

TEARFUND

Building the capacity of local groups

A PILLARS Guide

by Isabel Carter



Partnership in Local Language Resources



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of local groups**

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by Isabel Carter

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Building the capacity of local groups

A PILLARS Guide

Introduction to PILLARS Guides

These guides are designed for use in small group situations where one or more people are literate and confident enough to lead others in group discussion. They aim to provide material for discussion around a subject either in isolation or as part of a regular group meeting; for example of farmers, literacy trainees or Mothers Union members. Ideally just two or three pages should be used each time allowing plenty of time for discussion of the issues raised and for carrying out some of the practical ideas suggested. No training is first necessary for the discussion leader.

PILLARS Guides aim to increase confidence among group members, so that they can successfully manage change within their own situation without the need for outside intervention. They try to build on existing knowledge and experiences among the members or within their community, so that different ideas can be tried out, adapted, and then either abandoned if not useful or appropriate, or found useful and adopted.

Objectives of this guide

- To be an effective group in working and acting together
- To improve record and note keeping
- To enhance the communication and openness within a group
- To encourage groups to take positive, autonomous action without outside intervention

Anticipated outcomes

- Local groups encouraged to gain confidence in their own ability to make changes for the better within their own communities
- Groups enabled to keep better records of their activities and to make use of this information for future planning and evaluation
- Use, sharing and networking of information encouraged
- Groups helped to plan for the future through organising activities and action

Glossary of difficult words

- aim** broad, long-term, important goal
- assumption** the hope that something wanted will happen
- co-ordinate** to manage activities by working together with others
- e-mail** message sent by computer
- evaluate** to study or measure the significance and impact of some action after it has happened
- literate** able to read and write
- objective** measurable activity which contributes towards achieving the main aim
- resource** something needed to achieve an objective: money, information, human skills or natural products
- risk** the possibility of injury or damage
- SWOT** Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

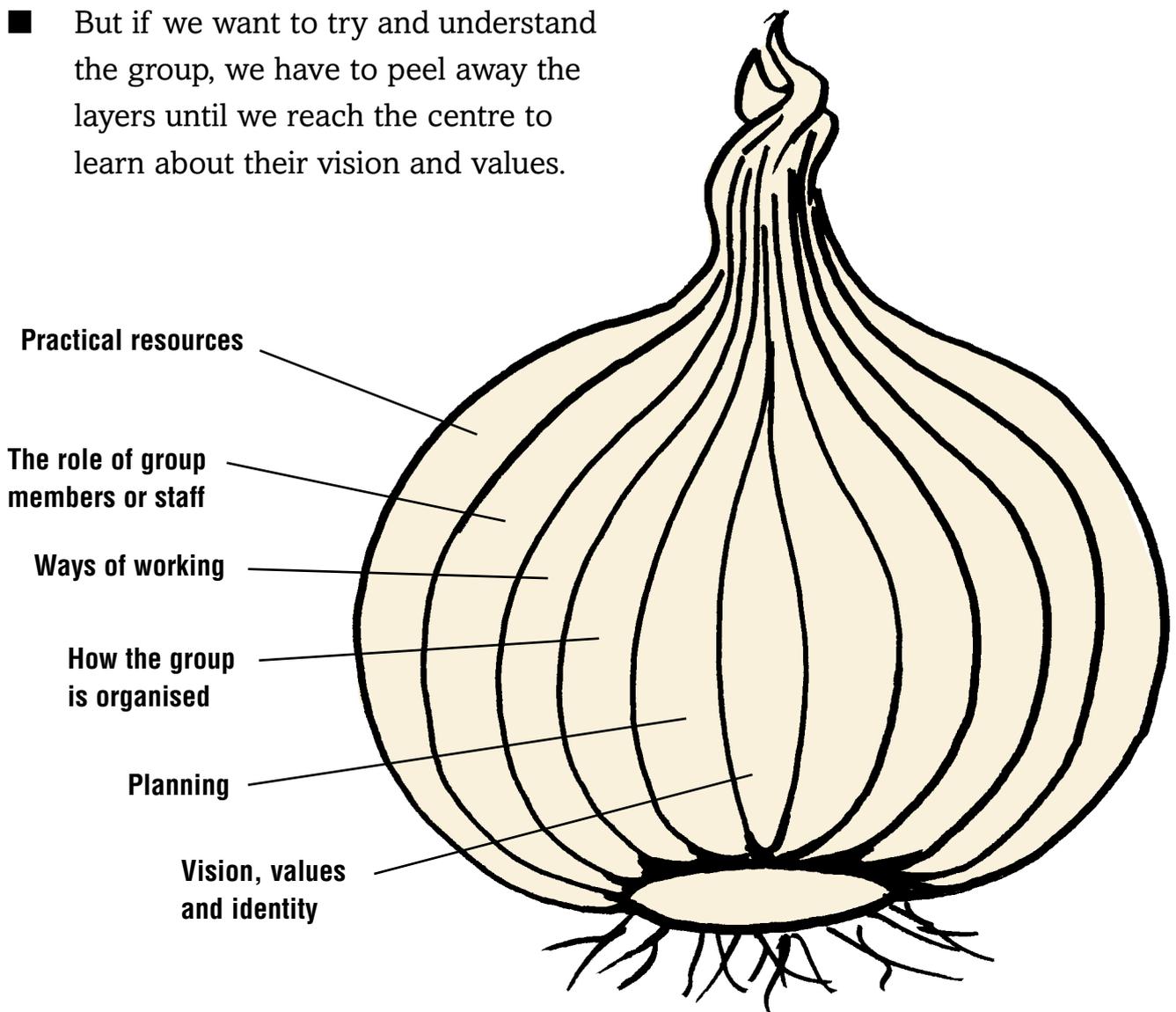
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Understanding the purpose of a group

Understanding how a group works can be rather like understanding how an onion is made!

- All we see of the onion is the outside layer unless we cut it open and see the different layers inside. All we usually see of a group are the people and the resources they have.
- But if we want to try and understand the group, we have to peel away the layers until we reach the centre to learn about their vision and values.



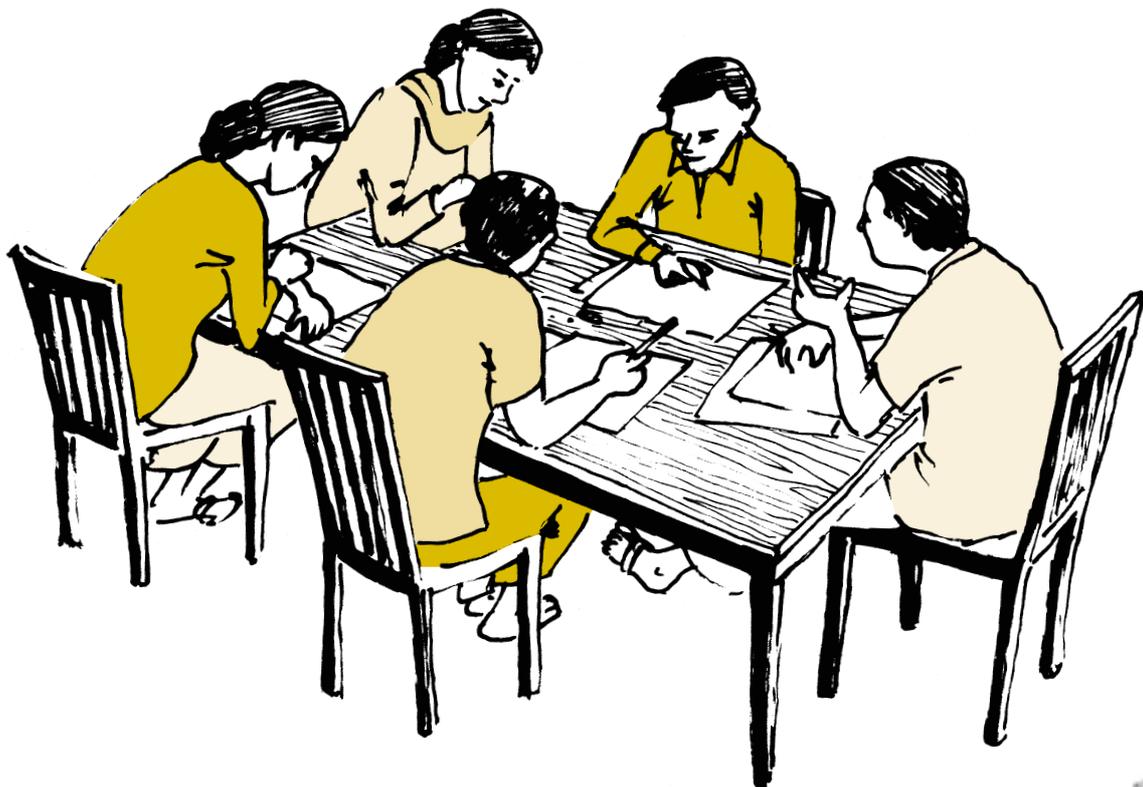
Discussion

C1

- Discuss the different groups participants are aware of. Try to work out how much you know about them. It will probably be easier to fill in the outer layer or two, but much harder to work out what should be at the centre.
- How often do groups start working with the outer layers before they have worked out their central vision? What problems will this bring? What happens if the central vision changes?

Working together

- Within a community, there will be many situations where health workers, farmers, teachers, extension workers and others need to work alongside or co-operate with other people. Successful co-operation needs understanding of other people's views, concern for the needs of others and sharing of the same goal.
- Take time to listen to what others are doing, how they are doing it and what the results have been. Take time to discuss ways their work could be changed to bring in new skills or people. Always try to build on what others are doing rather than starting again. Always remember that everyone has something to offer.



Discussion

C2

- Discuss this quotation by Stephen Corey: 'Seek to understand someone before you seek to be understood.' What do participants think of this idea?
- Discuss any existing co-operation between different organisations in the area. If there is none, discuss what sort of co-operation might be useful.
- This is a good exercise which shows the results of not working together:

You will need felt pens, large sheet of paper for each person, plenty of table space.

Divide people into groups of four to six. Each group should sit together. It is very important that people do not discuss what they are doing!

Give each person a sheet of paper and ask them to begin drawing a picture of their own choice. After a few minutes, ask them to stop drawing and pass their piece of paper on to the next person. Each person should then continue with the incomplete drawing that they receive. Repeat this process until each person has back their own original drawing. Give each person time to look at their own drawing.

The following points can be discussed – you may think of others, especially if you were watching people as they took part in this activity.

- *When you added to someone else's drawing, did you understand what that person was trying to draw?*
- *Were the additions to your picture appropriate and relevant? Is your picture better or worse than you had hoped? Why?*
- *How did you feel if the picture you wanted to draw was changed? Why?*
- *What did you do if the picture you received was almost complete?*
- *How did you feel if the picture you received had just been started?*
- *Was anyone afraid to begin drawing a picture? Why?*
- *Did anyone find it difficult or easy to add to a picture? Why?*
- *What conclusions can you reach after completing this exercise?*
- *How could they affect how you feel about team work in the future?*

Adapted from 'Health Care Together' published by TALC. Edited by M P Johnston and S B Rilkin.

Unity is strength

- One person working alone may feel unable to do much to change their situation. They may have no confidence to make changes, take action or speak out.
- A group of people who share the same situation, commitment and values, however, can achieve a great deal. Through working together and supporting each other they can take practical action. This can help build their confidence in themselves as a force for change. Together they may feel able to ask outsiders for advice or help. Together they can be strong.



Discussion

C3

- Encourage people to discuss ways in which they could work together. Are there any examples in the community of groups of people who work together? Encourage anyone who is a member of any kind of group to talk about their experiences, both good and bad. Discuss together the potential and the advantages and disadvantages of being in a group.
- Ideas might include farmer groups, food processing groups, herbal medicine learning groups, health committees, youth groups and vegetable co-operatives.

The role of leaders

- A good leader should provide a stable base for a group, should be able to inspire group members to take action, should be able to keep the group united, should have the confidence to speak out if things go wrong and should always be open to new ideas. However, leaders should also be people who are always ready to listen, especially before making decisions.
- People often choose strong individuals with influence and wealth as group leaders. Sometimes this may be the right choice, but sometimes these individuals lead the group in the way they want, rather than the way most of the members want. A quieter person who listens well, may prove to be a good leader, especially if they are really committed to the group's well-being.



Discussion

C4

- Suggest at least five qualities that a good leader should have. Discuss what order of importance participants think these should have. Can you think of people who have one of these qualities? Can these qualities be developed or encouraged?
- Discuss the importance of a leader in maintaining and supporting a group. If there is no one person who has all the necessary qualities, are there two or three people who have some of the necessary qualities, who could lead together? What would be the advantages and disadvantages of this?
- A useful exercise is to send out small groups to observe together the way in which ducks and chickens care for their young. After a short period, bring groups together and discuss what each group has observed and discussed. How useful is this when considering the role of a leader?

What makes a good leader?

There are three kinds of leadership:

- **Leaders who command** – they make decisions on behalf of the group and allow little or no discussion with group members. In times of trouble, this may be necessary but in other situations it is unlikely to encourage the group to grow in confidence and skills.
- **Leaders who consult** – these leaders encourage discussion about situations and goals and then make a decision on behalf of the group.
- **Leaders who enable** – they set certain limits but within these limits encourage and enable members to gain confidence in discussing and analysing their situation and in making their own decisions.

Can you identify examples of these kind of leadership styles. Which style would help your own situation?



Discussion

C5

- Can participants think of examples of these three leadership styles?
- Was each different leadership style appropriate for the particular situation?
- Discuss what makes a good leader. If possible encourage thoughtful discussion of local personalities, politicians, characters from well known books or radio programmes or leaders within local organisations. Try to keep the discussion from becoming critical or too personal.
- How much does the personal knowledge and experience of a person affect their ability to lead successfully?

How to choose leaders

- Discuss the purpose of the group. What kind of leadership style will be needed? What particular knowledge and skills might be helpful? The likelihood is that there will be no-one in the group who will make a perfect leader, but there may be someone who could develop into a good leader.
- Take time to consider who should be nominated, based on all that has been discussed.
- If a vote is needed to allow members to choose between two leaders, decide how this can be done to allow each person to vote privately without being under any pressure. What is happening in the drawing below?



Discussion

C6

- Encourage participants to first discuss what might be needed in a leader for the particular local needs they have.
- What rules should a group have for selecting leaders and for deciding how long people should remain as leaders. Make sure these are agreed before choosing a leader.
- Encourage useful discussion of the practical requirements needed to allow people to feel free from pressure both when nominating people for leadership and in their choice of vote.
- Paper ballots, show of hands, placing stones in piles or in containers are all ways of allowing people to vote. Discuss if these, or other methods, might be useful in your own situation.

The role of Chairperson

A leader may often take the role of Chairperson during meetings, but the two roles are different and can be done by different people. During meetings a Chairperson needs to:

- carefully explain issues under discussion and regularly review where the discussion has reached
- be able to inspire and motivate others during meetings
- encourage quieter people to share their opinions, views and knowledge
- keep control of any debate and make sure people stay on the subject
- allow decisions to be made with popular agreement
- make sure that disagreements and arguments do not interfere with the ongoing progress of the group
- stand back from personal feelings and make good judgments on the group's behalf
- share out responsibilities and work
- be approachable and encourage openness.



Discussion

C7

- Emphasise that the list provided may not be complete. Discuss each point one by one and use examples when possible. What other qualities and responsibilities could be added? Why?
- Which of these roles do participants think are more important? Why? If most members are literate, these roles and any others suggested, could be written out on pieces of paper and then ranked in order of importance.

The role of Secretary

The role of a Secretary is to provide support for the Chairperson, to keep careful notes and to organise the smooth running of the group. A Secretary needs to be:

- literate so that a record (minutes) can be made of all the important points discussed and decisions made at each meeting
- able to write letters and reports on behalf of the group
- able to arrange the timing and place for meetings and make sure all members have this information and details of matters to be discussed
- able to look after and organise any information resources and notes which the group owns.



Discussion

C8

- This list may not be complete. What other roles could be added?
- What are the possible consequences for a group which is unable to keep notes of its meetings and activities?
- What are the benefits of good organisation within a small group?
- What personal qualities might a Secretary need?
- Which of these roles do participants think are more important? These could be ranked in order of importance.
- How vital is literacy for the role of a Secretary? Is training available for anyone who would make a good Secretary, but needs encouragement with literacy training?

The role of Treasurer

A Treasurer may have many roles. They need to be:

- trustworthy
- able to keep careful records of all money paid in – as contributions, fees or sale of produce, and of all money paid out – as loans, or expenses
- able to look after the group's money wisely
- able to manage the bank account (if one is opened) and keep cash in the bank for safety
- confident in reporting back to members on the group's finances
- able to advise the group on the best ways to use their funds.



Discussion

C9

- What sort of training or experience might be needed for a Treasurer? Where might this be available?
- What should group members do to make sure the Treasurer is fully accountable to them?
- What help and support might a Treasurer need in carrying out their work?
- Are there other qualities which would be useful in a Treasurer. Which of the roles mentioned do participants think are more important? Can you rank them in order of importance?
- Women make better Treasurers? Discuss this statement. Do participants agree with it?

The special role of animators

- The role of an animator is rarely given a formal title within a group. However within most successful groups there will be at least one animator. These are people who bring new ideas, enthusiasm and a vision for making change possible. They rarely push themselves forward but have a real concern for the well-being and progress of the group. They don't just talk about new ideas, they make them happen practically.
- Animators believe in the potential of people in their communities and help provide the energy that is needed for change.



Discussion

C10

- Discuss the idea of the role of an animator. Do participants agree that these people are usually found in each group? How often are they the Chairperson?
- Are all development workers in NGOs and Church organisations animators?
- List the qualities an animator may have. Start by mentioning:
 - *encourager*
 - *enabler*
 - *trainer*.
- Can these qualities be learnt and developed in someone?

Group members

Groups are made up of all kinds of people but there are a few types that can be found in nearly all groups:

- **Complainers** – people who rarely find anything good in other people’s views and decisions and are quick to complain.
- **Know-it-alls** – people who are always convinced their views are right and often persuade others to follow them, sometimes creating division within the group.
- **Quiet members** – people who rarely share their opinions and do not want to take any responsibility or make decisions.
- **Positive members** – people who carefully consider ideas before reaching their own view or opinion. They join in discussion and share in decision-making. These people are usually the committed centre of a group.
- **Traditionalists** – people who dislike change or taking risks with anything new.
- **Bridge-builders** – people who like others to feel at peace with each other and happy with decisions made. They take time to sort out disagreements.



Discussion

C11

- Is there ever likely to be the perfect group?
- Encourage discussion about how group members can learn to appreciate the many different roles and personalities that have been suggested for possible group members. Be careful not to allow people to become personal and start making comments about each other.
- Which of these different types of people are less common within groups?
- Ask participants to suggest practical ways of encouraging each of these different personalities to play supportive roles within a group.

Making the most of meetings

- How often are meetings dominated by one or two 'important people' telling everyone what they should be doing? How productive is this kind of meeting? Are people more likely to become involved in taking action if they have been involved in the decision-making process? How can meetings avoid the situation pictured below?



- Sensitive leaders will encourage group members to take more and more responsibility both during meetings and practical work. Over time the leader's role may become less important as members become more used to sharing responsibility.



- To help people reach decisions, especially on sensitive issues, a good Chairperson should have the skills to stop debate, summarise the views expressed and ask for a decision, if necessary by a show of hands. Postponing decisions is usually only necessary if more information is needed. What can group members do when meetings are badly led?
- Continue to discuss how to encourage participation at meetings. How can 'important people' be politely asked to let others have their say? How can women be given confidence to speak and make their views known?
- How can meetings use time well? How can meetings start on time? How can decisions be reached instead of postponed for yet another meeting? Should decisions be made early or late during meetings? Why?
- A good and effective Chairperson is key. They need to prepare for the meeting with a well planned agenda which is then followed. Time limits should be set for meetings and kept.

Setting aims and objectives

- A new group must take time to carefully agree on the purpose of the group.
- Most groups come together because members all have an interest in a similar idea. This is usually the main 'aim' of the group. However, they should first meet with others in the community to discuss the needs, then agree on exactly how they plan to work together, what their priorities are and how they can work together effectively to reach their aim.
- It is usually a mistake to set lots of objectives. Discuss what you hope to see happening in the future. Then try to decide on just a few key objectives.



Discussion

C13

- First discuss what people mean by objectives and aims. A group will usually have just one or two main aims. These could include supporting their community, improving health, raising income.
- How can the real needs of the community be understood? How important is it to make sure that activities planned by groups will help meet some of the needs in the community?
- Groups then need to set objectives, which are the ways in which they plan to achieve their aim. For example if the aim of the group is to improve health, their objectives might be to improve the water supply, to build latrines, to have a health worker trained in each village and to support the clinic in their immunisation programme.
- What sort of objectives might a group set if their aim was to improve literacy in their community – or to protect their environment by planting trees?
- What happens if group members have very different ideas on what the group objectives should be? What should happen if they cannot agree? Should groups agree to split at the first major sign of differences? What are the alternatives?

Planning activities with the Five Finger method

- Once a group has agreed its objectives it can begin to take action. For successful activities, it is always helpful to first plan them carefully and put them in order of priority.
- The Five Finger Questions are a very good way of planning:

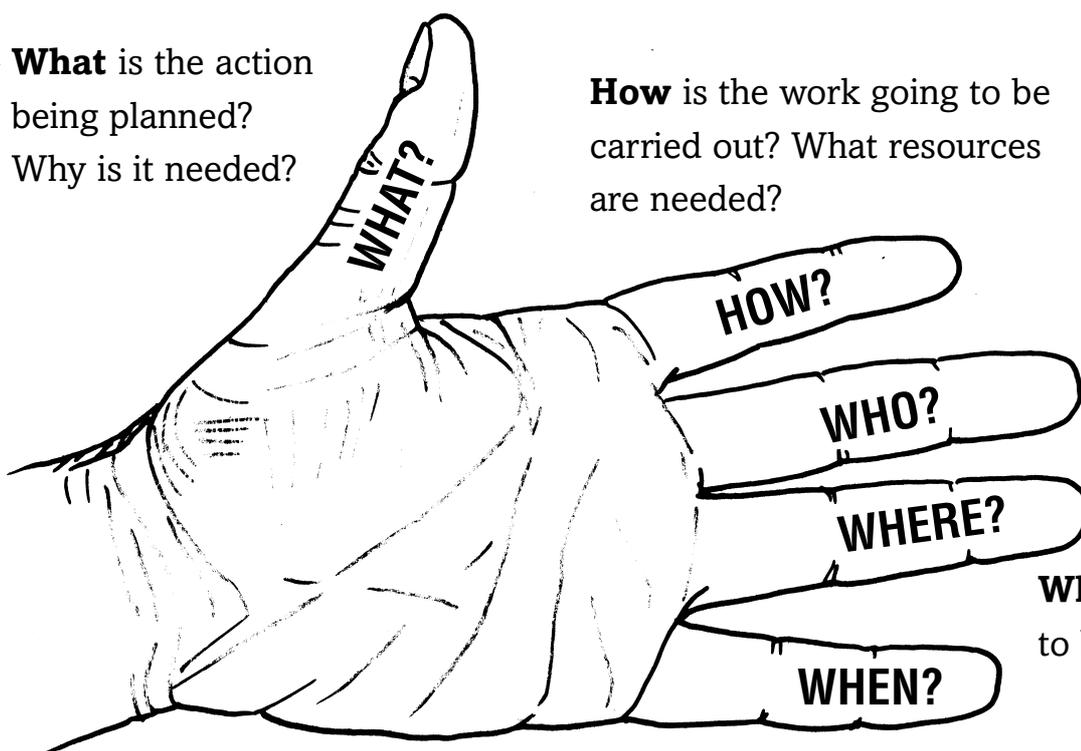
What is the action being planned?
Why is it needed?

How is the work going to be carried out? What resources are needed?

Who is going to carry out this work? Will they need training?

Where is the work to be done?

When is the work going to be done? How long will it take?



Discussion

C14

- Why is it important to ask these questions for every activity which a group plans to carry out? What might happen if they are not asked? Try them out for each activity participants are planning to carry out.
- If participants do not belong to a group with clear objectives, discuss how they might ask these questions for each of the possible objectives set on C13 by the group who wanted to improve health in their community. Alternatively, set some other imaginary objectives and work out what activities would be needed to achieve them.

Planning in a changing situation

- When a group plan their aims and activities, it is easy to be positive and to assume everything will go well. However, all kinds of things may change how planned activities work out. Often things don't turn out as planned.
- When planning activities, it is very helpful to consider what may unexpectedly change and put the activities at risk. For example, key members may become ill or leave the group; there may be a natural disaster; the Treasurer may disappear with the money; another group may start producing the same products.
- Once risks are considered, the group will be better prepared to deal with the unexpected.



Discussion

C15

■ Consider again the group wanting to improve their community's health. First of all, consider what they assume will remain the same. For example:

- *Assume clinic will remain open*
- *Assume that people will use improved water sources*
- *Can you think of more?*

■ What are possible risks they may have to face? For example:

- *Salaries will be increased by the government by 50%*
- *There may be a major outbreak of cholera or typhoid*

Can you think of more?

■ Think of the assumptions and risks for each one of the objectives you have listed.

■ Repeat this exercise again with some other imaginary objectives.

Measuring progress

Consider what the signs of progress will be for various different activities planned. How can you measure whether there has been any progress?

If you think health, agriculture or income may have improved a bit as a result of your planned activities, this will not tell you very much! If, for example, your activities have included introducing rabbit husbandry, you could plan to measure:

- the number of farmers deciding to look after rabbits
- the number of rabbits sold for meat
- the number of rabbits eaten by family members
- the number of cases of childhood malnutrition recorded in the local clinic
- the frequency of disease in rabbits
- the income from selling the furs.

Over two years, this would provide a good record of the effect of your activities on farmers, nutrition and income, and indicate ways of improving future activities.



- If you start activities and only consider measuring their effectiveness after two years, it may prove very difficult to discover what has been achieved. You need to think about how you will measure progress before starting work. Then you will be able to keep useful records that may show clearly the results of activities.
- Consider again the example of the community improving health. What ways could they use for measuring improvements in health? If participants are slow to suggest measurements, here are some ideas:
 - *The increase in children receiving vaccinations*
 - *The number of cases of childhood diarrhoea*
 - *The number of child deaths in the first two years of life.*
- Can you think of other activities and then suggest ways of measuring their effectiveness.
- Expect all these planning activities to take a long time. However, you will find they will prove very worthwhile. This kind of planning process is especially important if you hope to find funding for your work.
- Use all the different stages (aims, objectives, activities, assumptions and risks and ways of measuring progress) when writing funding applications!

New skills and information

- A group with clear objectives and plans will usually find it has a need for new skills or more information. Sometimes these can be found within the community or nearby and can be arranged informally. Sometimes group members do not know where to find these.
- Try visiting nearby organisations to ask for their advice. People may fear visiting organisations and officials on their own. However, acting for the group may give members the confidence to go out and visit with one or two other members. Training to learn new skills may cost money. If so, ask for advice about obtaining a scholarship or grant for this.



Discussion

C17

- Encourage participants to discuss any NGOs, government or church organisations which they are aware of. There may be several more. It is also helpful if one member knows somebody who may be able to give advice on several of these organisations. Begin with local knowledge and contacts and build upon them.
- Discuss where or to whom participants go to ask for advice or information when necessary?
- What other possible sources might there be?
- Would they have more confidence to visit new organisations or government officials if they went with other members? What would be the benefits of this?
- Are there useful workshops or training courses participants are aware of?
- Try to find other local groups with similar interests and experience. They may have useful knowledge to share about organisations, government officials and training opportunities.

Local resources

- Within the local community there are often many valuable sources of information. Elder people in particular are often a huge store of information about the local environment, cultural traditions and customs, and the uses of local plants and animals, particularly for their medicinal qualities.
- There is a quotation saying that ‘each time an old person dies, a whole library of information dies with them’.



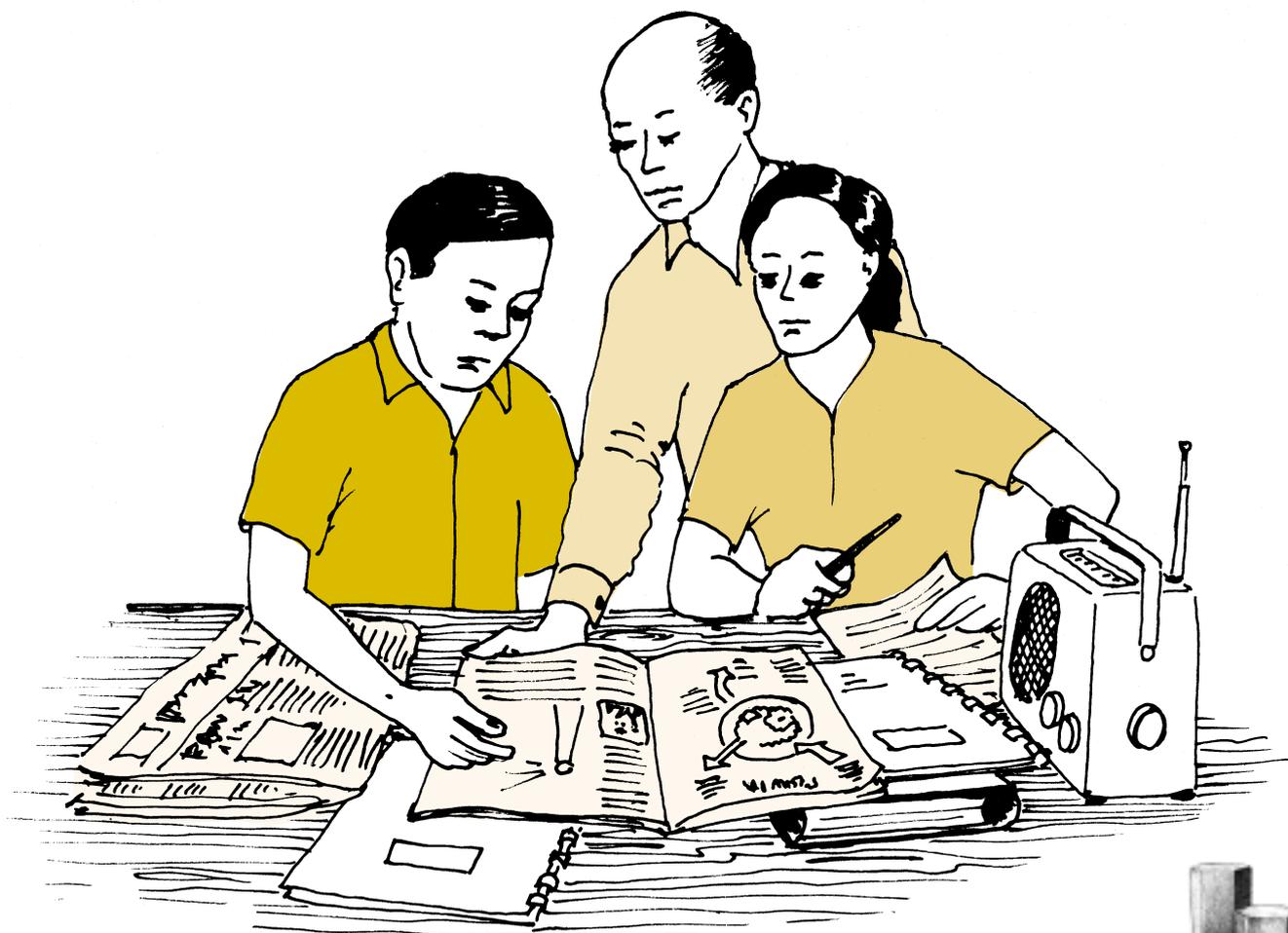
Discussion

C18

- What do participants think of this quotation? How may this problem be avoided? What information is it important to learn?
- Discuss what local sources of information participants find useful. Who (or what) do they turn to first?
- Are there innovative farmers in the local area – farmers who are always trying out new ideas, often regarded as slightly odd by others in the community? Can local people visit and learn from them?
- Are there herbalists or traditional birth attendants or retired men with experience in local government?
- What kind of information is available locally which participants fail to find?

Outside information

- New ideas often require new sources of information and resources. All groups need to develop their methods of obtaining such new information. This will often mean building relationships with individuals in organisations, especially where they may be able to help with obtaining useful information about other organisations, suppliers, purchasers of new goods, crafts or products.
- What printed information does the group have access to? Many newsletters and some books can be obtained free of charge. Try to build up a small resource centre.
- Information may bring the knowledge, power and confidence to make changes.



Discussion

C19

- Encourage participants to discuss any useful sources of outside information they have found. Help participants to list all the likely sources of outside information. Which ones have never been used by participants? Why? Examples might be research institutes, universities, British Council libraries and the internet.
- What sources of printed information do group members have access to? How could members share this information? Do any have access to newsletters? Often these will refer to other useful newsletters or resources.
- Does the group have any money to buy information in the form of useful books or manuals?

Keeping records

- Clear, brief and accurate records should be kept of every meeting. Good records (minutes) mean that any disagreements about decisions made can quickly be checked. They can also be used to look back and check progress.
- Good records should also be kept for each activity carried out. Many outside organisations may consider good records an indication of a group's ability to manage resources and funds. They can also provide a record of those present at every meeting. They should always be open to members.
- It is a good idea for members who act on behalf of the group to keep a diary in a notebook, recording each activity, how many came, what was shared or learnt, what were the results etc. This simple idea will provide good records and a lot of information when evaluating the work of the group.



Discussion

C20

- Consider the purpose of records kept by any groups or organisations of which participants have experience. Did they fill a useful purpose? How often were they referred back to?
- Could they have been more useful? Were members able to see copies of the records? Did they have too much detail or too little?
- Consider the present meeting. How would you keep records of the meeting? Is it necessary to record all the discussion or just the decisions reached? Should minutes be as short as possible or as long as possible?
- Have any participants kept a diary of their activities. Notes need only be very short, but could still prove a very useful record.

Networking

- Contact with groups in similar situations and with similar objectives can be very rewarding. Each group can bring different experiences to share. Networking with several such groups may be even more rewarding.
- Usually one group or individual needs to be responsible for maintaining regular contact between network members. Networks can keep contact through meetings, letters, newsletters, Email links, workshops or informal contacts.



- Often people feel they are on their own, cut off from help and similar groups. They feel they have to struggle alone to find out new skills and information. It can be very encouraging to discover that there are other similar groups.
- Networks are ways of linking people together. Usually networks link groups with a similar interest – such as community health, animal traction, sustainable agriculture or literacy.
- Members of networks are often linked by newsletters. Sometimes there may be workshops or regional meetings. Sometimes network members are encouraged to visit nearby contacts.
- Do participants have any experience of belonging to networks?
- Useful and free newsletters include the following:

GENERAL

Footsteps – PO Box 200, Bridgnorth, Shropshire, WV16 4WQ, UK
E-mail: footsteps@tearfund.org

AGRICULTURE

Spore – CTA, Postbus 380, 6700 AJ Wageningen, The Netherlands
E-mail: cta@cta.nl

AGROFORESTRY

Agroforestry Today – Circulation, Agroforestry Today, PO Box 30677, Nairobi, Kenya
E-mail: e.mwamunga@cgiar.org

HEALTH

Health Action – Healthlink Worldwide, Cityside, 40 Adler St, London, E1 1EE, UK
E-mail: info@healthlink.org.uk

Contact – CMAI, 2A–3 Local Shopping Centre, Janakpuri, New Delhi 110 058, India

Child to Child – Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London, WC1 HOA, UK

Looking back (evaluating)

- However much a group has managed to achieve, there will always be many more things that can be done. Sometimes a group will be very successful in some of its actions, whereas other actions may prove of little use. It's always good to set aside time to look back and consider where the group has come from.
- Evaluation looks back at what has been achieved, studies the groups' records, decides what have been the strengths and weaknesses, looks at how things could have been done more effectively and then makes new plans.
- A group who used the ideas suggested for planning will find it much easier to evaluate their work.
- Take time to be encouraged by progress, however small!



- Evaluation can take a lot of time, but it can be very valuable, so it is worth setting aside time each year to do this. Would it be helpful for someone from outside to take part in this as they can often see things very clearly? Could you ask another group to help with this?
- Often people rely on what they think is happening rather than what is actually happening. This is where surveys can help. For example, people may think that latrines are being well used, until a visit shows that this is not always the case. Decide what would be useful to measure and how the group members could do this.
- Carry out a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis. This can look at organisations, activities or the work of a group. First consider all the strengths, then the weaknesses. Then consider opportunities for new possibilities and finally anything which may become a threat.

Bible studies

These Bible studies are designed to use in small groups. They may provide a useful introduction to a meeting where different topics from the Guide are being discussed. Choose a study that will be linked to the topic you plan to study or that is relevant to your situation. During the studies, encourage people to reflect on what they read, to discuss the meaning and the implications of what they learn and, finally, to pray together about what they have learnt.

BIBLE STUDY 1

One in heart and mind

Read Philippians 2:1-4. Is there someone in your life who has treated you in a way that has been a great encouragement, comfort or support to you? Such people help us to realise the value of unity and love.

With any group it is important to:

- agree on a purpose and what we intend our group to achieve
- relate positively to one another.

Paul tells the Philippian church to be 'one in spirit and purpose'. Likewise, Acts 4:32 says: 'all the believers were one in heart and mind.'

- What happens if a group does not have a vision or purpose, or if the members do not all agree and share the vision?
- How should you decide on the central vision of your group so that all the members are fully behind it?

Jesus said: 'Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fall.' (Luke 11:17) It is important in any group to consider everyone's opinions, to ensure that each person in the group feels valued and is contributing in a positive way.

- Are you listening to others in your group?

Read Philippians 2:5-11. Christ Jesus is, of course, our greatest example. According to this passage, who is Jesus? Yet what was he prepared to do for us? How far will you forego your own position to encourage others?

Read Philippians 2:12-13. Is God achieving his purposes through your group?

BIBLE STUDY 2

Leadership: 1

Read 1 Timothy 3:1-10. This passage describes the qualities Paul considered important for leaders in the church. What does Paul say about the person who sets their heart on being an overseer (verse 1)?

- Which of the qualities listed for overseers and deacons (verses 2-5 and 7-9) might be important for your group leader(s) and why?
- What danger does verse 6 say there is in having a recent convert as a church leader? Could there be the same danger for your group if you had a new member leading?
- What does verse 10 say about deacons?

BIBLE STUDY 3

Leadership: 2

Read the following verses: Exodus 3:11, Judges 6:15, 1 Samuel 9:21, 1 Kings 3:7 and Jeremiah 1:6.

- What sort of people is God choosing for leadership roles here?
- What are their attitudes?
- What model of leadership does Jesus show us in John 13:3-5? What does God say he looks at when he is selecting a leader? (1 Samuel 16:7)

Having reviewed the qualities and attitudes a leader needs and the work to be done, many people might feel (as did some of these examples) inadequate and unable to fulfil the leadership role. This can be a healthy attitude if handled correctly, as it means the leader will look for support and not become proud.

BIBLE STUDY 4

Leadership: 3

- What help might your leader need to fulfil their role effectively? The following may give you some ideas:
 - God's help – Exodus 3:11-12; Judges 6:15-16
 - Help from others – Exodus 4:10-16; Exodus 17:12; Acts 6:1-7

- Prayer – Acts 6:6; 13:3; 1 Thessalonians 5:25
- Resources and workers – Exodus 36:2-3; Nehemiah 4:6
- Training alongside those with more experience, following the example of Joshua (Exodus 24:13; 33:11); Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21); Timothy (Philippians 2:22).

BIBLE STUDY 5

One body, many parts: 1

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 and Romans 12:3-8.

One body – There is much we can learn from these passages about how a group works together. In any group there are a variety of people but they form one body (1 Corinthians 12:12; Romans 12:4-5) and as such have a commitment to, or belong to, one another (1 Corinthians 12:14-16; 12:26).

- What does this mean in practice for your group?

Many parts – Each member of the group has a gift to use. In these passages several dangers are highlighted when thinking about our own gifts and those of others. What warning does Romans 12:3 give us? 1 Corinthians 12:21-25 teaches of a similar attitude.

- What happens when we overvalue our own gifts and undervalue those of others or begin to boast about our own gifts?

BIBLE STUDY 6

One body, many parts: 2

The Bible tells us that every person has gifts (1 Corinthians 12:7, 11). Jesus himself also gave us some strong teaching on what happens to those who do not use their gifts (Matthew 25:14-30).

- Do you know what your gifts are and are you using them (Romans 12:6-8)?

1 Corinthians 4:7 reminds us that all we have has been given to us – so there is no room for pride. However, what is the opposite danger (1 Corinthians 12:15-20)?

- Is your group functioning well, like a healthy body, where each different member is playing their part? How can you encourage one another to do so?

BIBLE STUDY 7

Planning

Read 1 Chronicles 22:1-19. David shows us the importance of making good preparations before beginning work. Luke 14:28-30 likewise encourages us to 'estimate the cost' before starting anything, so that people will not laugh at us because we began something and were then unable to finish it.

We can see how the Five Finger planning method applies to this passage (see sheet C14):

- WHAT is the action being planned? What did David have it in his heart to do (verse 7)?
- HOW is the work to be carried out? What resources were needed (verses 2-4, 14)?
- WHO is going to carry out the work? What part did David play and why (verse 5)?
 - Who is given the overall responsibility during the construction phase (verse 6)?
 - What kinds of workers were involved (verses 15-16)?
 - Who else does David encourage to help (verse 17)?
- WHERE is the work to be done? 1 Chronicles 21:18 tells us that David was guided by God as to where to build the temple.
- WHEN would the work be done (verses 7-10)?

All the practical details for this project are thoroughly planned: the aim; the site; the materials; the workers; the supervisor; the helpers and the timing.

- Who is really in charge of all this planning for the building of the temple?
(See for example, 1 Chronicles 28:18 and 1 Chronicles 29:7-13).

Proverbs 16:3 tells us: 'Commit to the Lord whatever you do and your plans will succeed.'

- Are you following this advice?

BIBLE STUDY 8

Nothing is impossible with God

Read Judges 7:1-22.

- Why does the Lord say he cannot deliver Midian into the hands of Gideon and his men?
- What does he not want Israel to end up doing?
- Which men turn back first (verses 2-3)?

The Lord uses the way that the men drink from the river to decide who else shall not go with Gideon. The majority of the army kneel down to drink and just 300 men lap with their tongues like a dog, with their hands to their mouths. God tells Gideon that these 300 men are the ones to go into the battle.

- How does your group choose who will do a certain task (verses 4-8)?
- Do you seek God's advice?
- We are told that the Midianite army is huge (verse 12). How does the Lord encourage Gideon not to be afraid and to believe that his small army will win the battle?

Gideon and his men use the resources they have to great effect: they work together (verses 17-18, 20), with each man playing his part (verse 21), 'for the Lord and for Gideon' (verses 18, 20). They know that the victory is the Lord's (verses 15, 22).

- How might this passage encourage your group as you face the tasks ahead of you?

If God has called us and we keep our eyes fixed on him, however immense the task seems, and however small our resources are, we will succeed: 'For with God, nothing is impossible.' (Luke 1:37)

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