

## *Facilitation for leadership, empowerment, and sustainability*

*Linda Mayoux 2011*



An example of facilitation from the back in Uganda. Janet Biira in the black suit is the facilitator.

GALS follows established good practice in participatory facilitation. But GALS moves even further away from 'teaching mode' because the goal is not 'awareness-raising' in the sense of conscientisation by outsiders, but to catalyse discussion, awareness and motivation 'from within' the participants themselves.

GALS challenges the view that only some people, women or men, can be leaders of a gender change process, and the rest can only follow or be dragged kicking and screaming. GALS **promotes the leadership qualities of everyone** in a change process. It helps women and men (in communities and organisations) to identify their strengths, contributions and responsibilities. It also helps them identify their weaknesses and develop participatory listening skills to work collaboratively with others. This then is part of developing the skills and motivation for ownership of the process and widespread scaling up through peer training.

Every learning 'event' **focuses on tangible actions** for change which can be taken by individuals immediately, before waiting for other actions identified at group and institutional levels. The precise purpose of every session and tool in terms of these action outputs needs to be very clear from the beginning, and the main focus of the facilitator's introduction. These actions include immediate practical steps towards change once participants get home, learning and further development of the documentation in individual diaries, and commitments to peer training. It is important that time is always left to discuss the action implications of the discussion – shortening analysis of information and/or giving some tasks for homework where necessary.

In GALS, the best **facilitation is 'from the back'** where the facilitator empowers participants to express themselves. Through encouraging participants to speak and asking a few pointed questions, good facilitation manages to arrive at a point where most of the important issues come up from participants themselves. This requires very close observation of the process – who is and who is not talking and why – and encouraging people who lack confidence. The facilitator barely speaks and does not express their own opinion during the discussion. The facilitator's main task is to ensure that all voices are fairly heard and the discussion is not dominated by particular people, and to make space for most of the main points to be made by participants themselves. Facilitation should be through asking questions, e.g. on contradictions between different responses, to provoke discussion. The facilitator should not be frightened by silence, but give people time and space to reflect. Only in case of great difficulty when issues cannot be raised through other means can the facilitator relate experience in other GALS processes from their own experience as this develops.

This requires practice, and is hard even for those trained in more conventional participatory awareness-raising techniques. On a practical level there are a few basic guidelines which support the above process. The facilitator should be seated on the same level as the participants, and whenever possible at the back. The facilitator should not touch the marker but ask others to draw. The main space which can be used by the facilitator to express their own views is when they have 5-10 minutes for final wrap-up: summarising discussion on contradictions and pointing to any omissions referring to CEDAW. A copy of CEDAW or any other women's rights/gender policies and principles to be used as the basis for the GALS process can be given out at the end. If some participants become very emotional because of their experience they should be asked if they wish to stay or need to go to see someone outside the group who can help them and come back when they are ready.

## **BOX 1: GALS FACILITATION PRINCIPLES**

### **Everyone can become a leader**

- Every learning event contributes to building participatory leadership capacities and systems for ongoing peer action learning as the basis for a sustainable process of change.

### **Action focus**

- Make the action purpose on every session and every tool clear at the beginning – why should people bother doing the exercise? What benefit is there for them?
- Focus every learning ‘event’ on tangible actions for change including:
- Immediate practical steps towards change once participants get home.
- Learning and further development of the documentation in individual diaries.
- Commitments to peer training.

### **‘Active facilitation from the back’**

- Ensure that all voices are fairly heard.
- Make space for most of the main points to be made by participants themselves.
- Be seated on the same level as participants.
- Don’t be afraid of silence.
- Don’t hold the marker.
- Save main points for a succinct 5-10 minute wrap up referring to pictorial version of CEDAW.

### **Everyone should have a voice**

- Start each session/day with a participatory pairwise recapitulation.
- Feedback should always start from the back or with minority participants.
- In group discussions introduce some object to represent a microphone. At the end of each stage this should be given to anyone who has not spoken.
- All participants and all responses should be applauded and respected.

### **‘One picture is worth a thousand words’**

- Drawing is a means of gaining clarity of vision and concepts, not ‘dumbing down’. Drawing increases participation and inclusion.
- Drawing enables very succinct visual documentation which is then much easier to track over time.
- Encourage people of all levels of education to draw and ensure that all facilitators are comfortable with drawing.
- Consider a pictorial number system or ensuring people can read numbers.
- Drawing should be seen as a step up rather than substitute for literacy in the longer term.

### **Keep documentation accessible and minimum**

- Every participant documents their own action learning process in A4 diaries or flipcharts using coloured markers.
- The main documentation should be the collective drawings as these are accessible to all participants.
- Some baseline and individual information can be collected in an empowering way through pictorial or written surveys during the sessions.
- Some selected information can be transferred from the drawings or pictorial surveys or (with permission) individual diaries to an Excel sheet.
- Use photography and/or video.
- Use this information then as the basis for well-planned research at a later stage, rather than trying to document everything from the beginning.

### **Make it fun**

Encourage continual creativity in songs, dance and drawings to develop an alternative culture and new ways of being.

Everyone should have a voice. Always start each session/day with a participatory pairwise recapitulation of the previous session, or questions on perceptions and expectations of the meeting while others are arriving (See Box 8). Pair discussions enable participants to start focusing on the issues as soon as they arrive, so that they are not sitting around with nothing to do while others are still arriving. They also allow for the fact that, even with the best will in the world, the reality is that not everyone will be able to arrive exactly on time. It is important not to penalise people who justifiably come a bit late on occasion. At the same time, if those who come on time are kept waiting, they are less likely to come on time next time. So the pair discussion is a useful way of overcoming this dilemma and reinforcing discipline. Although initially time consuming, the discussions should not be rushed. The participatory skills and discipline learned, and friendly understanding developed, through continual repetition of this exercise are as important as the content of the tools. As people get used to having these pair discussions at the beginning of each training they will go much more smoothly in subsequent sessions. Experience shows a very clear difference between those sessions where pair discussions have taken place and those where normal rounds of individual introductions were done because of a perceived lack of time. This is the case at all levels: in communities and also senior levels in institutions. The rest of the session is much smoother and more lively because people are already confident and participating. Pair discussions are also a very important part of the participatory skills training and network development. They help the facilitator to get a good sense of peoples' initial level of understanding and the language they use, and to observe the dynamics of the group and make any last minute minor adjustments to their facilitation accordingly.

Feedback should always start from the back or with minority participants (e.g. men first if they are poor and fewer in number) to show respect for those who are likely to be less confident and to promote inclusion. This means those who are larger in number or more likely to be dominant have to listen and respond to others in their presentations/suggestions. In group discussions introduce some sort of tool such as a stick or a banana to represent a microphone. It is only the person holding this tool who is allowed to talk. It is then possible to ensure that everyone has a turn to hold the tool, and limits on the number of times or length of time anyone can hold it can also be introduced. At the end make sure everyone has contributed: at the end of each stage anyone who has not spoken or drawn on the diagram must be given the 'microphone' or pen and encouraged to comment/draw on the diagram. All participants and all responses should be applauded and respected through a culturally relevant show of appreciation following each presentation. Make it clear to everyone that everyone's word is to be valued and respected, particularly the views of those who may be more disadvantaged than others in the group. This includes women, people who cannot read and write and also men if they are in a minority and not in leadership positions. No one should feel they cannot ask questions or say things which they feel – provided this is done in a real spirit of wanting to understand and does not undermine the free expression of others.

## **BOX 2: Pair discussions and plenary feedback**

### **Introduction**

Introduce pair discussions explaining that:

- The GALS pair discussions are extremely important and replace the normal individual introductions, and will also recapitulate on previous experience in GALS and cover expectations.

- They enable any session to start exactly on time with a fun activity, where those who are late miss out on the interesting discussion, but not on the substance of the training.
- It is important for people in training, and in groups, to listen and learn from each other and to speak up for each other.
- The aim of the training is also to build new networks and friendships, so people should be continually mixing with new people or those they do not know so well – or even those they do not currently get on with so well, so they understand each other better.
- This will be important after the training because the participants get better at collaborating with each other in getting facilities – many voices are louder than one.

### **Process**

- People should choose as a partner someone they do not know so well. If numbers are very large then small groups of 3 or 4 are fine, but here there must be a greater attempt to form groups from a similar background or status, and more than four will hinder the discussion. Before proceeding, check if the people speak the same language; if not, make some adjustments.
- Stress that each person will feedback what their partner said – not their own views, so they have to listen carefully.

If this is the very first session, each pair should discuss:

- Name and (if they are not already from the same group) where they live and which group or organisation they belong to.
- What they have learned from the GALS Gender Justice Diamond – what aspects they liked about being a woman or a man and what they wanted to change, prioritising 3 of each between them for the plenary.
- Expectations of this training, prioritising 3 per pair between them for the plenary.
- Each participant should choose her/his own personal symbol if the participant does not already have one.

If this is a later session then people should discuss:

- 3 key learnings from the previous session.
- 3 continuing questions/difficulties.
- 3 expectations of this session.

### **Formal welcome and start of the session (2 minutes)**

No more than 10 minutes after the stated start time of the session, there should be a very short formal welcome to bring the pair discussions to a close and formally start the session.

### **Plenary feedback (10-15 minutes)**

Each participant then feeds back to the group what their partner said. All that is needed as outputs from the plenary are:

- a list of the priorities for change.
- a list of the expectations.

To speed things up feedback should start at the back, each pair adding new aspects, rather than duplicating what has already been said.

The facilitator then gives a short summary response on how far expectations are likely to be met by the training and which expectations will have to be addressed by other means, and a brief summary of any other relevant points arising to introduce the session itself.

GALS adapts a small number of very simple and intuitive diagramming tools to specific gender issues, contexts and organisational needs. Particularly where some participants cannot read and write, it is best to do as much as possible through drawing in order to develop drawing/representational skills and free up the discussion. What is required in GALS are not fine art paintings, but simple symbolic representations. Even people who cannot read and write are often able to use and facilitate these after an event like that described here, with very little follow up. The diagrams can contain written information, or a mixture of drawing and writing. All the diagrams discussed here can be used creatively for ever deeper analysis through using, for example colour coding, differences in size and location of symbols, different types of line etc. Although those who can read and write or have formal education may feel uncomfortable drawing at first, if facilitated in the right way this is a liberating experience and leads to greater clarity of thought even at senior levels in organisations – ‘a picture is worth 1000 words’ (See Box 10). Collective drawing can be great fun and very useful in team-building; some suggestions are given in Box 10. Within about 10 minutes, left alone with friends to gain confidence, most people will be happily drawing, even if initially they refuse and say they cannot draw<sup>1</sup>. The facilitator should not touch the marker – participants should do all drawings themselves in order to develop skills and increase confidence and ownership.

### **BOX 3: ‘A picture is worth 1000 words’: Drawing fun**

Where people are not used to drawing it is possible to make this fun through:

#### **Drawing charades**

Ask everyone to think of a concept and draw this on a piece of paper. One person is then selected to present their drawing. They hold it up and other participants are given one question each to guess what the drawing means. At the end participants then give some suggestions on how the drawing could be made clearer.

#### **Soulmates**

Participants suggest a difficult concept related to the session. They then draw this on a piece of paper. Then they mingle with the other participants to find their ‘soulmate’ – the person whose drawing they think most resembles their own. This normally leads to formation of about 3-5 groups with different drawings who can then compare as the basis for clarifying the concept (see below).

#### **Road journey**

Where people are not even used to holding the pen, it is a good idea to start with the road journey.

- The first circle will be quite large and their hand may shake. Reassure them that this is quite normal and reassure them that this always happens. Many other people have gone through this stage, but if they persevere with drawing it will become much easier, and then it is even a short step to doing numbers and eventually learning to write.
- The second circle should be easier. Then the straight lines come more quickly. By this stage the participant should be reasonably confident drawing.
- The real next test comes with the symbol for the business activity. Explain that now they have drawn circles and lines. All drawings are just combinations of circles and lines – long ones short ones, squishy ones, bent ones etc. So how would they start to draw a symbol for their activity.

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<sup>1</sup> The video and materials on the palsnetwork site show this process [www.palsnetwork.info](http://www.palsnetwork.info)

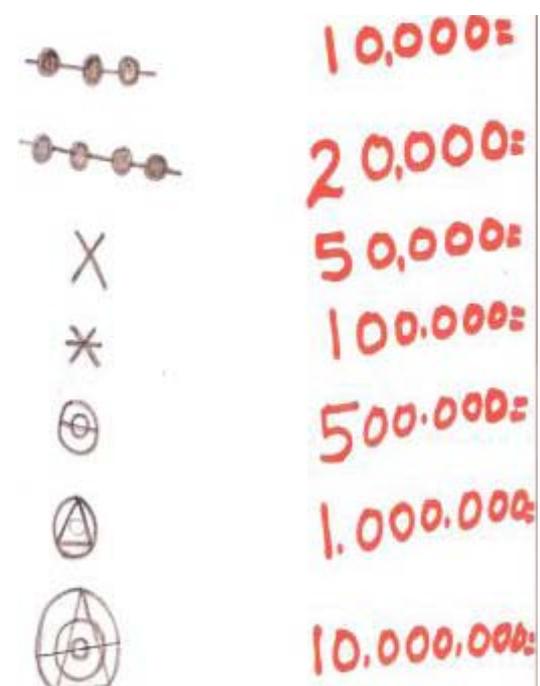
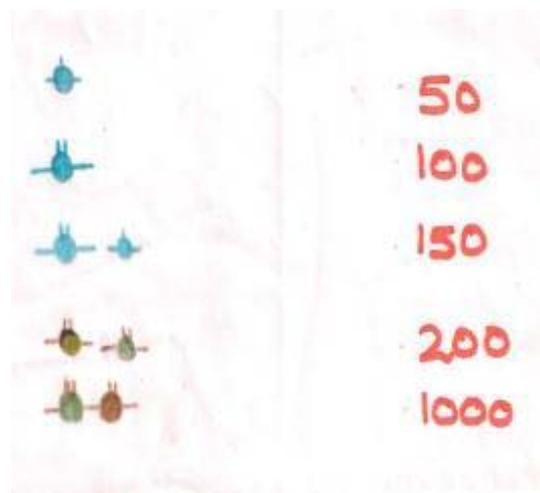
- Continually probe to ask them how you know that what they have drawn is what they mean. For example initially a pig may just be a circle, but it needs four legs, it also needs a curly tail so we know it's a pig and not a goat, it also needs something to show whether it is a local or exotic pig, male or female etc. By this time people are generally laughing and having fun. Then continue this probing for all subsequent drawings till they are confident and making these sorts of distinctions on their own.

It is also possible that at some stage a number system will need to be developed. This is particularly so once incomes or scale of activities increases beyond very simple strings of strokes. It is important to consider whether a new pictorial system is needed – this is usually easier where people already have pictorial systems for recording. These may make simple arithmetical calculations easier as for example systems based on the abacus. In many cases people who cannot read and write are better at mental arithmetic than people who can read, because they have to be able to calculate so they are not cheated. In other contexts it is better to support people to learn numbers as they are written – e.g. learning from their children or group members.

Finally, it is really important that all sessions should be fun. People should be encouraged to start and end with some culturally appropriate event such as a song or a dance which reinforces the basic philosophy and gender justice principles of the process.

**(vi) Documentation, monitoring and evaluation**

It is important right from the beginning to have a clear idea of how much documentation is required, and exactly what to focus on, when and how it will be used. It is possible to use the tools described here for participatory research. When well facilitated, even by people who cannot read and write, the information which comes out is as quantitatively reliable as many surveys and extremely rich in qualitative detail. Capturing all this information to support



collective action and advocacy is done from Stage 2, and particularly Stages 3 and 4 as described in more detail in the relevant sections, particularly Stage 4.

The main form of documentation at the beginning should be ensuring that all information is systematically put on the diagram outputs at individual and collective levels. In all cases, the key is to put on the diagrams the information most useful to participants for increasing incomes and changing gender inequalities. One rapporteur can sit at the back of each large group. These diagrams are then monitored over time, together with the peer training process.

GALS makes substantial use of photography and participatory video. As much of the discussion as possible at the main events should be captured on video – not the long speeches by ‘important people’ but what women and men are saying in the groups. Then a write up can be done with a clear understanding of the important focal points.

Any diagrams for external use should be well labelled after the discussion e.g. through use of pinned or sticky labels. The organisation can use the information at any point in time as a basis for more detailed quantitative or qualitative study on particular issues or in further capacity-building. The diagrams are also powerful evidence to support advocacy and decision-making. But it is important not to overload the diagrams or participants’ time with information which is not directly relevant to their own goals. Lots of outsiders going around with notebooks and asking questions can easily detract from the main objective of the events, i.e. to further an empowerment process owned by participants themselves.