should ideally be translated into the local language before each training session. Understanding of the concepts and terms used should be checked (see Glossary, page 80).

### TRAINING ACTIVITIES

The initial sessions of the training involve a certain amount of presentation by those facilitating. These presentations do not involve the active participation of the trainees, and it may be appropriate to use energisers – short games or activities – to get people moving again. If people's energy levels are high, they will not only enjoy the training more but they will also learn more effectively! A list of energisers can be found in Appendix D, page 73. If there is not enough time to do an energiser, simply asking people to stand up and say hello to someone sitting on the other side of the room can be enough to help people relax and engage again.

Much of the training centres around group activities and discussions. These will give participants an opportunity to act both as facilitators and group members. They will be encouraged to take responsibility for different aspects of the workshop. This will increase their awareness of the advantages of working together through direct personal experience. These participatory activities include role-play, group Bible study and debate. The role of the training facilitators is to make these tasks easier for the

participants, and to help them learn and work together. They will need to prepare well for each activity, with the appropriate materials ready for use, and anticipate problems or questions that may arise.

The training facilitators will also need to try to balance the groups in terms of gender, age and experience or confidence in the particular activity being carried out. For the first few sessions of the training, participants should stay in the same working groups, unless specifically indicated. This helps them build good relationships with a smaller number of participants as they learn to work together. As the training progresses, the participants can be put in different groups according to their organisation, place of origin or area of interest. Some training sessions specify how these groups should be formed for the purpose of particular activities. Otherwise, groups can be formed at random. For example, to form five groups, each participant can be given a number between one and five. Participants can then find others with the same number and form a group.

The field study visit will require good preparation, well in advance. The purpose of this visit is for participants to visit local community groups to practise their facilitation skills and to pilot the PILLARS materials in a real life situation. Three or four groups should be identified who are located near the venue, and who can meet for two to three hours to participate in discussions and activities based on PILLARS Guides. The purpose of the visit should be explained clearly (see Session 14, page 41) and arrangements made for transport and any other practical needs.