

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE **TOOLBOX**

Group methods for sharing, discovery and co-creation



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Report Team

Principal author: Meena Arivananthan.

Contributing authors: Angèle Bijanu, Paula Bulancea, Jens Matthes, Diksha Mudbhary-Sitaula, Eric Mullerbeck, Paola Storchi, Ian Thorpe.

Other contributors: Rinko Kinoshita, Donna Murdoch.

Principal editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

Executive editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert Review Panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar, Edgar Tan (Straits Knowledge).

Additional expert reviewers: George Laryea-Adjei, Carolyn Bacquet, Angèle Bijanu, Anna Boelens, Lucy Braun, Nima Fallah, Abel Henry, Shannon O'Shea, Michael Robbins, Paola Storchi, Timothee Tosti. The contributions of the members of the UNICEF Knowledge Exchange community are gratefully acknowledged.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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(Refer to 'Credits' section of individual tools for details of contributions.)



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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

This Toolbox in its latest edition, as well as all individual tools, are available online for free download at <http://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/>

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A quick guide to choosing a tool

This is a short overview of the tools, organized according to what kind of knowledge exchange process they support. **Select your desired process from the table below, then check out the suggested tools.** For more detailed information, see 'How to use this toolbox' in the Introduction.

Tool types



in-person



online

Process	Suggested tools	(Criteria) Choose this tool when you want to:
1. Stimulating creativity, generating new ideas 	 Brainstorming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand a group's creativity using a versatile, familiar, and powerful tool
	 Topsy Turvy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take an innovative approach to brainstorming
	 VIPP Card Collection and Clustering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather diverse creative inputs and organize them as a group
	 World Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply the power of small-group conversations to gather input on multiple issues
	 Buzz groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Add quick, easy creative conversations to any plenary meeting
	 Online Jam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene a group online at a fixed time Brainstorm (text-based)
2. Learning and sharing lessons within groups 	 VIPP Card Collection and Clustering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classify and prioritize learnings together
	 World Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learn in small groups that allow conversations, questions and answers
	 Buzz Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complement standard presentations by adding short conversations and sharing among participants
	 E-discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct an online discussion over days/weeks, with participants contributing on their own schedules Help develop answers to key policy or implementation questions Explore core issues and topics for team learning
3. Learning from experts 	 Lightning Talk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage focused, dynamic presentations Accommodate several presenters in a limited time
	 Expert Interview (with audience)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer a dynamic, engaging alternative to traditional expert presentations

<i>(Learning from experts, continued)</i>	<i>Expert Interview (with audience, cont.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants take the lead in asking questions; experts remain the main speakers throughout
	 Fishbowl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer a spontaneous, conversational alternative to traditional expert presentations • Participants take the lead in asking questions and can replace experts as speakers
	 Chat Show	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold a learning conversation with several experts at once • Facilitator takes the lead in asking questions and animating the discussion
	 Buzz groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complement standard presentations by adding short conversations and sharing among participants
	 Webinar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a group online at a fixed time • Experts share audio-visual presentations • Disseminate new guidance to key audiences • Conduct training on important new tools, methods or procedures
	 Online Jam (Ask Me Anything version)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a group online at a fixed time • Offer text-based online Q & A with experts or others with unique, relevant experiences to share
4. Learning BEFORE a project/ initiative 	 SWOT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan effectively for any type of project/ initiative, either quickly or in depth • Analyse important decisions, proposals or problems
	 VIPP Card Collection and Clustering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly identify and prioritize relevant issues
	 Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a shared understanding among your team of current opportunities and challenges in a project/ initiative
	 Online Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn from others who have tackled similar challenges • Build a strong foundation of practical knowledge over time, which can be applied as needed in different activities
	 Virtual Peer Assist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn from others who have tackled similar challenges • Hold a single focused learning event online
	 Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiently identify priorities and issues for later action
5. Learning DURING a project/ initiative 	 After Action Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuously improve team effectiveness and results during a project/ initiative
	 VIPP Card Collection and Clustering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quickly identify and prioritize relevant issues

<i>(Learning during a project/ initiative, continued)</i>	 Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a shared understanding among your team of current opportunities and challenges in a project/ initiative
	 Online Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a community that can provide ongoing answers and advice during any relevant activity
	 Virtual Peer Assist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get help on particularly challenging issues that you have encountered
6. Learning AFTER a project/ initiative, or at major moments of reflection 	 Retrospect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out in-depth team reflection in order to capture and prioritize lessons, and improve results
	 Debrief (one-on-one)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capture lessons on potentially sensitive topics from individuals in a confidential setting
	 Timeline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the how and why of project results
	Lessons Learned (template)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write up lessons for future use
	 Surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficiently capture a selection of lessons from large numbers of individuals
7. Developing and improving a shared practice or area of work 	 Online Communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage the power of networking for building capacity over time, solving problems and answering key questions as they arise

Tools and skills for opening, running and evaluating meetings and events!
*Use these **together** with any other knowledge exchange tools*

8. Running effective in-person knowledge events 	 Icebreakers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Break the ice’ in order to build trust, promote connecting and sharing among participants
	 Real-Time Meeting Evaluation Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the success of an event/ workshop while it is happening, so you can make needed changes and maximize the event’s impact
	 Meeting Facilitation (a skill, not a tool)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote participation, avoid or resolve meeting-related problems and maximize results, during any and all in-person knowledge events

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FOREWORD

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Jeffrey O'Malley, Director, Division of Data, Research and Policy, UNICEF

This Toolbox was conceived as a resource for UNICEF staff and partners to support a range of essential knowledge exchange activities in development for children. The flexibility, relevance and accessibility of the tools have inspired us to share it publicly in order to maximize its impact and potential benefit.

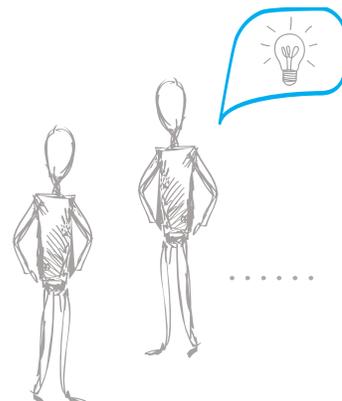
The Toolbox is a convenient reference for any practitioner in search of a guide for the selection and application of proven knowledge exchange methods. It has an important role in promoting the uptake and use of powerful tools that, although long known in various forms, remain underused. It will empower decision-makers to choose from a variety of methods that can be applied individually or in combination, to capture and apply knowledge to help make progress on the biggest priorities and toughest development challenges for children, families and countries around the world.

In addition to providing simple tools for efficient **knowledge sharing**, the Toolbox also offers a wide array of other methods for **learning from experience** in order to improve practice and results; for effective and context-appropriate **planning and decision-making**; and for **co-creation of solutions**, in which the knowledge of diverse participants is brought to bear in order to devise solutions that no individual could have produced alone.

Because these tools are applied in group contexts, they also offer a major collateral benefit: They serve to **bring teams, groups and networks 'onto the same page'**, by establishing a common understanding of challenges and perspectives on potential actions, and building the connections necessary for effective teamwork. Development challenges for children can only be solved collaboratively, through the efforts of multiple contributors working together. These tools have a natural and significant role in strengthening that process.

This Toolbox is a living document. We welcome your feedback and suggestions. Additional tools will be added over time, along with relevant examples of how they have been applied in various stages of policy and planning. We will also improve and revise the existing tools from time to time based on your feedback and our experience in using them. We hope you will enjoy applying these tools and will share them with others.

INTRODUCTION



This Toolbox was created to help UNICEF staff and partners to plan and implement successful knowledge sharing events. A successful event is one that creates or shares significant **practical** knowledge – knowledge that is relevant for achieving results. This may be academic or technical, or it may be ‘know-how’, based on experiences of how to achieve results in a particular context, or how to address specific challenges.

Practical knowledge can be created or shared via concrete outputs produced through a knowledge event, and through individual learning by the participants. Many of the tools in this Toolbox are intended to produce concrete outputs. For example, the Retrospect should result in a record of the discussion that includes lessons and insights applicable to the project/initiative being reviewed; the Timeline yields a product of the same name, depicting the key actions and turning points that led to the outcome (or that will lead to the outcome, if the project/ initiative being considered is still only partly complete).

However, concrete outputs alone should almost never be the main focus of a knowledge event. Equally or even more important are the benefits to the participants in terms of **learning and increased knowledge gained through self-reflection and feedback** as a result of the participatory process. Together, reflection, sharing and open feedback are the indispensable foundation for creating novel, relevant ideas and solutions. Great project ideas typically are not created by individuals working in isolation, nor are such ideas entirely new; instead, they generally come from combinations of old ideas that come together for the first time when people meet to discuss, reflect and share ideas and views. Reflection and open discussion are also key ingredients for building shared understanding and trust among participants, so that they can undertake effective collective action.

This Toolbox is for anyone who needs to make effective decisions, facilitate or guide effective decision-making processes, or manage or coordinate group work in development that requires the knowledge of multiple persons to succeed. Some of the audience may be full-time specialists in knowledge exchange/knowledge management, while others may be managers and team leaders who need effective solutions to challenging problems. (Managers and leaders do not necessarily need to know how to apply the tools themselves: It may be enough for them to know that relevant, effective tools exist, so that they can find resources and



persons who can apply them on behalf of the team.) Still others will be technical specialists who want a few additional tools in their arsenal, to complement their own research and analytical skills. Such users may ‘specialize’ in only a few of these tools, and may turn to others for application of the other tools.

This Toolbox is a work of research, compilation and adaptation. All of the tools in this Toolbox are based on methods and approaches used previously by UNICEF and other organizations and individuals. They have been edited, adapted based on the experience of the many contributors, and reviewed by a panel of internal and external experts and practitioners. This Toolbox aspires to offer a selection and distillation of multiple sources for each tool (listed in the References) into a whole that blends just enough theory to see the big picture, with clear, easy-to-follow and complete instructions for application. With only a couple of exceptions, these tools are applied in groups, either in-person or online.

How each tool is organized

Each tool description includes the following sections:

What is...? (Overview): A concise summary of the benefits and requirements of the tool.

When and why to use: A more detailed description of the benefits, the best situations in which to use the tool, and sometimes when NOT to use it.

How to apply: A step-by-step guide on applying the tool, from planning to implementation and follow-up.

Tips for success: Advice on how to get the best results.

Variations: Modified approaches to using the tool, usually with slightly different objectives in mind.

Example: Some tools include an example based on use of the tool in practice.

References: A list of the principal sources used to compile the tool.

Credits: List of contributors.

How to use this Toolbox

We recommend that you start by identifying the type of real business (development) challenges you wish to address, and then look to see which knowledge exchange tools might help you with those challenges. Knowledge exchange is not an end in itself; its purpose is to empower staff and partners to overcome challenges – especially the thorny ones – and achieve the best possible results. Here is the recommended sequence of steps:

1. **Understand the overall objective of the project/ initiative you are supporting, and the key challenges that have been identified thus far.** You don’t have to know in detail how the objective will be accomplished (and if planning is one of the key challenges, then there are several tools which can help, such as SWOT or Timeline).
2. **Think about what kind of knowledge exchange process will be most helpful for getting closer to your overall objective, and/or for overcoming key challenges.** These processes include:

- **Stimulating creativity and generating new ideas:** For solving specific identified challenges, feeding in to production of specific outputs/products, and during the early stages of a project/ initiative.
 - **Group learning:** For peer-to-peer learning within groups, where group members identify, discuss and prioritize key facts, ideas, experiences and other knowledge together.
 - **Learning from experts:** For focused learning on specific topics from experts (anyone with in-depth/ specialized knowledge of a relevant topic).
 - **Learning before embarking on a project/ initiative:** For effective advance planning and decision-making, including incorporating the most useful and relevant knowledge into plans.
 - **Learning during a project/ initiative:** For feeding back learning into ongoing activities, in order to improve results.
 - **Learning after a project/ initiative** (or at a major turning point / moment of reflection): For formally capturing in-depth lessons that can be used in the next phase of the project, or in other similar projects
 - **Ongoing development and improvement of a shared practice or area of work:** For laying a basis of knowledge and establishing a collaborative professional network, in order to sharpen organizational practice for achievement of best results in any related projects/ initiatives.
3. **Consider who needs to participate in the process – to learn, to share their knowledge, or both – and how you can convene them.** The right mix of participants ensures that the key actors in the project are all represented, and also that there is diversity in roles and opinions; diversity helps ensure creative conversations. In-person meetings are usually the most fruitful for learning and co-creation; can you assemble participants for an in-person meeting? If not, you may need to use an online method.
 4. **Equipped with knowledge of the objective and challenges, the most promising process(es) and the participants, refer to the Entry Points table below and select a tool or tools.** Remember that multiple tools can be combined; for example, combine Timeline with Retrospect for a particularly powerful approach to learning after the conclusion of a major project; or combine Topsy Turvy with Card Collection and Clustering to discover and prioritize innovative solutions for a challenge. There are many more combinations possible.
 5. **Confirm your choice by reading the overview section ('What is...?') of any tools you are considering.** Each overview is designed to concisely summarize the value of the tool and what is required in order to implement it.
 6. **If you are planning an in-person meeting**, consider also:
 - The role of Meeting Facilitation. It is a key to the success of all of the tools in this Toolbox (and indeed of any group work).
 - The value of Icebreakers for opening up sharing among participants.

- The possible use of Real-Time Meeting Evaluation Tools.

See the articles on Meeting Facilitation, Icebreakers and Real Time Evaluation tools, in this Toolbox.

7. **Apply the tool**, using the detailed description in the corresponding article in this Toolbox as a guide. Then reflect on your experiences, and if appropriate, return at a later point to use a different process/tool. If possible, share your experiences with the creators of this Toolbox.

A note on workshops

A workshop usually consists of multiple sessions, over several hours or a few days. When selecting knowledge exchange tools for use in a workshop, keep in mind not only the objectives of the relevant project/ initiative, but also the immediate goals of the workshop. Workshops often aim to produce specific concrete outputs; knowledge exchange tools should contribute to the production of those outputs. In such cases, tie the work of each session to the production of those outputs as clearly as possible. For example, if the goal of your workshop is to create an action plan, then map out how each tool you use at a session of the workshop (World Café, SWOT, etc.) will contribute to the action plan. Involve the workshop managers and facilitators in this process; some brainstorming and several advance planning sessions may be needed. Once the workshop begins, communicate the objectives, desired workshop outputs and outputs from each session clearly to the participants.

Some tools may be most useful in the early stages of a long event, notably SWOT. A SWOT session can set the stage for later sessions, by identifying opportunities to be acted on, weaknesses to be overcome, and threats to counter; these can become fodder for brainstorming and sessions focusing on experts (Chat Show, Expert Interview) with knowledge particularly relevant to one of the factors identified in the SWOT.

TOOLS

AFTER ACTION REVIEW

/ Continuous improvement of ongoing projects or initiatives /

WHAT IS AN AFTER ACTION REVIEW?

The After Action Review (AAR) is a quick reflective exercise for team-based learning during a project or ongoing initiative, in order to improve results in the current project. The AAR facilitates team learning from experience; it does not require outside experts. AARs can be very powerful tools for change, especially if they are repeated at major project milestones.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator (can also be a participant)*
- *Rapporteur*
- *Flipchart*
- *2 - 15 participants*
- *45 - 90 minutes*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

The AAR is best used:

▲ **To improve practice in the context of a specific project.** Apply AAR to identify problems and find solutions, to surface issues that might otherwise remain hidden, and to draw out learning for improving results, especially in activities that will be repeated.

Improved results come from corrections and improvements in the methods being used, from better coordination among the persons working on the project, and from improved ability to respond to change during the project.

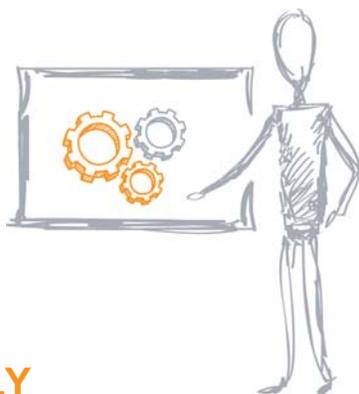
▲ **To develop capacity within your team.** Repeated use of AARs during a project can improve communication, clarify team roles and objectives, build confidence among team members in their joint capacity to overcome challenges, and can also accelerate the building of individual capacities and competencies by team members..

▲ **To reflect on significant project moments.** Use the AAR upon completion of significant tasks or project phases, when the team is still available and the memory of past actions is

fresh, and when challenges, opportunities and new approaches have occurred during the project.

The application of AAR, over time, leads to new or revised knowledge, new and more effective ways of working together, and eventually to mastery within the context of the project. The AAR is for continuously improving and strengthening capacity for action, not for assessment or reporting. Actions from the AAR should be taken forward by the participants.

The AAR is a process for quick, action-oriented learning and improvement during an ongoing project. For more in-depth learning at the end of a project, use the Retrospect method described elsewhere in this Toolbox.



HOW TO APPLY

Prepare in advance

1. Plan for AARs and integrate them into your project work schedule and routine.

Before you start a long-term project, set aside a small amount of time periodically to do an AAR. For example you could do them at the same time as any other regularly scheduled reviews. For shorter-term projects, workshops, activities or events, schedule the AAR right after the activity has been completed.

When you are ready to start

2. Convene the group, and assign a facilitator and rapporteur. Pose the following four questions to the whole group. For each question, collect answers, get opinions from all participants, and note any trends that emerge. Then proceed to the next question.

Question 1: What was supposed to happen (in the project or activity under review)? The answer(s) should be a brief recap of the objectives or intended results. This step is often crucial in gauging if all persons involved understood the action(s) to be taken.

Question 2: What actually happened? Obtain the answer through personal accounts of the participants. Ask participants always to refer to facts that support their conclusions about what happened.

Question 3: Why was there a difference (between the plan and the actual result)? Discuss and agree on the reasons for the differences. Identify the factors that contributed to success or lack thereof.

Question 4: What will we do next time (the same, and differently)? You are looking for specific ideas for action that can be implemented by your team.

3. Create a brief action plan, or simply assign responsibilities for relevant actions, in order to maintain the successes and improve on the shortcomings.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



Planning

▲ Plan for AARs during the planning stage of the project/ initiative: Assign dates and let the team know about what is expected.

▲ AARs should be carried out soon after important milestones or turning points, while the team is still available and memories are fresh.

▲ Avoid using AAR for evaluating performance (e.g. PER) or for assigning credit or blame; to do so will likely kill the process.

▲ Try to involve all of the persons who play key roles in implementation; if a key person is omitted, then future action may not benefit from the reflection that the AAR facilitates, and needed change may not take root.

▲ AARs involving large groups or sensitive topics may work better with an impartial external facilitator, but most sessions can be facilitated by a member of the group.

▲ A 'champion' who knows the value of

AARs in practice can be very valuable for instituting and sustaining their regular use, but if no champion is available, don't let that stop you. Get started and use them.

Running the AAR

▲ Because the AAR is a group learning process, minimizing the impact of hierarchy is essential. Try to seat people in a circle, and encourage participation by emphasizing the value of everyone's contribution. Consider using index cards to collect the answers from participants, in order to further reduce the impact of hierarchy.

▲ During the discussion, focus on issues and learnings that are relevant to future activity. Reflecting and learning from past actions must be accompanied by planning and decision-making on what you will do, or do differently, in future. Make the recommendations both actionable and as specific as possible.

▲ Don't over-analyse and get bogged down with unnecessary detail; discuss only the most important factors and move along.

▲ Openness and honesty are key to making this work. Done well, it can help to build trust and minimise fear of admitting mistakes. The focus should be on learning.

▲ All the rules of good facilitation apply, including respecting and listening to one another, leaving aside preconceptions, exploring disagreement rather than shutting it off, keeping

the meeting focused on the process, and balancing participation among group members.

▲ The learning from an AAR can be captured in a brief (e.g. 1 page) action plan. If you choose to do so, then keep the writing simple; the real output of an AAR is the shared learning and understanding, and the writing is simply an adjunct. In the action plan, maintain confidentiality and do not attribute any comments to specific individuals; this will help maximize openness and trust among participants. Disseminate the action plan to relevant team members as needed.

Follow-up

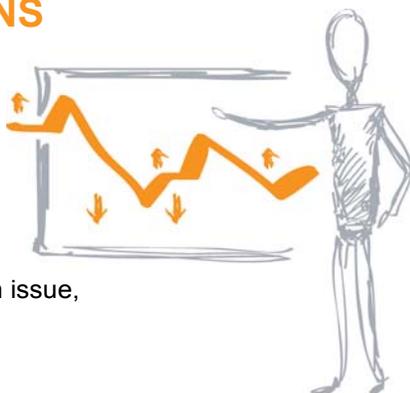
▲ Be aware that iteration is often necessary in order to put learning into practice. This means that a series of small, light AARs will yield more benefit than one lengthy session.

▲ Don't judge the value of the AAR method with just a single trial. Although it is a simple technique, it can take time for a team to find its rhythm with the AAR. At least 3-5 iterations of the AAR within a project are suggested as a good starting point. Through repeated use of the AAR, team members will learn how to bring important issues to the group, how to identify key learnings, how to filter out non-essentials and how to apply learnings to change practice.

VARIATIONS

▲ 2-5-1 Storytelling:

For use in situations where reticence or unfamiliarity is an issue,



try 2-5-1 Storytelling¹. The numbers refer to specific points that each participant should make, and the 5 in particular refers to the 5 fingers. The first 2 points can be dropped in situations where all team members know each other well.

2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Who I am 2. Summary of my experience
5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Little finger: Aspects of the project receiving insufficient attention 2. Ring finger: Relationships, including new relationships that others should be informed of, relationships needing improvement or relationships that need to be created 3. Middle finger: Things that have frustrated me or that have obstructed success 4. Index finger: What I want to tell others, such as partners, senior managers, etc., about how things could be improved 5. Thumb: Things that have gone well
1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The most important point or idea for future action

▲ **Cascading AARs:** For a large project with many participants, or with geographically separated teams, you can implement cascading AARs. First carry out an AAR in each of several smaller teams. Then get a representative from each team to meet and do a second level AAR in order to combine the results of the initial set of AARs; this completes one cascaded AAR. Repeat as necessary. Carrying out cascading AARs is more time-intensive, but can help synthesize project learning across several widely separated groups, and can keep the number of participants in

¹ Created and described by Karuna Ramanathan and written up by Robert Swanwick; see references list.

each session manageable. (Note: For the second level AAR, ensure the representatives have decision-making authority so that discussions lead to future improvement.)

If you use cascading AARs, then ensure that each group uses the same methods for recording the discussions (e.g. a flipchart, computer-based note-taking, group members writing on cards, etc.) This will greatly facilitate aggregating and/or comparing the outputs of the various groups.

▲ AAR in a hurry (with only 3 questions):

If you are pressed for time, you can try a version of the AAR with only three questions. This is best suited for teams already familiar with the AAR approach; it does give up some of the analytical power that comes with the more structured 4-question approach described above, in favour of a faster process. The three questions are:

1. What worked well, and why?
2. What did not work well?
3. What can be improved, and how?

Then create a **brief** action plan, or simply assign responsibilities for relevant actions.



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CREDITS

Author: Eric Mullerbeck.

Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert Review Panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar, Edgar Tan, Meena Arivanathan.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

This Toolbox in its latest edition, as well as all individual tools, are available online for free download at <http://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/>

BRAINSTORMING

/ Free-flowing creativity for problem-solving /

WHAT IS BRAINSTORMING?

Brainstorming is a quick and easy way to generate novel ideas for problem solving and innovation. As the name suggests, Brainstorming is meant to stimulate or excite the brain into thinking about issues in a new way. It encourages people to arrest conventional, logical thinking and embrace spontaneity, originality, and imagination

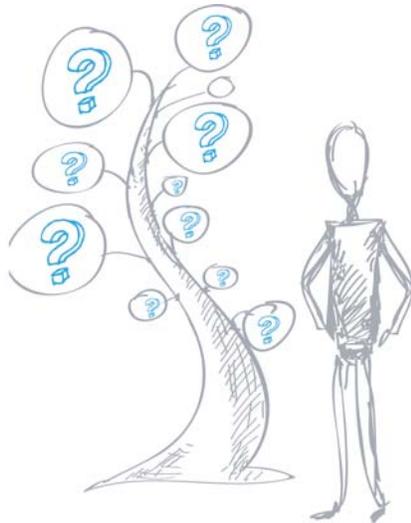
Responding to a single, specific problem or question, participants in a Brainstorming session express their suggestions or ideas quickly and spontaneously, without much processed thought or reflection. Free association and building on the ideas of others are encouraged; criticism and censorship are forbidden. The focus is on quantity rather than quality, the goal being to generate as many ideas as possible in a short time. The assumption is that the greater the number of ideas generated, the greater the chance of producing a novel and effective solution.

Alternative Brainstorming methods (see below under Variations) allow facilitators to change the approach when needed.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *Rapporteur (optional for groups up to 10; required for larger groups)*
- *Plenty of cards (10 x 20 cm/ 4 x 8 inch) or post-it notes of different colours, and marker pens, (for recording and clustering ideas)*
- *Flipchart or laptop & projector (for displaying the Brainstorming question)*
- *Flipchart paper (placed on walls/boards) or pin boards, for putting up post-its/cards*
- *Coloured dots/stickers (optional, for ranking exercise)*
- *Meeting space (e.g., isolated room, park, garden)*
- *5 - 15 participants (per facilitator; see 'Brainstorming in larger groups' under Variations)*
- *20 - 30 minutes minimum*

WHEN AND WHY TO USE



Brainstorming is a group method enabling participants to look at a problem or question creatively. When correctly applied, Brainstorming temporarily halts the critical processes that would ordinarily snuff out potentially useful ideas before they could surface.

This is useful for:

- ▲ **Problem solving**, when fresh insight is needed.
- ▲ **Innovation**, when starting a campaign/ project, or enlisting external support.
- ▲ **Discovering diverse solutions**, when a problem has many facets.

Brainstorming requires only a little preparation and minimal equipment. It is versatile and can be applied in a variety of ways:

- ▲ **Standalone Brainstorming.** To help overcome a problem or challenge, you can invite participants from existing team, or from several teams, to offer their suggestions. Once you have gathered ideas through Brainstorming, these can be clustered, refined, prioritized and applied as needed; the original Brainstorming participants may or may not be involved in the later processes.

▲ **Brainstorming during a multi-session workshop.** Brainstorming is effective when used early during a workshop to generate ideas that can be culled and refined in later workshop sessions. This helps involve participants in shaping the course of the workshop, and thus creates a sense of ownership and commitment. Brainstorming can also be used later during a workshop, to collect ideas that the workshop may have inspired in participants and define next steps in a project/ initiative.



HOW TO APPLY

Prepare in advance

1. Define the question or problem for brainstorming, ensuring that it is appropriately challenging, provocative and relevant for the participants. Write it down in a brief statement. A good question is indispensable for a good session. Refer to the 'Tips for success' below for guidance on formulating questions.

2. Arrange the venue – if possible, an unconventional one, such as a garden/ park space (for groups below 10), a room away from your normal working location, or a meeting room that is quiet and away from the scrutiny of others.

3. Inform/invite participants. Aim for diversity and include both experts and novices, to benefit from the broadest possible range of creative perspectives.

When you are ready to start

4. Start with a short icebreaking or inspirational exercise. Shake them out of their comfort zone and get them into the mindset that believes in new possibilities. (See the two suggested exercises in 'Tips for success' below.)

5. Instruct participants on how the session will be conducted:

▲ All ideas are valid. Big or small, as wild or as illogical as they may seem, there are no bad ideas during a brainstorm. Wild ideas can give rise to creative leaps. Freeing participants to consider wacky ideas encourages them to think about what they really want without the constraints of technology or materials.

▲ The session will start with solo reflection and writing of ideas in response to the question, and then the discussion will be opened up to all.

▲ During open discussion, Ideas should be expressed as quickly as they arise, without censoring one's own thoughts.

▲ Piggybacking – modifying or expanding on others' ideas – is encouraged-. In conversation, encourage participants to use 'and' (which adds to others' suggestions) instead of 'but' (which contradicts).

▲ One conversation at a time.

▲ No criticism or judgement of any ideas during the brainstorming. (This takes place only at the end, during the clustering and ranking exercises).

▲ All distractions should be minimized, hence no use of laptops, mobile phones, etc.

6. Introduce the problem statement or question. Show it on a flipchart or projector. (If it is long, have it written out before the session.) Keep the question visible throughout the session, and keep the session focused on it; sessions that try to address multiple questions can be confusing and inefficient

7. Start with individual reflection and response. (This step is helpful for ensuring participation from quieter people who may not speak up in groups.) Ensure everyone has 3 -4 post-its or cards and pens. Give participants a couple of minutes to write their ideas and responses, one per post-it/card.

8. Collect and read out all the written responses, going through them quickly (to set the tone for the rest of the session) and post/pin them up.

9. Next, ask participants to speak up with the first thoughts that come to mind. Prompt them to speak quickly, even loudly, without thinking too much, to help foster a sense of creative urgency and disorder. Keep participants energized about sharing their ideas: Validate their contributions, and encourage them to come up with even wilder ones – remember, no one is allowed to criticize or

judge ideas during the Brainstorm. The process should be exciting and fast-paced.

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10. Record all ideas as they are shared.

Get participants to use post-its or cards for writing down ideas, to allow for easier clustering and processing of ideas. If the group is larger than about 10 people, it is very helpful to have a rapporteur, but otherwise the facilitator is responsible for note-taking even while facilitating.

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11. Once there is a lull in the flow of ideas, wait a minute or two longer to check for any final thoughts – then consider stopping.

In a Brainstorm, ideas should fly off-the-cuff without too much thought or control. Once the flow of ideas has ebbed, typically after 15 - 20 minutes, conclude this part of the activity and move on.

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12. Cluster and process the ideas.

Brainstorming works best if an immediate clustering/ranking session is incorporated. (Otherwise participants could succumb to the 'so what?' factor as their ideas disappear into a black hole.

- ▲ Create clusters of ideas that are similar or overlapping, by taking inputs from the group and moving the post-its/cards into relevant clusters. You can also cluster the ideas by theme or by other pre-determined categories.

- ▲ (Optional) Participatory ranking: Give each participant two coloured sticky dots and invite them to mark their two favourite ideas. Record the rankings with numbers.

- ▲ Capture all the idea clusters and rankings. Photos taken with a smartphone are a convenient way to do this.

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Follow up after the event

13. Take forward the outputs of the Brainstorming session.

Ideas or idea clusters can be processed further in subsequent workshop sessions, by applying critical valuation, planning, prioritization, estimation of resource requirements and other project planning methods, or they can be assessed and applied by the project/ initiative team. **Report back to participants on what has been done with their ideas.**

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS



- ▲ Questions are the 'soul' of Brainstorming. A few relevant tips:

A good Brainstorming question is neither too narrow nor too broad. If it is too narrow or precise, it may fail to inspire expansive thinking. If it is too broad or vague, it will tend to encourage lacklustre solutions. Try to strike a correct balance.

Combine the question with an explanation of what we are trying to achieve when solving the problem or challenge, e.g. 'We are seeking to implement a community-based approach to sanitation. What are the key messages that will be most effective and powerful for our social mobilization campaign?'

Formulate questions in a positive way – i.e. instead of asking ‘Why can’t we succeed in ...’ or ‘What shouldn’t we do...’, ask ‘How could we successfully...’ or ‘What should we do...’.

Avoid questions that can be answered with a ‘no’, a ‘yes’ or a short, simple answer.

Important: Test questions beforehand with a couple of colleagues, to check whether the answers correspond to what you are looking for.

▲ Try to hold the session outside the usual office setting. This signals that the Brainstorming session will be different, and fosters a shift in mindset towards greater openness to new ideas, at least for the duration of the session. If the session can only be conducted in an ordinary meeting room due to time or space constraints, look for one that is private and out of others’ earshot.

▲ If possible, include participants from various organizational units outside the immediate team. Outsiders will bring cognitive diversity in the form of different experiences and knowledge, and they are more likely to look at your problem differently.

▲ As facilitator, you will need to ensure that the group does not sink into analysis – a little is ok to build on previous ideas, but if conversation is veering too much towards implementation, move on.

▲ If using a rapporteur, it is essential that

they record the ideas using words as close as possible to the original speaker’s, and even check back with the speaker to ensure fidelity to what they wanted to say. Avoid re-phrasing.

▲ Before beginning the clustering exercise at the end of Brainstorming, try to arrange for a short break. This will give participants a chance to shift gears, and will give you time for a head-start on identifying patterns/potential groups to kick-start the subsequent clustering process.

▲ Don’t neglect reporting back to participants after the session on what happened with their ideas. Not doing so can limit enthusiasm and creativity for subsequent Brainstorms.

▲ Optional: If desired, consult with the project team before the Brainstorm to develop pre-determined criteria, specific to the problem or challenge faced, for helping to cluster the ideas that will be developed by participants.

▲ Start the brainstorm session with a simple icebreaker exercise to get people comfortable with sharing seemingly illogical, wild ideas – which will help open the door to innovation. Here are two such exercises.

Clearing Cobwebs (5 – 10 minutes):

1. Show participants a random inanimate object (e.g., paperclip, scissors, paper cup), and ask them to come up with ideas on what it could be used for. Participants can suggest any purpose for the object **except** what it was originally designed for. Encourage them to suspend

critical thinking and be as outrageous with their responses as they can.

2. Spend about 3 -5 minutes on this, recording the ideas as they come up. Then spend another few minutes reviewing these ideas with the group to show them the results of their own creativity.

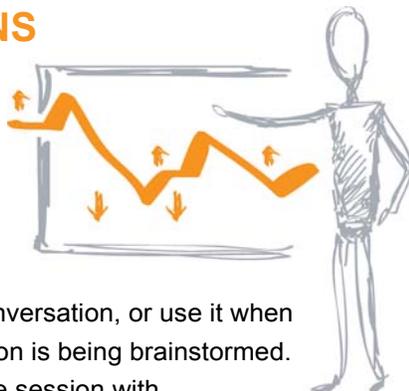
Nonsense Debate (15 – 20 minutes):

1. Ask participants to suggest a few ridiculous proposals regarding everyday life, for example: “Chopsticks should be used for all meals” or “Everyone should eat ice cream every day”. If the group is too serious to come up with sufficiently ridiculous ideas, create a few of your own. Write all the proposals on a flipchart.
2. Pick one proposal by group vote.
3. Write ‘yes’ on one card and ‘no’ on another. Raise one of the cards: if it is ‘yes’, then all participants should argue in favour of the proposal, and if ‘no’, they should attempt to refute it. Solicit their ideas, moving quickly around the room to include many voices – and then switch the card and have participants take the opposite side of the argument. Enjoy the exercising of the minds!

VARIATIONS

▲ **Silent Brainstorming:**

Use this to keep a few dominant voices from controlling the conversation, or use it when a sensitive question is being brainstormed. Conduct the entire session with



participants writing on cards. Give everyone pens and 3 – 4 post-its/cards of the same colour to ensure uniformity. Collect one round of ideas, read them out, then issue fresh post-its/cards and do another round. You can continue until the ideas run out.

▲ **Brain Writing (also known as the Group Passing Technique):** This is useful for eliciting large numbers of ideas from small groups of around 4 - 8 people. Each person starts with a sheet of paper (A4) on which the problem statement is written and writes one idea. All participants then pass their papers to the left and receive a paper (with one new idea already added) from the person on their right. After reading the idea contributed by the person on their right, each participant then either adds a second new idea, or fleshes out the first idea. The cycle is repeated until contributions begin to flag. The output consists of several lists of ideas that can be refined and expanded using other methods.

▲ **Topsy Turvy/ Reverse Brainstorming:** Determine the objective of your brainstorming, then start with a question on how to do the exact opposite; normally this will be a ‘negative’ question on how to wreck a process or fail to achieve a goal. Elicit unbridled and negative ideas from your participants for a time – then flip the process around and turn each negative idea, with the help of your participants, into a positive step. See the module on ‘Topsy Turvy’ in this Toolbox for more details.

▲ **Brainstorming in larger groups (1):** Larger groups (15 - 30 participants) can make for dynamic brainstorming sessions. Ideas will flow more rapidly, but you will likely need at least two facilitators to manage the process. The facilitators work as a unit, with a prepared script. They complement each other when dealing with participants, giving instructions, answering queries and ensuring all responses are captured by the rapporteur(s).

▲ **Brainstorming in larger groups (2):**

Alternatively, consider dividing a large group into two smaller groups, with each group to brainstorm the same problem or question. Reunite the groups for a short concluding session to compare their outputs.

▲ **Autumn Leaves:** This method is well-suited for use in parks, gardens or other outdoor spaces. After the problem statement or question is introduced, invite participants to walk around with a stack of cards and write out their ideas, one idea per card. As the cards are filled out, they are deposited in a designated spot on the ground/ bench – a box can come in handy – so that others can pick them up, read them and perhaps gain inspiration for further ideas of their own. Once your participants run out of ideas, the cards can be processed by clustering and prioritized for further action.

▲ **Team Idea Mapping:** This method of brainstorming works by the method of association. It may improve collaboration and increase the quantity of ideas, and is designed so that all attendees participate and no ideas are rejected. The process begins with a well-defined topic. Each participant brainstorms individually, then all the ideas are merged and consolidated onto one large idea map. During the consolidation phase, participants may discover a common understanding of the issues as they share the meanings behind their ideas. It is OK to share additional new ideas during consolidation, and they are added to the map as well. Once all the ideas are captured, the group can prioritize and/or take action.

▲ **Question brainstorming (also known as Star-Bursting):** This process involves introducing a new idea or proposal, and then brainstorming the questions that need to be answered. Participants come up with the questions, which are briefly answered by the originators/proposers. Then another round of questions takes place, inspired at least partly

by the first set of answers. This method is good for getting participation from everyone, since asking questions is often easier for quiet people than is proposing ideas in a group. The answers to the brainstormed questions form the framework for constructing future action plans.

▲ **Nominal Group Technique:** This is an advanced technique that builds on Silent Brainstorming. Participants write their ideas individually, in silence, for about 5-10 minutes. Then the ideas are shared in round-robin format: The facilitator calls on participants to share one idea each, in turn, and records the ideas on a flipchart. Once all the ideas are recorded, there can be a second round of idea writing and round-robin sharing. Next there is a group discussion: Participants can ask for more details, answer questions about ideas, or give further suggestions. Finally, the group ranks the ideas by voting (a process called distillation). The vote can be as simple as a show of hands in favor of a given idea. After distillation, the top ranked ideas may be sent back to the group or to subgroups for further brainstorming. Sometimes ideas that were previously dropped may be brought forward again once the group has re-evaluated the ideas. A trained and experienced facilitator is required. The participants should be primed and encouraged to embrace the process. Like all team efforts, it may take a few practice sessions to train the team in the method before tackling the important ideas.



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CREDITS

Author: Meena Arivananthan.

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert review panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar, Edgar Tan.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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BUZZ GROUPS

/ Mini-discussions in plenary /

WHAT ARE BUZZ GROUPS?

Buzz Groups are a method for quickly and efficiently gathering feedback on a topic or responding to a specific question during a plenary (a session that includes all participants of an event). Without moving from their seats, participants form mini-clusters of two or three people and engage in free discussion – or ‘buzz’ – for a few minutes on a given question. Buzz Groups provide a welcome change of pace for participants, helping to enliven and energize large group meetings and events.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *Flipchart*
- *8-30 participants for one facilitator (or 50 - 100, see below)*
- *10 - 20 minutes (approx. 5 minutes ‘buzzing’, and 5 - 15 minutes to share feedback in plenary)*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

Buzz Groups can be applied to obtain participant feedback quickly, or to facilitate engagement with a topic, without breaking away from plenary. Splitting people up into groups and moving them to different locations for short discussions takes time and requires more effort; Buzz Groups make short discussions easy and are particularly useful when time is limited.

Buzz Groups are useful as a follow-up to a presentation (especially if the presentation is particularly complex). They help to shift the session out of lecture mode, and they enable participants to have quick discussions to check on facts, reflect on what was presented, exchange ideas, and link ideas/concepts together. Buzz Groups can also help connect one session to the next, during a multi-session event, by posing leading questions related to the upcoming session.

Buzz Groups can also be used as an icebreaker near the beginning of a workshop. They are a useful way to encourage quiet people to get involved in the discussion and contribute, since they may be more comfortable talking in small groups.



HOW TO APPLY

There are three basic ways to apply Buzz Groups: to obtain feedback, to engage participants with a topic, or to generate questions after a presentation.

To obtain feedback:

1. Instruct participants to form groups of either two or three with their immediate neighbours, without moving from their seats. Prefer groups of two for smaller sessions, and groups of three for larger ones. These are the Buzz Groups. The point is to allow participants to communicate with the person(s) next to them while keeping them seated in plenary.

2. Pose a specific question to obtain feedback. This may be a question you devised previously, or one that has come up during the meeting. Ask each group to discuss it and formulate their ideas, in a maximum of 3 - 5 minutes. Encourage each person to share their views briefly and respond to the comments of others within their group. Ask each group to nominate a presenter to feed back to the plenary.

3. The group discussions proceed. As each group 'buzzes', the room transforms into a lively, energetic space, helping to re-energize the participants while adding to their collective understanding.

4. When the 3 - 5 minutes is up, call a halt to the discussions and ask the presenter of each Buzz Group to share their group's response to the question, in plenary, in one minute or less. If desired, record the feedback on cards or a flipchart sheet.

To engage participants with the topic and relate it to their own experience, or as an icebreaker:

1. Ask participants to form Buzz Groups of 2 - 3 persons with their immediate neighbours.

2. Invite the members of each group to share their reflections on the topic at hand, describe their learning from the event, or briefly summarize their own significant experiences with the topic. Allow 3 - 5 minutes for group discussions.

3. When time is up, you can ask groups to volunteer to share reflections in plenary (one minute per group). Alternatively you may choose not to have any reporting back at all, if your goal was simply to promote engagement with the topic.

To generate questions after a presentation:

1. Ask participants to form Buzz Groups of 2 - 3 persons.

2. Ask each Buzz Group to discuss the just-concluded presentation and come up with one pertinent question for the presenter.

3. Give the groups 3 - 5 minutes to come to consensus on what the question should be.

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4. A representative from each Buzz Group then asks the presenter their group's question in plenary.

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS



▲ Maintain the plenary formation. Buzz Groups are made up of 2-3 people who are seated next to each other. Do not move groups to other locations.

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▲ Once people start talking, they often don't want to stop. The facilitator should be firm and should also give a 1-minute warning before the end of the buzz time.

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▲ Use this method sparingly – not more than twice for a single session, or three times in an all-day session – as this technique can become repetitive or boring when used too often.

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▲ The facilitator should move around the room to provide assistance or clarifications if necessary.

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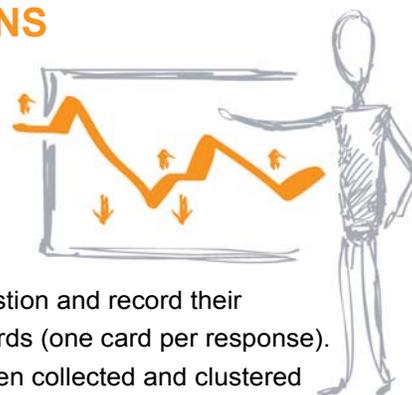
▲ For large groups of 50 - 100 participants, keep a lid on the time required for reporting back to plenary by asking presenters only to share new ideas not already shared by another group. Alternatively, incorporate Buzz Groups as a tool for engagement, so that no report back will be necessary.

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VARIATIONS

▲ **Buzz Groups using card**

collection: Ask the Buzz Groups to discuss a question and record their responses on cards (one card per response). The cards are then collected and clustered based on similarities. Use a pin board to group the similar cards together. A collage of different idea clusters should emerge. This is especially useful in groups of around 30 participants where feedback is expected.



▲ **Buzz Groups to define presentation content - for expert or fact-finding**

presentations: Buzz Groups can be used to generate questions to be answered during a presentation by an expert. This allows participants to define the presentation content, thereby increasing relevance and promoting engagement. Sufficient time should be allowed for the expert to prepare the presentation; depending on the expert and the issue, this could be minutes, hours or even a day.



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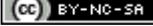
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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA

knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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CHAT SHOW

/ Interactive storytelling in front of an audience /

WHAT IS A CHAT SHOW?

The Chat Show (also called a Talk Show) is a meeting or workshop activity similar to a television talk show, with a host who interviews one or more guests. It is widely used as a dynamic and creative alternative to panel discussions, and is useful for sharing knowledge from guests who are experts or influential persons. A Chat Show usually focuses on a pre-selected theme. The key to the Chat Show's appeal is its informal approach to the Q&A process, which puts guests at ease while engaging the audience.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Host (facilitator; outgoing, engaging personality who is good at getting people to talk and thinking on their feet)*
- *3 - 5 guests (subject-matter experts, leaders, people with knowledge to share)*
- *Rapporteur*
- *Room (ideally with theatre-style seating)*
- *Microphones (lapel and wireless)*
- *Flipchart and marker pens (Optional: projector, for capturing key points on PowerPoint slide)*
- *20 - 50 people (larger audiences possible too)*
- *60 - 90 minutes*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

A successful Chat Show is one that creates a

lively, congenial environment, putting guests at ease, enabling them to share their thoughts and ideas without much preparation on their part. It sustains the interest of the audience and encourages them to participate as well. Best used in sessions that call for input from an expert panel, a Chat Show is a great substitute for lengthy presentations and is less intimidating than a panel discussion. A Chat Show can easily accommodate between three to five guests.

The Chat Show can be used for:

▲ **Introducing new concepts and ideas:**

When there is resistance to new initiatives that signal change, a chat show gives you the opportunity to inject transparency into the process, and thereby encourage the change process. With a skilled host at the helm, any topic can be explored in great depth.

▲ **Introducing new people:** Use chat shows to introduce new or prominent leaders/ staff. It has the potential to present them in a more appealing light and endear them to the audience. Guests also have a better chance of engaging with people in a relaxed environment.

▲ **Storytelling/Narrative:** The host uses questions to piece together a compelling narrative of the guests being interviewed. A creative alternative to case studies or project team reviews, a chat show can get beyond the standard responses. All it takes is an empathetic host to chip away at the obvious and get to the more meaningful experiences.

▲ **General knowledge sharing:** By doing away with the formality of presentations, a chat show can quickly get to the heart of what makes an expert or a panel of experts tick.

The main results of a successful Chat Show are learning and inspiration among all participants, as a basis for future improvement, especially when guests have shared lessons learned or experiences that can be re-used. Ideas presented during a Chat Show can form the basis for follow-up discussions later in a workshop. The recorded summary prepared by the rapporteur can sometimes be used directly for knowledge-sharing among others not present; this may require some editorial work. The primary goal remains informing and inspiring those who are actually present during the event.



HOW TO APPLY

Prepare in advance

1. **Choose a theme or topic and select 3 - 5 guests to be interviewed during the Chat Show.**

You can choose either the theme or the guests first, but they should be complementary.

▲ If you have a particular theme already in mind – for example, the theme of a conference or initiative which you are supporting through the Chat Show – then define it clearly in a few words, and think of guests who could speak to it.

▲ If your goal is to introduce new people, then you already know the proposed guests. Define a theme/topic in a few words, tailored to their expertise and role.

▲ Guests should be experts with valuable knowledge, people with relevant and interesting professional experiences, or leaders in positions that are relevant for your audience. The best Chat Show guests are spontaneous, open to sharing and good at storytelling.

2. **Identify a host.** Selection of the host is critical:

Success of the Chat Show depends on the host's ability to interact with the audience and guests. Hosts should be able to hold their own among the guests, be enthusiastic and should have some knowledge of the topic. Hosts should be skilled in the art of the question: anticipating what people

want to know; asking interesting (and occasionally tough) questions without being confrontational; engaging the audience; thinking on their feet and keeping the flow of conversation and energy going.

3. Contact your proposed guests to brief them on the process: Let them know that there will be no PowerPoint presentations or formal speeches, and that instead, they will be interviewed in front of an audience (of staff, partners, or whomever will participate in the event). Ensure they are willing to accept this, and let them know who the host will be. Give them time to reflect if needed, then get their agreement via email.

4. Once the host and guests are chosen, invite them to a pre-meeting session to prepare for a successful Chat Show event:

▲ Brief the host and guests on their roles. Let them know the rules: If you want an informal event, let them respond to each other's comments as per a real discussion/debate. Or if you prefer a formal tone, let the host act as moderator, and guests will respond only when called upon.

▲ Ask all guests to briefly describe their background and expertise, and encourage the host to ask questions. The goal is to enable the host to make short, interesting introductions of all guests at the event.

▲ Discuss at least some of the Chat Show questions, so that the guests have an idea of what to expect. Ensure that guests know their answers should be reasonably short and to the point. Questions should mostly be open-ended (i.e., they should require more than just a few words to answer).

They should bring out the guests' most relevant experiences, most powerful lessons learned and personal tips on how they solve problems, meet challenges and achieve success in the topic under discussion.

5. Publicize the session. Compose a short, compelling message about the event, and include the topic, who the experts are, when and where the session will take place, how to participate (e.g. just show up, or register in advance). Share it as appropriate: via direct email to individuals or mailing lists, broadcast emails, posting it on organizational social networks, putting up notices, etc., all depending on your desired participants. Then share a reminder a few days before the event.

▲ Optional: With your announcement you can invite questions from participants, and make a selection from these for the host to ask at the event.

Set up the room

6. An ideal venue has theatre or auditorium-style seating, with a stage in the front and the audience in a semi-circle facing it. Alternatively, you can use any sufficiently large room: Arrange the chairs in rows in a semi-circle. At the front, place comfortable armchairs or sofas for the guests, and small tables with refreshments. The host may choose to sit with the guests or stand, depending on what the host is comfortable with.

When you are ready to start

These instructions are for the host, who has ideally been selected according to the criteria in #2 above.

7. Welcome the audience and give a 2 - 3 minute introduction of the guests touching on

their relevant expertise. You may include an interesting snippet or anecdote, e.g., “An expert in public health communication campaigning, my first guest participated in successful polio eradication campaigns in 6 countries...”

8. Provide a quick overview of the topic, then begin with questions for your guests – mostly open-ended, some prepared in advance, others spontaneous and arising from the conversation. (See third bullet under #4 above for more advice on preparing questions.) Encourage the guests to share their experiences, gauge the audience’s understanding and appreciation of the topic being discussed and ask clarifying questions when needed. Ensure that each guest gets appropriate opportunity to respond to questions. If any guest begins straying into a lengthy monologue, intervene diplomatically to redirect the conversation.

9. The rapporteur captures pertinent points as they arise in conversation. This can be done in various ways: as keywords on a flipchart, as a mindmap displayed to the audience on paper or via a projector, or as words typed on a PowerPoint slide. Just make sure that the rapporteur’s activity does not distract from the Chat Show. Once the conversation is flowing, your role as host is to sustain it for the duration of the Chat Show:

- ▲ Ask the pre-determined questions when appropriate during the event, and intersperse them with spontaneous questions, balancing the opportunities for your various guests to respond.
- ▲ Ensure the conversations stay on topic.

▲ Summarize key points from time to time and more fully at the end.

▲ At intervals, you may turn to the audience and ask for reactions.

▲ Keep the energy level high by interspersing conversations with light banter to ensure the audience is attentive. Pay attention to how the audience is feeling and manage the situation accordingly.

▲ Where culturally appropriate, use humour. It puts guests at ease and it creates nice overall atmosphere.

10. Keep an eye on time. Depending on the chat show timing, i.e., 60 minutes or 90 minutes, allocate 10 – 15 minutes or 20 -30 minutes, respectively, for a concluding Q & A with the audience. Keep comments short and to the point, and use the rapporteur’s flipchart or mindmap to refresh their memory. (The rapporteur should continue recording the audience Q&A.) When ready to conclude, allow guests one final short comment that you frame by asking a specific “wrap up” question. Then conclude the Chat Show by thanking your guests for their time and contributions.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



▲ Microphones are important for ensuring a natural, audible conversation.

Use lapel mics for guests and have several wireless mics available for the audience, along with a couple of assistants to walk the mics out to audience members during the concluding Q&A. This saves a lot of time, especially with larger audiences.

Alternatively, stand mics may also be placed at various spots strategically for the audience to use.

The host should use a wireless mic for easy movement.

If lapel mics are not available for the guests, then tables may need to be set up with standard wired mics. Be aware however that this will look more like a panel discussion than a Chat Show.

If your audience is small (20 persons or less), and the room acoustics are good, you may be able to do without microphones. It is best to test this out prior to the session: Ensure that a person in the back rows can easily hear a person at the front speaking without a microphone.

▲ The Chat Show can be run in a more formal manner if your guests or circumstances require it. But if you are looking for a change of pace from your usual meetings, then an informal approach is best.

For added effect, adapt a local or popular television talk show name and use it for your session.

Create some excitement by publicizing the Chat Show before it takes place. Place simple flipchart posters to generate interest or ask for questions via social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook or Yammer.

Set the stage to closely resemble a home living room so that guests feel relaxed. Avoid having a podium or conference table; instead use an informal coffee table (with refreshments for guests) in front of the chairs, and arrange the chairs in a semicircle so that each guest can see the others as well as the host.

▲ The host should feel free to move around the stage if so inspired, or stand just off the stage between the guests and the audience and act as a conduit between the two, or just sit with the guests as per most TV talk shows.

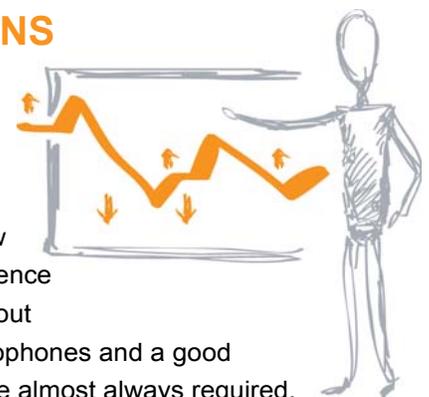
VARIATIONS

▲ **For large audiences:** To run a Chat Show for a larger audience of more than about

50 people, microphones and a good audio system are almost always required.

Ensure that all members of the audience have adequately comfortable seating with a clear view of the stage. If available, you can use a video camera and large screen to enhance visibility for persons towards the back of the room.

▲ **Buzz Group during audience Q&A:** Getting people to 'buzz' in plenary helps them come up with more meaningful questions for the experts; refer to the Buzz Groups tool in this Toolkit for full instructions on how to do this. Asking each Buzz Group to decide on one question helps filter out simple, obvious questions, improves quality and relevancy of the conversation and also ensures there is no lull in the process.



▲ **Expert Interview:** Similar to the Chat Show, the spotlight is on the subject-matter experts, except that the questions are asked directly by participants who come up on stage and sit two at a time to pose questions of any of the experts seated there. See 'Expert interview with an audience' in this Toolbox for details.

▲ **Combine social media with Chat Show:** If the technical capacity is available, then the Chat Show works well as a combined in-person and webcast event. If webcasting the event, ensure that the cameras are well-placed to capture the 'action'. Suggested questions can be requested in advance via social media from persons who cannot physical be present, or they can also be submitted online while the event is in progress; in this case, a second individual will need to monitor web channels and feed questions to the host on cards or via a mic.



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CREDITS

Author: Meena Arivananthan.

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

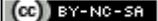
Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert review panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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DEBRIEF

/ Capturing insights from field missions and assignments /

WHAT IS A DEBRIEF?

The Debrief is an interview method for efficiently capturing key lessons from staff returning from field missions or at the end of an assignment. Currently used in UNICEF's Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), the Debrief is a voluntary exercise in which the interviewee is given an opportunity to reflect on their experiences during the mission/assignment, and share their thoughts on the work done and the challenges and opportunities that arose. It is a confidential process that allows people to share their views without repercussions.

REQUIREMENTS:

- Interviewer (with excellent communication skills)
- Set of 4-6 relevant guiding questions
- 60 minutes



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

The Debrief is a useful complement to formal written mission reports, such as the End of Assignment report. The one-to-one interview process used in the Debrief encourages reflection, and can often draw out relevant impressions and learnings that would not otherwise find their way into a written report.

Conducting a Debrief involves first developing a standard set of questions concerning the key issues of a mission or an assignment. The questions are designed with a view to helping staff share their insights concerning the big picture. For example, in a Debrief of a staff member returning from an emergency mission, the questions could address how effective the crisis support was, in the opinion of the staff member; what challenges were encountered, and how they were met; and how the emergency programme work could be improved on.

During a Debrief interview, it is important to accompany the questions with time for open reflection, to allow the staff member to consider their experience and freely share anything which seems important to them.

A series of Debriefs can be done when a number of staff members return from mission at around the same time. Debriefs can also be done on a rolling basis, as staff return at different times and become available to participate. Analyses and lessons from multiple Debriefs can be summarized in a single document. A cross-section of responses from several Debriefs, all pointing to a similar problem or opportunity, can then provide a basis for changing programming approaches and improving results.

Alternatively, significant learnings from individual Debriefs can be shared with key managers on an ongoing basis. This approach has been used in UNICEF's Office of Emergency Programmes with senior management staff who are leaving emergency duty stations.



HOW TO APPLY

Prepare in advance

1. Define a clear purpose for the Debrief(s): Methodically think through how the learnings from a Debrief will be used, and obtain the needed management buy-in on the potential value of the process and the lessons it can provide. The clearly defined purpose for the Debrief should then be shared with potential interviewees, so that the use and potential value of their reflections will be clear to them.

2. Plan to conduct the Debrief ideally within one month of the staff member's return from a mission or the end of the assignment. If you are in the same physical location as the staff member, use an in-person interview to conduct the Debrief; otherwise, use a telephone/Skype interview.

3. Make an appointment with the staff member. Since the Debrief (as currently used in UNICEF) is voluntary rather than required, some staff may at first need convincing in order to get them to participate. **The best way to do this is to give a simple, clear explanation of the process and the unique value their participation would bring:**

▲ **Process:** The Debrief is a one-hour interview where the staff member is given space to reflect on their trip and provide their views on the mission. A few simple questions from the interviewer help to inspire the reflection process.

▲ **Confidentiality:** The interview is conducted 'one-to-one', with only the staff member and interviewer present. Knowledge captured and shared from the Debrief will be devoid of any identifying information.

▲ **Value:** Share the clearly defined purpose of the Debrief. The staff member, having been on the ground participating in the emergency response, is now in a position to offer direct impressions about what worked well and what didn't. The interview process often prompts insights that otherwise would not make it into formal written reports. Once the staff member's responses are captured, an analysis of the findings will be shared as lessons for immediate improvement. The analysis may also translate into learning for future emergency situations.

4. Prepare 4-6 questions. Questions for the Debrief should encourage contemplation and conversation:

- ▲ Depending on personality, some colleagues will prefer to have space to reflect, without questions or prompting, on challenges and opportunities of the mission/assignment. Give the staff member the choice either to proceed directly with structured questions, or to begin with open reflection.
- ▲ Choose open-ended questions to allow for more discussion and exploration.
- ▲ Your first question or two should be general, in order to help set the staff member at ease. The rest of the questions can aim at gathering specifics concerning the mission, such as clarity of staff roles on the ground, interactions among staff from various sectors and offices, challenges observed, or expert opinions where applicable.
- ▲ Plan to ask for examples to illustrate a point, where possible. It is often in the details that solutions can be found.

5. Arrange for a private room for the interview, whether it is in-person or via telephone/Skype.

When you are ready to start

6. Welcome the staff member and ensure that they understand, and are comfortable with, the process.

7. Proceed with the questions. Give the person being interviewed some time for reflection. Let the conversation flow naturally. When appropriate, ask for relevant examples. Take notes: Your notes will be the basis for your analysis and any lessons shared. (It is not recommended to record a Debrief: the knowledge that an interview is being recorded often has a negative effect on the staff member's willingness to openly share impressions and learnings).

8. At the conclusion of the interview, thank the staff member and let them know about how the Debrief will be processed and shared.

9. After the interview, do an analysis of the interview results, highlighting any particularly relevant findings, and removing any personal or identifying information. Communicate your findings as appropriate, with a view to improving actions taken and results. Optional: If you will be doing multiple Debriefs for a given field situation, then once they are all completed you can do another analysis covering all the interview results and highlighting any commonalities.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



- ▲ Creating a safe space: Choose a quiet, private room for the interview. Assure the staff member of confidentiality and build rapport with

them to ensure they feel relaxed during the interview process.

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▲ Recognize that everyone is different and one approach does not always fit all. The interviewer should be able to gauge the differences and tailor the interview to suit the interviewee's personality. For example, when dealing with persons who are naturally quiet, ask questions in a creative manner so that she can elicit a response.

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▲ Interviewers should have basic facilitation skills. In particular they should be experienced in starting conversations, encouraging people to talk, and thinking on their feet in order to adjust questions and steer conversations naturally.

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▲ When conducting interviews via telephone/Skype, be sure to listen carefully to the staff member, paying attention to verbal cues, noting and responding to any signs of discomfort on their part. As the Debrief is very much a voluntary exercise, if you do note any signs of discomfort, then offer to move on to another question, while underscoring the confidential nature of the Debrief.

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CASE STUDY / EXAMPLE



Ebola response

The Debrief method has been used in UNICEF during several major corporate emergency responses, dating back to the Haiti earthquake, and more recently during the Ebola response. The latter experience is summarized briefly here:

During the L3 Ebola emergency response, initially 21 staff members were sent on mission to Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone from Headquarters and Regional Offices. The response teams were multi-sectoral, representing an innovation for UNICEF.

UNICEF, like other organizations, was quick to realise that responding to Ebola would require innovative programming and thinking, and consequently there was interest to capture and apply learnings from the staff who participated in the initial response. Upon their return, the technical team members were invited to participate in voluntary Debriefs; 13 chose to do so.

Each Debrief began with the interviewer introducing the method, and then providing time for the staff member to engage in open reflection. Thereafter the interviewer asked a series of questions on mission timeliness, the effectiveness of cross-sectoral teams, accountability and clarity of roles. Participating staff were also asked to reflect on the mechanisms in place in Headquarters for

providing feedback, ensuring coordination and giving access to information.

Analysis of results indicated that the Debrief process was successful in creating an environment where staff felt comfortable sharing specific, relevant impressions. Many of the participants expressed satisfaction that their experiences, shared via the Debrief exercise, would be used by decision-makers as a basis for future improvement. The Debriefs were conducted at an early stage of the Ebola response. This made it possible to incorporate many of the learnings into the ongoing response, resulting in improved processes and outcomes.

In addition to the Debrief, other knowledge exchange/learning methods have been applied during the Ebola response. A series of reflection exercises modeled on the After Action Review method (which is described elsewhere in this Toolbox) were organized in various Headquarters Divisions and Country Offices. The findings from the Debriefs and the reflection exercises represented important inputs for a senior-level meeting examining challenges and lessons across the board in emergency response. The meeting led to the drafting of a management response plan to address the identified challenges.



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CREDITS

Author and creator of the Debrief method: Diksha Mudbhary-Sitaula.

Co-author: Meena Arivananthan.

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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*Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA*

knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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Annex: Post-mission Debrief script for Ebola-affected countries

The script was used during Debriefs of staff returning from participation in emergency response in Ebola-affected countries. The script includes the introductory remarks used at the start of the interview, and a set of relevant questions.

Introduction to Debrief: Explanation of purpose and approach

(Beginning of script as used by interviewer)

As I mentioned in my email, given the magnitude and complexity of the Ebola response, and how it is a unique crisis requiring response from across 3 country offices, RO and HQ, it presents us an important opportunity to capture some learning from the response thus far.

The Debrief is an opportunity for you to reflect on your experience in country and share thoughts on what worked well, and what the challenges were. In the first part of the Debrief we'll keep the conversation as open ended as possible to allow you to share your thoughts. I will then have a few specific questions to explore in the second half. If you'd like to speak more broadly to your experience during this L3, please indicate where your comments are specific to the mission and where they are more broadly related to the response.

The Debrief is considered confidential, and in preparing the post-debrief analysis, any identifying details will not be shared. We invite you to be frank in your response. It is often the details that allow us to craft solutions for moving forward, so it is best to be specific in sharing examples.

After the Debriefs are completed, an analysis of the findings will be shared as lessons with the Global Emergency Coordination for the Ebola response and other colleagues involved in the response. Given the iterative nature of the response, findings from these debriefs should be valuable in informing our response moving forward. It will also help inform future humanitarian policy and lessons learned.

Before we begin, do you have any questions?

Questions

1. The technical team missions took place early in the response- what are your thoughts on the timeliness of the mission?
2. Joint mission planning in this case was an innovation. How well do you think this went:
 - Operations wise?
 - From a programmatic point of view?
3. In terms of the composition of the teams with RO/HQ colleagues across sectors, what are your thoughts on how well this went? Challenges?
 - If well, please provide some specific examples of cross sectoral coordination
4. Did you feel there was clarity in terms of accountability?
5. How were interactions at the country level? Were you able to fulfill your role as advisor?
6. From a programmatic point of view and your specific technical expertise, what are your thoughts regarding the appropriateness/timeliness of the technical decisions made?

More broadly beyond the mission, we will now have a few specific questions relating to this L3 response.

7. How useful do you find the mechanisms in place at HQ level (EMTs, T-EMT, PD weekly meetings, regular calls with RO/HQ)?
8. What are your thoughts on interdivision coordination at HQ level: EMOPS (Emergency Operations), PD (Programme Division), HR (Human Resources), COMMS (Communications)?
9. What are your thoughts on finding easy access to information necessary to fulfill your role as technical advisor

(End of script)

E-Discussion

/ Applying collective knowledge to answer key questions /

WHAT IS AN E-DISCUSSION?

E-Discussions are online exchanges among members of a group, in written (text) form, that are organized to reflect in depth on important questions related to ongoing projects, initiatives, or development themes. It takes place over several days or a few weeks (by contrast, an Online Jam takes place over an hour or two, with all participants present simultaneously; see 'Online Jam' in this Toolbox). E-Discussions are used to improve practice and overcome challenges in a critical development area, to prepare documentation, or to help plan for events.

An E-Discussion occurs in a dedicated online discussion space, such as on an organization's social networking platform (e.g., Yammer). Participants go to the discussion space independently to read, contribute their answers, and respond to others by noting points of agreement or difference, sharing significant evidence, and raising relevant issues. The group's responses to the questions discussed represent a concrete output of the E-Discussion. These responses may be summarized by the facilitator, adapted for use in documentation, and applied in event planning and in relevant development contexts.

E-Discussions may be structured (organized in advance around preplanned discussion questions) or unstructured (arising spontaneously through an important question(s) asked of an online group by one of its members). Both approaches benefit from skilled facilitation.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Online discussion platform (e.g., Yammer,¹ Teamworks, Jive, IBM Connections, etc.).*
- *Participants (preferably at least 5) with computers and access to the platform. Participants should have some solid experience in the topics/issues being considered (unless the discussion is for purposes of gathering public opinions), and may even be experts.*
- *Facilitator with experience in online discussions, and some subject matter expertise.*
- *For structured E-Discussions: Advance preparation time for drafting questions, publicizing the E-Discussion and inviting participants. (Unstructured E-Discussions by definition do not have advance preparation.)*
- *Time for event: Varies, usually takes place over several days or a few weeks. Depending on the level of activity, the facilitator may need up to 1 - 2 hours/day to post questions, monitor the conversation and intervene or stimulate the discussion as needed.*

¹ UNICEF's social network platform is Yammer. Other platforms may be available to UNICEF staff when engaging in external discussions.



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

E-Discussions² can be a very productive way to tap into the expertise and experience of a diverse group of individuals across multiple locations and time zones. Compared with face-to-face events, E-Discussions offer participants more time to think before responding to questions, and to express their thoughts and ideas well at a time that suits them. For these reasons, E-Discussions are well-suited for:

- ▲ Thoughtful consideration of planning, programmatic or operational issues, with inputs from a diverse audience. E-Discussions may take place at the start of the project/initiative, at points of reflection, or at the end for reporting and capturing lessons.
- ▲ Discussion of policy issues with diverse stakeholders, both national and international.
- ▲ Document collaboration: E-Discussions are useful for documents that must synthesize a variety of views on an issue requiring some reflection.
- ▲ Planning and preparing for, or following up to, a face-to-face event/ workshop.

² This document addresses only E-Discussions with adult participants, such as staff or partners. E-Discussions with youth or young people will need to consider issues of the ethics of engagement, parental consent, the balance of child rights versus opportunities, etc. Consult relevant authorities for guidance.

- ▲ Advancing the area of work covered by an existing knowledge exchange community, for example to cover a new issue or significant challenge that has arisen.
- ▲ Knowledge sharing:
 - Training/ tutoring programmes with a syllabus.
 - Participatory learning, where people can explore ideas, exchange information and share experiences on a topic or question.
 - Mentoring.

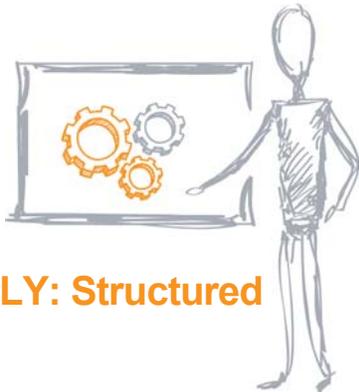
E-Discussions offer several logistical benefits: They are useful for collaboration among participants in different locations, by minimizing the costs of travel, both in time and in money. E-Discussions can be a valuable collaboration option when it is challenging to bring everyone together at a single time and place. They can enable participation by people with packed schedules, who might not be able to attend meetings/workshops³ at fixed times, but who can participate online at varying times according to their own availability.

The keys to succeeding with an E-Discussion include:

- ▲ A relevant topic and thought-provoking questions that encourage participant engagement and stimulate interesting discussion threads.
- ▲ A specific ask or output that the E-Discussion is addressing (so people understand what they are working towards and why their views are being sought.)

³ Note that E-Discussions are not the same as online meetings; the latter take place at a specific time, usually via meeting software such as Lync/Skype/GoToMeeting, and require simultaneous participation from all participants. See also the module on Online Jam for a hybrid E-Discussion/online meeting model.

- ▲ Choosing participants who are willing to engage in the online discussion.
- ▲ A skillful facilitator who is prepared to invest the time needed to maximize participation.
- ▲ Priming the discussion (i.e., engaging participants behind the scenes before the E-Discussion actually begins, in order to kick-start the online exchanges). See Tips for success below.
- ▲ Preparation of concise, accurate summaries of the discussions, with any additional insights that the facilitator can offer. This is required for structured E-Discussions, and is very often helpful for unstructured ones as well.



HOW TO APPLY: Structured e-discussions

Prepare in advance

This guidance is for organizers of the E-Discussion.

1. Understand the purpose of the E-Discussion. Review the options listed under ‘When and why to use’, and identify the specific objective(s) and outputs for your discussion.

2. Identify the participants needed in order to achieve the objectives, then inform and invite them.

▲ Whose views do you want to hear, and whose expertise do you want to tap into? Are they colleagues or are they from other departments or agencies? Do they see the discussion topics as relevant to them? Are they open to discussing and sharing ideas online? Do they already have an online discussion space that could be used for the E-Discussion?

▲ Once you know roughly who you want as participants, contact them and invite them to the upcoming E-Discussion. If there is only a limited number of potential participants, contact them directly by email. Or, if the E-Discussion addresses questions of wide interest that would benefit from a large number of participants, then cast your net wider: Promote the E-Discussion through broadcast emails, announcements (on the social network platform, or physical notices), sharing information at regular meetings, etc. to build interest. Clearly communicate “what’s in it for them” – how they would benefit, or why they should put in their time. You may need to use multiple channels in order to get the attention of your intended audience.

▲ All of your communications – whether targeted email, broadcasts, announcements, etc. – should specify the topic of the E-Discussion, what will be done with the results (especially if the discussion is for a purpose such as providing input to a policy note or helping evaluate a programme), when and how to join, and whom to contact in case of questions.

▲ If you know of 1-2 participants who have particularly strong expertise in relevant issues, consider asking them privately to help get the ball rolling in the discussion, by being the first ones to respond online; see *Tips* below.

3. Prepare an outline to guide the E-Discussion, taking into account your participants' background and roles, and your objectives. The outline should include 2-5 major discussion questions, and (if needed) background reading/reference materials. Include also the order in which the questions will be posed to participants, how many days will be spent on each major question, and the start and end dates of the E-Discussion.

▲ Ask questions that induce reflection and challenge viewpoints. Make them concrete: Structure them around activities, tasks and specific issues. Craft them with a view to getting answers that will help achieve your objectives. See *Tips for success* below for more guidance on creating E-Discussion questions.

▲ Optional (useful for complex issues): Prepare a 2-3 page contextual background document summarizing the main themes/issues and listing key references for reading prior to or during the E-Discussion. This document can be shared with participants for further reading.

▲ Optional: Prepare short guidelines for the facilitator and participants. See Annex 1 for example content of guidelines. The guidelines consist of simple rules and practices that enable respectful and constructive discussions. (If most of your participants are very experienced in E-Discussions, the guidelines will be less important.)

4. Designate a facilitator. The facilitator (perhaps yourself) should be familiar with the topic being explored, with the E-Discussion format and with the platform to be used. S/he should be prepared to write summaries of the discussions quickly and accurately as the discussion proceeds. S/he should also ensure

that they have time to dedicate to this every day to ensure active participation as well as removal of spam/inappropriate comments.

▲ If appropriate, consider engaging an external facilitator(s) who has/have a very good reputation in the topic of the discussion; this can sometimes stimulate participation. External facilitators have the same role and time commitments as any other facilitators.

5. Remind participants to sign up and complete their online profiles a few days before the discussion begins. Encourage them to add photos and personal details, and give instructions on how to do so. Profiles with photos and relevant personal details are quite helpful for building a sense of connectedness and fostering dialogue online, especially if not all participants know each other. They also help to prevent spam or inappropriate comments.

▲ **If email alerts are available in your chosen platform, ensure they are enabled, and advise participants on how to turn them on/off.** Email alerts are important for helping participants stay on top of discussions, and respond in a timely way to questions and comments but depending upon volume, can also be intrusive.

▲ Some discussion platforms allow contributions by email; if appropriate, share the relevant details on how to do so.

When you are ready to start

This guidance is for facilitators.

6. Upload all relevant documents and reading material (such as the outline, the contextual background document, and any important

readings) to the E-Discussion space in the platform.

7. On the first day of the E-Discussion, kick things off with a message in the discussion space (on the platform) welcoming all participants and briefly summarizing the purpose, duration and methods to be used.

- ▲ If appropriate, post some brief background information on the E-Discussion participants (including facilitators and any designated experts): organizational affiliation(s), special expertise, roles, etc.
 - ▲ If you prepared discussion guidelines, share them now, either as a link or as full text in your message.
 - ▲ If participants are unfamiliar with the platform, share links to available technical guidance, how-to's or FAQs which they may find useful.
 - ▲ Let participants know how they should contact you (most likely, via email) if they have technical difficulties. Be prepared to respond quickly to any such queries.
 - ▲ Once you have posted the welcome message, **send at least one initial email to all participants, advising them that the E-Discussion has begun, and linking to your welcome message on the platform.** Do this even if email alerts are on.
-

8. Begin sharing the discussion questions with participants, according to the outline prepared earlier. For each question, let participants know how long they will have to

discuss it. Ask for responses, or ask pre-selected participants (via private email) to respond first, then allow the discussion to proceed.

9. Throughout the E-Discussion, act as a guide and stimulate the discussion. Apply your facilitation skills to foster constructive conversation, prompt people to respond and contribute, read posts regularly and respond yourself to encourage participation, ask provocative questions to get reactions, and comment or clarify as needed. See 'Facilitation tips' below. This may require up to 1 - 2 hours per day.

10. Write a short recap at the end of each discussion phase. The recap (also called a 'consolidated reply') should include the main highlights of participants' responses and comments. In addition it should provide a quick analysis and refer to any examples or useful literature. Depending on the extent of the discussions, your summary recap could be anywhere from 100 to 1000 words or even more. Post the summary in the discussion space, and use it as a means to further promote the overall discussion and to attract and engage participants. Then proceed to the next question or set of questions.

- ▲ If appropriate, send also an email message with a link to the recap, to all invited participants (in case some have not yet joined the discussion).
-

11. At the conclusion of the E-Discussion, thank participants for their contributions. The primary concrete outputs – the summary recaps of the various questions – will have already been compiled by you and are now available for sharing

and use as appropriate, according to your initial objectives. The discussion threads themselves remain online as a reference and record of the discussions.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



Developing effective questions

▲ Base the questions on relevant activities, tasks or specific issues within a topic or theme that participants are familiar with. Think about what questions are relevant for your work objectives, interesting for the participants you intend to invite, and appropriately challenging for them.

Example: (Issue) ‘The government of (country X) has just passed an amendment to the constitution recognizing the right to both water and sanitation services for all. What are the key priorities to address in a realistic programme of action to realize this right? Bear in mind the current economic situation of the country, the challenges of providing services in remote and rural communities, and the issues presented by the activity of armed groups in the neighbouring (country Y). Consider the progress achieved, and the problems encountered, when (country Z, in the same region) attempted to expand provision of safe water in rural areas and improve sanitation in major urban communities; refer to the background reading attached.’

▲ If needed, request assistance of 1-2 subject matter experts in question development (likely not more, as then the discussion process might be pre-empted).

▲ For each question, explain the issue or problem clearly, and provide examples. If needed, you can share **brief** background readings to accompany questions; remember to provide time in the schedule for participants to read and reflect.

▲ Give clear directions on what is expected in the responses, i.e., the scope for discussion, type of response sought, the maximum number of words etc. Share examples to guide participants.

▲ Use open-ended questions, which are questions that cannot be answered either Yes/No or by picking from a list of answers. Open-ended questions encourage greater quality and quantity of discussion.

▲ In general, avoid closed or single-response questions. Closed questions (which are accompanied by a list of answers from which the participant must choose) and single-response questions (which can be answered by a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’) can be limiting. Using them can shut discussions down quickly, even if the questions are accompanied by a request for participants to explain their answer. Consider posting some closed/single-response questions as polls (using the polling features of the discussion platform).

Other planning tips

▲ Decide how many participants to invite. Small group discussions (5-15 participants) can work if the group includes the needed expertise and if the facilitator can ensure that those who have the expertise actively participate. Trust levels may be higher in small groups; this may be a key factor for discussions on sensitive topics. But large group discussions (more than 15 participants) usually work best, because they are more likely to generate better and more diverse responses. Large groups may require more questions, or more challenging questions, to keep the group engaged.

▲ **To prime the discussion, identify a few potential respondents who are experts or whom you know to have insights or experience relevant to the discussion.**

Reach out to them personally before the conversation begins, alert them of the upcoming discussion and try to get a concrete commitment from them to each make initial contributions to the discussion when it begins. Consider asking for alternative or provocative views in order to stimulate interest. **Priming is almost always essential to succeed in an E-Discussion:** there tends to be a lot of initial inertia, and many persons may register but not contribute, just acting as observers.

▲ If your conversation includes external participants (i.e. any who are not from your organization), make sure that the platform you are using allows them access.

▲ Share final outputs from the discussion with all participants, including any external ones.

▲ Whomever you select as facilitator should be ready to provide some level of technical support or 'hand-holding' for participants on using the platform.

▲ If your E-Discussion is intended to help create documentation other than the standard discussion recaps (see #5 under 'When you are ready to start' above) then think about how the discussion will feed in to the desired products, so that mechanisms are in place in advance.

Facilitation tips

▲ Your first objective is **getting participation**, in the form of responses and active discussion. Be ready to call on any participants you contacted in advance if their help is needed to activate the discussion. Recognize the value of any contributions, even small ones. After some time, start explicitly calling on people who have not yet contributed, e.g. by saying 'we're interested in everyone's views'. Try to be thought-provoking in your own contributions. Remind the group of the goals and purposes of the discussion: Provided these have been properly chosen, their relevance and importance will spur the exchange.

▲ Once the discussion is flowing, stay on top of it by checking the discussion space regularly, perhaps several times a day.

- Respond to participant posts in a timely manner. Observe, analyze and reflect on their inputs. Let them know when they are on the right track. In general, respond as a 'model participant', adhering to all of your guidelines and

supporting your discussion objectives.

- Refer people to other participants' posts; let them interact and respond to each other.
- Provide suggestions and solutions to help people who seem to be.
- If a conversation veers off topic, steer it back in the desired direction. Look out for signs of confusion, tension, or technical difficulty, and intervene supportively and helpfully to clear these up.
- Be ready to remove any inappropriate (discriminatory, completely off-topic, etc.) contributions, should these occur.
- If there are participants in time zones far removed from your own, remember that their responses may come in at varying times, so check in frequently.

▲ Because an E-Discussion takes place online, it has some additional facilitation challenges that are not found in face-to-face meetings. It is more difficult for facilitators of online activities to gauge participants' levels of interest and engagement, because they don't have access to the physical clues (such as gaze, tone of voice, offhand comments, body language, etc.) which are available in a face-to-face setting. **When facilitating an E-Discussion, pay close attention to the frequency and tone of participant comments, in order to manage the interaction in the best way.**

VARIATIONS



▲ Unstructured E-Discussions:

These typically take place among members of an online community that already exists. Unstructured E-Discussions begin when a member or a community facilitator poses a significant, relevant question to the community, more or less spontaneously. The discussion then evolves under its own momentum, often with some assistance from a facilitator.

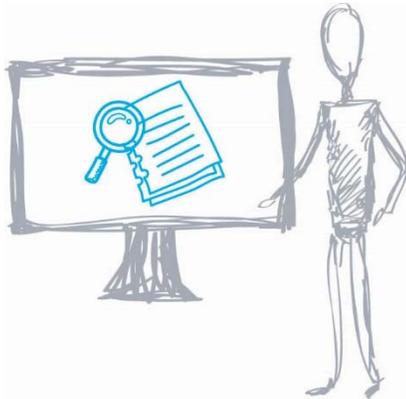
Despite being unplanned, such discussions can offer great value. The spontaneous nature of the question can sometimes be very effective in eliciting participation from the community. The ability to hold unstructured E-Discussions is one reason for establishing and maintaining a Knowledge Exchange Community (see the article in this Toolbox).

Some of the same considerations as for structured E-Discussions apply.

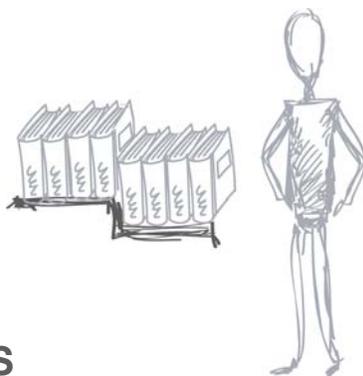
- The best questions are concrete, challenging, usually open-ended, and are relevant to the background and work objectives of the community members/discussion participants.
- Community facilitators can help by responding to highlight particularly important questions, referring participants to reference materials or previous discussions, keeping discussions on track, encouraging participation, and sometimes by privately prompting knowledgeable persons to respond when needed.

- If good responses are provided during an unstructured E-Discussion, a summary recap by a community facilitator can help capture the knowledge more effectively.

CASE STUDY / EXAMPLE



A set of related publicly accessible E-Discussions took place on the **2015 ECOSOC theme: "Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals: What it will take"**. To view the discussions, go to <https://www.unteamworks.org/amr2015>.



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CREDITS

Author: Meena Arivananthan.

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

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Expert Review Panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar.

Additional expert reviewers: Anna Boelens, Nima Fallah, Shannon O'Shea.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA

knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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Annex: Discussion guidelines

Guidelines can be useful in preparing participants for an E-Discussion. Below are some examples of what they might cover:

Facilitator:

- ▲ How to use the discussion forum tool.
- ▲ Role: setting the agenda, moderating the E-Discussion, fostering interaction, guiding the discussion, encouraging diverse views but keeping the focus on the topic being discussed, summarizing and capturing highlights from the discussions.

Participants:

- ▲ How to use the discussion forum tool. This guide may be slightly different from how the facilitator would use the tool.
- ▲ How to make the best use of the E-Discussion. What are the benefits?
- ▲ Rules of engagement which define what is allowed, what is not, including etiquette for sharing views, comments and critique. E.g.
 - Be respectful when discussing other people's viewpoints. Challenge views, not people.
 - Avoid misunderstandings by clarifying issues calmly.
 - Have fun!

EXPERT INTERVIEW (with audience)

/ Direct learning conversations with experts /

WHAT IS THE EXPERT INTERVIEW?

The Expert Interview is a participatory question and answer session in which members of the audience take the lead in asking a subject matter expert questions that are oriented towards their needs and interests, within the context of his/her expertise. Instead of the expert giving a presentation on what s/he thinks people want to know, this tool lets participants decide on the questions they consider important. The tool can be used to 'interview' up to three experts and can accommodate any number of participants.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *Rapporteur*
- *Up to 3 guests (subject matter experts)*
- *Participants (any number)*
- *Microphones: One per expert, plus 1-2 for participants asking questions*
- *Open space or room, large enough to accommodate participants*
- *Chairs (see 'Set up the room' below)*
- *Pin board (optional)*
- *Flipchart sheets and marker pens (optional)*
- *Laptop computer (optional)*
- *LCD projector (optional)*
- *60 – 90 minutes*

WHEN AND WHY TO USE

The Expert Interview is perfect for sharing knowledge and experiences from a few experts in a dynamic, engaging and participatory way. There



are no presentations. Instead, participants are free to ask any relevant questions within the designated topic (based on the particular knowledge of the experts). Experts (who may be academics, practitioners, or both) respond directly and can have conversations with participants.

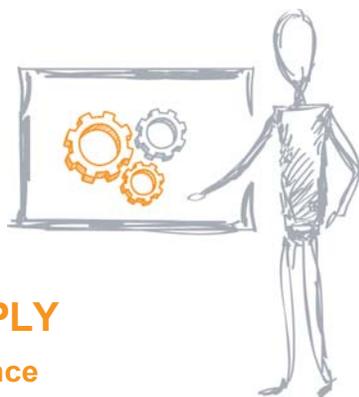
Spontaneous questions from participants can often elicit more, and more relevant, knowledge from experts than one-way presentations in which the expert tries to anticipate what s/he thinks the audience wants to know. The open layout used in

the Expert Interview helps make it less intimidating, and more conducive to participation, than a panel discussion. The Expert Interview can be used:

- ▲ To introduce a topic or theme at the beginning of a workshop/ multi-session event.
- ▲ As an alternative to a formal podium presentation or keynote with experts.
- ▲ To elicit knowledge from resource persons without requiring them to do a lot of preparation.
- ▲ To introduce new concepts or potentially 'hot topics' that participants may be curious about but have little knowledge of.

The Expert Interview is similar to the Fishbowl. Key differences include that the physical setup for the Expert Interview keeps the experts at the front of the room, and the Expert Interview does not allow experts to leave the discussion and be replaced. The net effect is a greater emphasis, in the Expert Interview, on the contributions of the experts.

The Expert Interview is the face-to-face equivalent of the Online Jam in its Ask Me Anything version (see the article on the Online Jam in this Toolbox for more information).



HOW TO APPLY

Prepare in advance

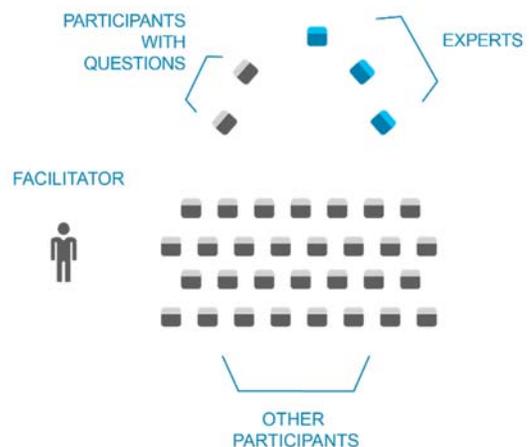
1. Choose experts based on relevance of their knowledge and experiences to the work of your participants, and/or to your desired objectives. Pick a date and time, confirm the experts' availability, and brief them on how the session will unfold.

2. Publicize the session. Compose a short, compelling message about the event, and include the topic, who the experts are, when and where the session will take place, how to participate (e.g. just show up, or register in advance). Share it as appropriate: via direct email to individuals or mailing lists, broadcast emails, posting it on organizational social networks, putting up notices, etc., all depending on your desired participants.

Ask participants to come prepared with relevant questions. Then share a reminder a few days before the event.

Set up the room

3. In front of the audience, place up to three chairs on one side (for the experts), and two chairs on the other (for participants with questions) in the shape of an inverted V (see illustration). Ensure that a microphone is available at each chair. The audience is seated facing the experts in a semi-circle or theatre-style, depending on the number of participants and room size. The facilitator starts by standing at the front to open the session, and then remains among the audience, to support the process of asking questions and provide any other needed support.



When you are ready to start

4. Begin by giving a brief explanation of how the session will be run. Ensure that participants understand their active role in group learning: The participants themselves are responsible for eliciting stories and experiences from the experts. Encourage them to ask about relevant issues and challenges that the experts have grappled with in getting their jobs done, how they created effective solutions, etc.

5. Introduce each of the experts: Give their names, identify their roles/positions, and summarize their expertise and its relevance to the audience. This will help participants understand the scope for discussion and allow them to formulate relevant questions. Use a flipchart, or project a PowerPoint slide, to highlight key points that can provide further context and spark the discussion.

6. Invite participants with questions – first come, first served – to seat themselves on one of the two empty chairs available. Instruct them to keep their questions to the point, and to avoid statements and lengthy preambles. Once their question has been asked and answered, they should vacate the seat so that someone else with a question can sit and ask it. Up to two participants can sit at the front; one will be asking a question or listening to a response, and the other is next up. Ask other participants with questions to wait nearby so they can quickly take their turn: This reduces unnecessary pauses between questions.

7. As each question is being answered, the rapporteur captures the main points in order to document the session and to help participants keep track. Rapporteurs can write on colour-coded cards that are pinned onto a pin board, or they can take notes on a computer and project them onto a large screen (the latter is useful for large audiences).

8. The Q&A continues for the stipulated time or until the questions run out. Allow up to 45 minutes of Q&A for a session with one expert, or 80 minutes for three, plus time for participant briefing and expert introductions. Avoid longer sessions: Both the audience and the experts will likely become restless or tired.

9. Close the session by thanking the experts and summarizing the key messages from the session.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



▲ Don't limit your choice of experts to academics: An expert is anyone with relevant experience and insights from theory and practice concerning a relevant topic, or even a person who has just completed a really interesting/important project or assignment.

▲ Don't use more than 3 experts. Otherwise the Q&A may become tediously long, and the session will resemble an ordinary panel discussion.

▲ Explain the scope of the Expert Interview clearly to ensure that the questions asked are relevant to the theme and to the experts' knowledge.

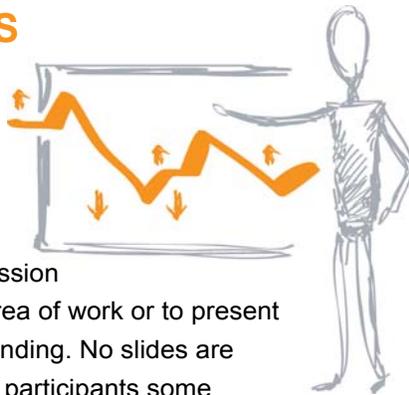
▲ Allow flexibility in the questions asked. Encourage a wide range so that the session caters to participant interests.

▲ As facilitator, you should be prepared to ask one or two questions at the start of the session, if needed to get the ball rolling.

VARIATIONS

▲ 5-minute introductory talk:

The expert is given 5 minutes at the beginning of the session to introduce their area of work or to present a new topic/ idea/ finding. No slides are allowed. This gives participants some context in which they can ask questions. The talk is followed by the participant Q&A process, as above.



▲ **Temporary expert:** One extra chair is added to the experts' side; if there are two experts, there will be three chairs. If a question is asked and a participant has considerable relevant knowledge or experience (at their own

discretion), they may take the empty seat and assume the role of 'temporary expert' by responding to the question. Afterwards they vacate the seat.



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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA

knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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FISHBOWL

/ Maximizing participation in direct conversations with experts /

WHAT IS THE FISHBOWL?

The fishbowl is a method to organize presentations and group discussions that offers the benefits of small group discussions – most notably, a spontaneous, conversational approach to discussing issues – within large group settings. This is done by arranging the room so that the speakers are seated in the centre of the room with other participants sitting around them in a circle watching their conversation ‘in the fishbowl.’

Best used in conferences, workshops and town hall-type meetings, the Fishbowl focuses the entire group’s attention on a discussion among 3 - 6 people. Other people present become observers, active listeners, and potential participants through a rotation process which reduces the distance between speakers and audience. The Fishbowl is especially useful as an engaging alternative to PowerPoint presentations or panel discussions, as a way to allow direct conversations with experts, as a means of providing noteworthy participants with a prominent platform while still maintaining interactivity, or for discussing controversial issues that people may feel strongly about. This method requires a facilitator. It is versatile and can be adapted easily (see the multiple Variations below).

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *12 - 30 people (or more: see ‘Variations’ below)*
- *Open space or large room with enough space for participants to move around easily*
- *Chairs (arranged as per illustration below)*
- *Microphone(s) (optional)*
- *45 - 90 minutes*
- *Optional: Rapporteur*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

The fishbowl method can be used to:

▲ **Foster dynamic group interactions and active participation.** In large group settings, it is often challenging to engage all participants. With the Fishbowl, one group of participants discusses an issue, while the other group observes the discussion. There is an evolving conversation as participants move in and out of the Fishbowl to share what they know or ask questions. The element of change helps keep participants on their toes wondering who will come in next, and what they will say, and keeps energy levels up.

▲ **Discuss or introduce controversial topics.** Start the Fishbowl discussion with 3 - 6 people who have diverse views, yet also understand the topic and its pros and cons broadly. The observers will be able to see various facets and viewpoints emerge through the discussion, which facilitates a more objective exploration of the topic and its related issues.

▲ **Showcase expert panel discussions.** In this case, the Fishbowl begins with a panel discussion among experts or other noteworthy participants, such as high officials or leaders of organizations. The discussion is led by the facilitator. As the panel discusses the issue at hand, observers participate by active listening. An empty chair is placed in the Fishbowl so

that any observer can come forward and participate by asking a question or contributing an idea. This contributes to making the panel discussion more relevant and engaging than a panel discussion in the standard format.

▲ **Avoid PowerPoint presentations.** When there are 3 - 4 presenters who have been invited to share their knowledge on the same theme, the Fishbowl method can provide a breath of fresh air for the audience. Lengthy PowerPoint presentations scheduled back-to-back can easily diminish attention in a workshop, whereas the Fishbowl can set a more informal and dynamic pace and keep interest up. (Note that the Fishbowl replaces slides with conversation – often a trade-off worth making.)

The Fishbowl is similar to the Expert Interview. Key differences include that the physical setup for the Fishbowl has the conversation right in the middle of the room, surrounded on all sides by the audience, and the Fishbowl allows anyone to step into or out of the conversation – hence even the experts may be replaced by participants, should the occasion demand. The net effect, in the Fishbowl, is a greater sense of an intimate and spontaneous conversation.



HOW TO APPLY

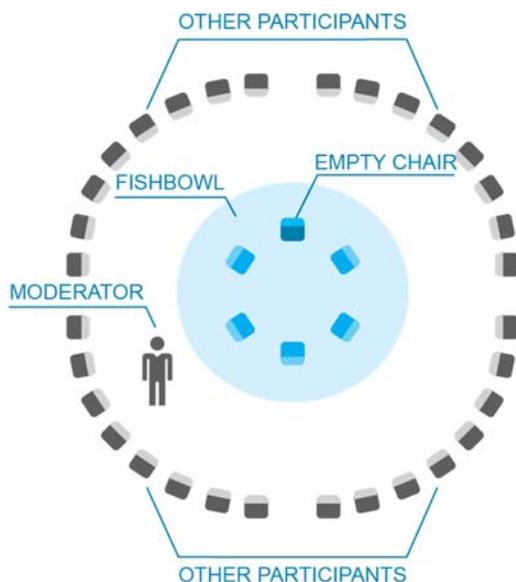
Prepare in advance

1. Choose an engaging topic before convening the Fishbowl. The best topics are compelling for the audience and broad enough to have conversations about.

2. Identify 3 - 6 experts or noteworthy participants who can initiate the Fishbowl conversation, and brief them on the Fishbowl process. This group will begin in the inner circle; all other participants will start in the larger group of observers/ active listeners. You may do the selection and briefing as part of advance planning, or at the event itself.

Set up the room

3. Arrange chairs in a circle for the small group (see illustration), making sure to include one or two empty chairs, i.e. if there are five people in the small group, six or seven chairs are needed in the small group circle. Add an outer circle of chairs around the small group for the remaining participants, leaving enough space for movement. For best results, the facilitator should remain standing in order to be clearly seen by all, and to move around the room to remind participants of the “rules” or encourage them to join or leave the inner circle.



When you are ready to start

4. Seat the participants (inner and outer circles) and introduce the session. Describe the topic for discussion and provide an overview of the process. If notes of the session are required, ensure the rapporteur is ready.

5. Invite the Fishbowl participants to begin the discussion. You may wish to ask a specific person in the Fishbowl to kick things off, or you may invite anyone in the Fishbowl to start. Participants in the outer circle observe the discussion as active listeners.

6. After about 10 - 15 minutes, invite a participant in the outer circle to join the Fishbowl. S/he can occupy an empty chair in the inner circle and ask a question or otherwise join the discussion. Only the inner circle can speak or contribute to the discussion.

7. Continue the discussion and the rotation process. Outer circle participants are free to join in the discussion, provided that someone from the inner circle, including the experts or anyone who has stepped in, frees a chair and joins the observers. One way to do this is to have the person who wants to join to signal in some way to the facilitator, or for them to tap on the shoulder of someone in the inner circle as an indication that they want to take over their chair. If you have a lot of participants wanting to ask questions, you may need to jot down their names so they can join in order.

8. In order to keep the discussion lively and informative, encourage participants to step away from the Fishbowl once they have contributed their thoughts. This frees up room for others to share their views on the topic.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



▲ Brief the experts in the process so that they know the Fishbowl is for conversations (not for presentations) and so that they are comfortable with leaving the Fishbowl after an initial discussion period of 15 minutes. As people move in and out of the Fishbowl, there is a dynamic flow of ideas which makes the discussion richer.

▲ Consider setting a time limit for any speaker in the Fishbowl, e.g. 3 minutes – especially if you are addressing a controversial or sensitive topic.

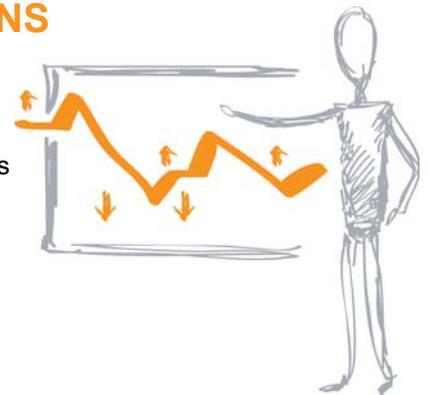
▲ To maintain focus and clarity, ensure all conversation in the room takes place only in the Fishbowl. Any input from someone in the outer circle can only be contributed if they move to an empty chair in the inner circle.

▲ To encourage the group to focus on the discussions, you may wish to have the rapporteur record the key points on a flipchart visible to everyone. The flipchart can be transcribed afterwards, if needed.

▲ If the Fishbowl tool is new for most of your participants, or if your meeting culture tends towards presentations rather than conversation, then consider privately asking 1-2 participants – ideally, team leaders – to prepare a question or two before the meeting. At the Fishbowl, they should be among the first to join the inner circle and ask their questions. This will help get the flow of conversation going.

VARIATIONS

There are several variations to the Fishbowl and these can easily be further adapted.



▲ **More empty chairs:** In larger groups, i.e. 30 or more participants, always begin the Fishbowl discussion with two empty chairs in place of one. This allows for quicker rotation of participants in and out of the Fishbowl.

▲ **Rotating and non-rotating participants:** If you are inviting in external experts, you might wish to keep them in the inner circle continuously while having a couple of chairs set aside for rotating participants. Just be sure to be clear to the invited experts and other participants who can rotate and who will remain in the inner circle throughout.

▲ **Closed Fishbowl:** This works best with smaller groups. Begin by dividing participants into two groups of equal size. One group becomes the Fishbowl, and the other becomes the outer circle. Participants in the Fishbowl are given an allotted time for discussion. Then the groups swap roles: The entire inner circle moves back to take the place of the observers, while the former observers move in to the Fishbowl to begin their discussion.

▲ **Heterogeneous Fishbowl:** Given a topic having multiple distinct viewpoints, invite one person from each main viewpoint to sit in the Fishbowl. The ensuing discussions will be varied and will cover many facets of the topic.

▲ **Homogeneous Fishbowl:** People who share similar opinions, experiences, culture, etc. are invited to sit in the Fishbowl and start their discussions on a specific topic. In the next round, representatives of a different viewpoint move to the fishbowl while the earlier group moves back to become observers. This is a great way to get people to appreciate diversity and encourage future dialogue among people with opposing views, contrasting experiences or different cultures.

▲ **Convening Cases:** This approach works best for learning among a small group of panel members (2 - 3) and a small audience. Designate panel members ahead of time and have each write up a brief (1 - 2 page) summary of a case: a challenge they recently faced, or a problem they want input on, and their actions, whether already taken or planned. The day before the event, panel members share their papers with each other for reading. At the event, each member has 5 minutes to present their case. For the next 15 - 20 minutes, the other panel members give their opinion on the case based on the written summary and presentation; crucially, the author of the case may not speak during this time. Members of the audience take turns to sit

at the empty chair with the panel and give brief comments. The case is concluded with 5 minutes for the author to respond to the comments. The process is repeated for each panel member. The value of this approach comes from the panel members' change in perspective, compelled by the fact that they cannot speak while others comment on their case, and from the value of fresh perspectives on the issues presented.



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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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ICEBREAKERS & ENERGIZERS

/ Set the tone for active contribution and engagement by all participants /

WHAT ARE ICEBREAKERS, AND WHY SHOULD I USE THEM?

Every event or workshop has participants, but often they don't participate actively enough. Sometimes this is because the event has too many presentations, with 'participants' being put into the role of passive listeners for the most part. But sometimes an event may have plenty of opportunities for participation, but it may start off on the wrong foot with a lengthy speech or 'keynote'. This can have a negative effect on the level of participation. Experienced event facilitators have observed that the first couple of sessions often set the tone for the remainder of an event; if these sessions are non-participatory, then a non-participatory tone is set for the event, and participants will usually behave accordingly.

Hence the value of icebreakers, which are informal activities and exercises to help people get to know each other quickly, and start communicating and connecting early in a meeting or workshop. Icebreakers are powerful tools to set the tone for participation, and encourage those at the event to play active, contributing roles.

Icebreakers help establish connections quickly and informally. This sense of connectedness and free communication will help the group achieve the work-related or learning objectives of the event. Icebreakers are especially useful when participants are from diverse cultural, ethnic or organizational backgrounds. When used correctly, icebreakers can also energize the group, highlight participants' particular strengths and subtly introduce themes to be explored later in the event.

The following effective icebreakers are described in detail below; the last two are the quickest and most informal:

- A. Speed Dating (Speed Networking)**
- B. Four Quadrants**
- C. Portrait of My Job**
- D. River of Life**

- E. Walking Billboard**
- F. Mistaken Identity**
- G. What Do They Like?**

There are many other icebreakers not covered here, which you can learn about from the references listed at the end of this document.

A. Speed Dating (Speed Networking)

The Speed Dating icebreaker is best used in meetings or workshops where most people don't know each other. It enables each meeting participant to meet a large number of other participants in a relatively short time. A structured format helps eliminate awkwardness: Participants prepare 1-minute 'elevator speeches' about themselves, then exchange introductions through a simple rotation process.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *Room with large empty space (no chairs or tables)*
- *Alarm clock/ bell / other audible signal*
- *A4 paper and pens for participants*
- *20 - 30 participants*
- *30 - 40 minutes*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

Speed dating/ networking is best used in meetings or workshops where most people don't know each other. Using a structured setting and pre-assigned questions, this activity eliminates the awkwardness of starting a conversation cold. This way, participants are able to focus on actually getting to know the person in front of them, without feeling nervous.

Using a structured format, participants are given approximately one minute to introduce themselves to others.



HOW TO APPLY

Plan in advance

1. Ensure you understand all the steps below. Then briefly explain the Speed Dating concept to participants.

2. Ask each person to come up with a one-minute 'elevator pitch': an informal verbal introduction to themselves and their work. Stipulate that each person's elevator pitch should include a funny/ memorable snippet of information about themselves, and that it should take no more than one minute to deliver. You can also ask them to mention, in 1 line only, how they are connected to

the theme of the event/workshop. Provide A4 paper, and give participants 5 minutes to jot down their pitches.

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3. In the room's empty space, have the participants form two concentric circles of equal number: an inner circle facing outwards, and an outer circle facing inwards. Each participant should now have a partner in front of them.

.....

4. Let the introductions begin: Each participant in the outer circle delivers their personal pitch to their partner in the inner circle. Then after one minute the inner circle partner does likewise.

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5. Keep time. After 2 minutes, ring the bell (or other clearly audible signal; you will have to be heard over the sound of all participants talking). Instruct participants in the outer circle to move to the right and stop in front of the next person in the inner circle.

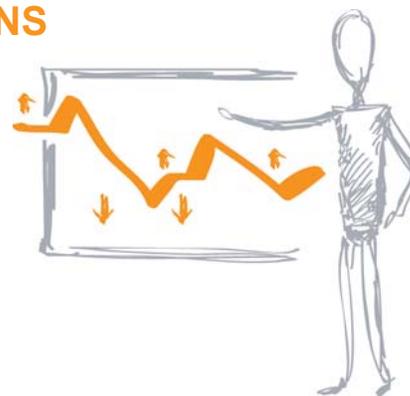
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6. The introductions begin again. The process is repeated until everyone in the outer circle has spoken to everyone in the inner circle.

.....

Tip: In traditional or conservative settings, where 'dating' is taboo, call this tool Speed Networking.

VARIATIONS



▲ **Questions:** Pose a couple of questions to the group; the answers will be delivered by participants to each other, by way of introduction, as they interact in the two concentric rings. The questions can be serious (e.g. 'What project has given you the most satisfaction to work on?'), humorous (e.g. 'What was your favourite joke as a child?') or connected to the workshop theme (e.g. 'What part of the event (workshop) are you looking forward to most?'). Have the outer ring rotate as described above, until everyone in the outer circle has spoken to everyone in the inner one.

▲ **Large groups:** In order not to exceed most people's information threshold, the suggested maximum number of participants in the usual Speed Dating is 30 (15 introductions in 30 minutes). If you have more than 30 people, form 2 (or more) sets of 2 circles each, an outer and an inner, that work just as described above. With 2 or more sets of circles, it is easiest if there is one facilitator per set. Keep some distance between multiple concurrent Speed Dating sessions, or even hold them in separate rooms, in order to limit the noise levels.

B. Four Quadrants

An active exercise that keeps people on their feet, Four Quadrants is best used in large groups as an initial icebreaker, a means of gradually introducing event themes and topics, or as an after-lunch energizer.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *4 flipchart sheets*
- *30 or more participants*
- *30 minutes*
- *Room: ideally empty, or with plenty of room for people to move around and gather in corners.*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

It can be difficult to mobilize the energy of a large group of participants who don't know each other well, especially when you don't have much time in your event schedule. Four Quadrants is ideal for these situations. By allowing participants to group themselves according to their responses to simple ideas or statements, it gives them an opportunity to identify with others in an easy way, even if they come from very different backgrounds.

Normally Four Quadrants begins with participants responding to common leisure or work activities. Participants must choose from among four standard responses, ranging from very positive to negative, hence the 'Four

Quadrants'. By progressing gradually to statements about workshop themes or topics, these can be introduced in a subtle way, and gauge participant interest levels and degree of experience. The dynamic nature of Four Quadrants also makes it a great energizer before embarking on long sessions.



HOW TO APPLY

- 1. Before the event: Decide on the four standard responses you would like participants to use in the exercise.** These can be any four words covering a spectrum from the most positive to the negative, for example: Passion / Like / Tolerate / Dislike.

Then create a list of up to 5-6 phrases or statements for participants to respond to. Each should be short and neither too serious nor obscure, e.g., 'watching sci-fi movies', 'singing', 'writing reports', 'talking to donors', 'social media', 'spicy food', etc. Stick to simple things that bring out strong reactions from people in a fun way, but avoid picking anything too political or polarizing. If you wish, you can also work in some of the basic themes from your event. Keep these as simple as you can: the purpose is simply to introduce basic ideas, not complex questions. Put these in the latter part of your list, for use near the end of the exercise.

.....

2. When you are ready to begin, write the response words on four flipchart sheets and post each one in one of the four corners of the room. These are the four quadrants.

.....

3. Instruct participants to stand in the middle of the room. Read out a phrase from your pre-determined list, starting with something light-hearted. Ask participants to move to the quadrant, from most positive to negative, that best describes their response to the phrase.

.....

4. Once participants have settled in their respective quadrants, select the quadrant with the fewest people in it, and ask those participants to share their thoughts on why they made their choice. Then ask volunteers from each of the other quadrants to share their thoughts. Highlight the similarities or differences among participants. The level of probing can be as light or as in-depth as you wish.

You can also ask each person to talk to at least two other participants in the same quadrant, to share why they feel the same way about the particular phrase. In large groups this will inspire a lot of conversations and energy.

.....

5. Continue this process with additional phrases and statements from your list, first the light-hearted or humorous ones, then move gradually into those that are related to the event's theme. The probing and discussions around work-related phrases will help you assess the comfort level, interest and experience participants may have with a particular topic.

.....

C. Portrait of My Job

This icebreaker is especially suitable for events involving participants from different parts of the same organization. The drawing of 'portraits' – each illustrating a participant's view of the communications and relationships necessary to do their job – gives participants a chance to communicate visually. The small group discussion of the portraits promotes interpersonal connection and builds empathy.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *Flipchart/ A4 paper (one sheet for each participant)*
- *Marker pens (several colours per participant)*
- *10- 30 participants*
- *45 minutes*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

One way of strengthening connectedness and communication among meeting participants is to help them understand what it takes for others to do their jobs. This can be especially useful when participants are in the same organization, but in different departments or locations. Participants will recognize commonalities (“I work with that person also!”) and will get some surprises (“I didn’t realize you had to coordinate with so many people”). This in turn will help create a sense of empathy and appreciation for the work that others do, and will open a communication channel that can later be used to discuss common issues and exchange solutions.

This exercise is not limited to those from only one organization; participants from different organizations can also find it stimulating, as long as there are at least some common elements in the way they work. The use of drawing, instead of dry lists of names and roles, can be a refreshing change of pace for participants.



HOW TO APPLY

1. Before the event: Prepare a portrait as an example to show participants at the session, and to become familiar with the process. This may be your own portrait, or – if your role and work are unfamiliar to meeting participants – it may be a fictitious one. Using one sheet of paper

(A4 or flipchart size, whichever you will use at the session – flipchart is preferred due to its larger size), sketch a very quick and small image/symbol of yourself (or your fictitious subject) in the middle. Then, around your image, draw images/ symbol representations of key persons you communicate with in order to do your work. Put the ones you work most closely with closest to the image that represents you. Use arrows to show the direction of the information flow; some arrows will be double-headed to show that information flows in both directions, while others will point in one direction only.

2. When you are ready to begin: Ask participants to reflect on their jobs for 5 minutes, and think about their place in the organization, how they communicate within their own teams and with other departments, and how they get their work done.

3. Provide participants with one sheet each of either A4 or flipchart paper. Summarize the instructions for drawing a portrait of their job, as in #1 above, and show them the example prepared earlier. Let them know that they can use different symbols for persons or processes if they wish; the key is to allow a bit of reflection and creativity. **Then give them 10 minutes to draw their own portraits.**

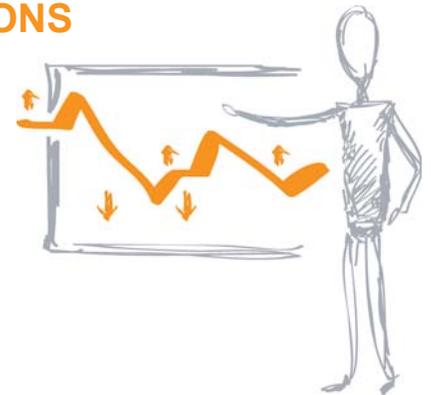
4. Once the portraits are completed, divide participants into small groups of 4-5 persons. Each group member has no more than 2-3 minutes to present and describe their portrait to the others in their group. Encourage group members to ask short questions to learn more,

e.g. ‘How do others perceive you at work?’, ‘Who is your boss’ boss and how do they fit in?’, or whatever relevant questions occur to them. This may take 20-30 minutes in total.

Once can also ask each person to talk to at least two other participants in the same quadrant, to share why they feel the same way about the particular phrase. In large groups this will inspire a lot of conversations and energy.

5. To wrap up, regroup in plenary and ask for one or two volunteers to share their insights on the activity.

VARIATIONS



This activity can be used as a standalone icebreaker. It can also be used as a starting point for subsequent sessions, especially if there is a specific challenge related to work processes, internal communication or networking that is being explored at your event. Or, instead of portraits of an individual, participants could prepare portraits of the work of a particular unit or department.

D. River of Life

Each participant in this exercise creates a graphic representation of their life, symbolized by a river and surrounding landscapes, and describes it in a small group setting. The River of Life is particularly useful for team building among individuals who don't know each other well.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *Flipchart paper (one sheet for each participant)*
- *Colour marker pens*
- *Optional: Colour cards, scissors, glue, masking tape*
- *10- 30 participants*
- *45- 60 minutes*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

In the River of Life, each participant creates a reflective individual drawing that highlights milestones, challenges and celebrations in their life. The process of sharing these highlights in a group encourages group members to bond with one another, laying a basis for improved group dynamics and promoting increased effectiveness in working together as a team. Some of the power of this exercise comes from the use of imagery, which can often be more effective than words.



HOW TO APPLY

1. Before the event: Draw an example River of Life. Imagine your life as a river starting at birth and flowing along the course of your life. Mark the milestones in the form of boats (things that helped you), trees (major achievements) and rocks (challenges). You can enrich the illustration with a landscape surrounding the river that depicts the growth experiences and offers more detail about the milestones, achievements and challenges that shaped the present.

2. When you are ready to begin: Give each participant one sheet of flipchart paper, and

ensure there are sufficient colour marker pens available (and, if so inclined, colour cards and scissors for cutting out shapes). Describe what is needed as per #1 above, and show them the pre-drawn example to guide them. **Allow 15 - 30 minutes to complete the drawing.**

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3. Once each participant has drawn their River of Life, organize them into groups of 4 - 5 and ask each person to share the highlights of their own River with their group, in about 2 - 3 minutes. The group presentations should take about 15 – 20 minutes in total.

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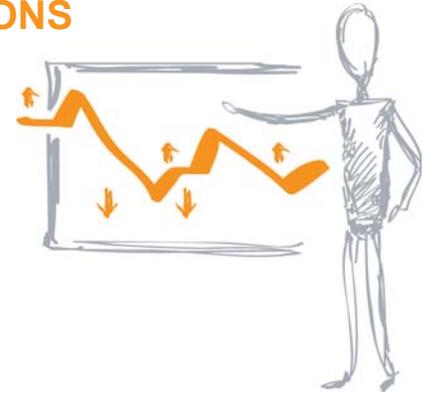
4. Ask participants to hang their River of Life drawings on a wall or pin board at the back of the room, creating a mini-gallery for others to view later.

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5. End the session in plenary: Ask 2 -3 volunteers to share their insights on the activity. Ask people to identify some of the similarities they noticed in the drawings. Did anything stand out? Were there similarities among the group members? .

.....

VARIATIONS



▲ **Working in pairs:** Participants pair off, and each partner creates a River of Life illustration for the other person, by asking relevant questions and interpreting the answers visually. Ensure that partners allocate the available time equally so that each will have an illustration prepared by the other (e.g., 15 min for each partner and illustration). Conclude with short presentations in plenary: Each person presents their partner's life using the illustration they drew.

E. Walking Billboard

This is an informal way to open a meeting. Participants prepare and wear a personal 'billboard': a sheet of flipchart paper with their name and answers to interesting questions about themselves. They then mingle for a short time; the billboards help catalyse conversations.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *Flipchart paper (one sheet per participant)*
- *Colour marker pens*
- *15- 40 participants*
- *30 minutes*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

The Walking Billboard is best used at the beginning of a meeting or workshop. Participants can converse with previously unknown persons more easily thanks to the personal responses (to previously selected, common questions) on the billboards. This exercise strikes a note of informality and, with the paper billboard covering participants' outfits and name tags, helps even out implied hierarchies and cultural barriers.



HOW TO APPLY

1. Ask participants to propose questions that they would like to ask others at the event. Give them examples to begin with, e.g., 'What is your favourite book?', 'What movie did you see most recently?', 'What is your main area of work?', 'Where have you worked the longest in your life?', 'What is the source of your interest in the theme of this event?' etc. The key is to have a healthy mix of lighthearted and substantive (but short) questions.

2. Write the proposed questions on a flipchart, and stop once you have at least 8 - 10. Read out the list and have a vote (a quick show of hands) among participants as to which ones they would like to select. Choose 3 - 5 popular questions.

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3. Give each participant a sheet of flipchart paper and ask them to create attractive billboards using colour markers, clearly writing their names and their brief responses to the selected questions. Allow 5 minutes.

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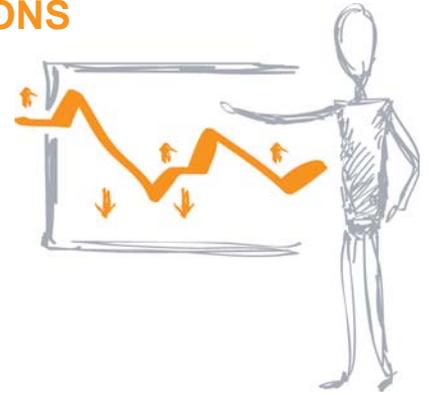
4. Have participants tape their billboards on their shoulders, covering the chest. Ask them to move around the room and mingle. Encourage everyone to talk to at least 5 people in 15 minutes, and to use the answers written on the billboards as conversation starters.

.....

5. Gather the group back in plenary and ask one or two volunteers to share their insights on the activity, whether they met anyone interesting, and any other highlights.

.....

VARIATIONS



▲ **Pre-determined questions:** Use this method when time is limited. Instead of asking participants to come up with questions, the facilitator provides 3 - 5 questions at the start of the activity. Participants prepare their billboards right away, and then mingle and converse.

F. Mistaken Identity

This is a quick and easy way for participants to get to know one other at the beginning of an event. When they first enter the meeting room at the start of the day, participants receive a name card with someone else's name on it, and are asked to mingle and find that person.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *Large name cards with participant names prewritten in large letters*
- *20- 50 participants*
- *10- 15 minutes*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

Use Mistaken Identity when you want a quick icebreaker that does not need much preparation. It can be used effectively in groups of up to around 50 people. As people walk around looking for the person whose name card they are holding, expect them to meet other people and make connections very quickly, with little effort.



HOW TO APPLY

- 1. Before the meeting, prepare name cards, writing participant's names on the cards prominently and legibly.**
.....
- 2. As participants arrive at the meeting room on the first day, hand out one name card to each (along with any other handouts), making sure no one gets their own name.** Ask them to look for the person whose name tag they are holding.
.....
- 3. Allow 10-15 minutes for this process, or end the exercise once everyone has found the person matching the name card they received.**

G. What Do They Like?

This informal icebreaker is easy to use at the start of an event. It challenges participants' memory in a fun way.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *20- 30 participants*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

Use this icebreaker when you are looking for something informal that requires no preparation. This method can be used with fewer than 20 participants, but larger numbers make it more challenging and therefore also more fun.



HOW TO APPLY

1. In plenary, have each participant introduce themselves with their name, title, where they are from, and then have them

mention something they like that begins with the first letter of their first name – the more memorable or unusual, the better. Thus a participant named Irene could say she likes ice cream, or one named Ajit could mention astronomy. Set the example by introducing yourself accordingly. Instruct everyone to pay attention as they will be tested later, then have all participants introduce themselves one by one.

2. After all introductions are complete, choose one participant and ask that person to introduce someone else – whom they haven't met before and who is not sitting next to them – using their first name and mentioning what they like. If they have trouble, ask the audience to help ("Does anyone know who this person is?"). The person introduced should then introduce another, and so on until everyone has been introduced by another person.

Step 2 can take place either immediately after step 1, or can be delayed, for example until after the opening presentation/remarks. Adding a delay raises the level of challenge and the fun.



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CREDITS

Authors: Meena Arivananthan, Ian Thorpe.

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert review panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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LESSONS LEARNED TEMPLATE

DEFINITION

Lessons learned are detailed reflections on a particular project, initiative, or major work activity, and identification of learning points based on experiences and results achieved during implementation. These lessons may be positive (successes) or negative (failures). You should be able to state the lesson(s) learned in a few sentences and provide verifiable results that are evidence of the lesson(s). Evidence could be quantitative or qualitative and from either internal monitoring and evaluation or formal evaluations. The example template included in this document consists of the major fields (i.e., types of information) that together make up a complete, well-documented lesson learned.

EXAMPLE TEMPLATE

Each field is accompanied by brief guidance in italic text. The template may be adapted for use in other formats according to the needs of your organization, and complemented as needed by additional fields.

Document type: Lessons Learned
Area of work (Outcome Area): <i>your text here</i>
Country: <i>your text here</i>
Title: <i>your text here</i>
Related links: <i>Please provide links to related studies, reports, evaluations, websites that may provide additional information on the Lessons Learned.</i>
Contact person: <i>Please provide the name, title and e-mail address of a person who can be contacted for any questions regarding this lesson.</i>
Abstract: <i>Please provide 1-2 short paragraphs to provide in brief an overall picture of the context, the lesson/s learned (positive or negative), why it is important and the value it adds.</i>
Issue (Background): <i>Briefly (2 paragraphs) describe the initial situation (context) and the problem/ issue addressed by the project, initiative or work activity.</i>
Strategy and Implementation: <i>Describe in 2-3 paragraphs the strategy used and how it was implemented. This should link to the issue outlined above and highlight the main steps taken in implementing the strategy. Strategies may include in terms of advocacy, participation, gender equity, ownership, capacity building, coordination and partnerships, monitoring and evaluation and replication/scaling up.</i>
Progress and Results: <i>In summary (2-3 paragraphs), describe the progress and any verified results (using qualitative and/or quantitative evidence) in implementation. The results could be at output, outcome, impact levels depending on the stage of the implementation. Please describe factors that enabled or hindered progress (challenges), and any shortfalls.</i>
Lesson Learned: <i>Please provide 1-2 short paragraphs to describe in summary the lesson(s) learned. Please limit this to 1-2 major lessons learned. This should leave the reader with an overall picture of the lesson(s), why it is important and the value it adds. Please include information both on what worked and what didn't.</i>
Potential application: <i>Please describe briefly the potential application of the lesson learned to programming, operations or work activities beyond the original scope (e.g. to scale up regionally nationally or to be replicated in other settings, other sectors). What are the issues that need to be considered?</i>
Next steps: <i>Describe (1-2 paragraphs) any planned next steps in implementation and highlight any changes in strategy as a result of progress or results to date.</i>

CREDITS

Creators: Ian Thorpe, Rinko Kinoshita.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF

3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA

knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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LIGHTNING TALKS

/ Sharing and learning at lightning speed /

WHAT ARE LIGHTNING TALKS?

Lightning Talks are a series (usually at least 4 - 5) of 5 minute talks/presentations by different speakers, each introducing a topic or idea very quickly. A set of Lightning Talks is an excellent way to rapidly and compellingly share information about diverse topics from several presenters, without overwhelming the absorptive capacity of the audience. They are very useful when you have many presenters but a short schedule. Some advance briefing is needed for presenters who are unfamiliar with the format. Two popular variants, Ignite and Pecha Kucha, are also described here.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *Meeting room/ auditorium (for large audiences)*
- *LCD projector and screen*
- *Laptop computer*
- *4 - 5 presenters*
- *Audience (limited by seating space only)*
- *Time: Normally 30 minutes (including transition time) for a standalone session of 5 Lightning Talks, or up to a maximum of 60 minutes for 10 talks during a workshop*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

The purpose of a Lightning Talk is to articulate a topic in a quick, clear and insightful manner. Lightning Talks are a great way to efficiently

introduce new projects, give multiple quick progress updates or share pertinent new ideas. Appropriate subject material for a Lightning Talk ranges from the simple (but relevant) to the highly technical.

The presenter has only 5 minutes to deliver key messages, and so typically uses only 3 - 5 slides. The 5 minute time limit creates a sense of urgency, which presenters can and should use to their advantage. It also forces them to be creative with their content and succinct in their delivery. The rapid pace of presentations one after another helps sustain audience interest and makes for a

welcome change of pace from standard PowerPoint presentations.

Lightning Talks are ideal for large conferences and workshops when you have many potential speakers but not much time to accommodate them in traditional presentation formats. A Lightning Talk session can easily accommodate up to 10 speakers in one hour (not including Q&A). A series of Lightning Talks can be among the most memorable portions of a workshop, provided the speakers are sufficiently well-prepared with quality, relevant content. Potential presenters may need support and encouragement in advance in order to have them successfully conform to the requirements of this format.

Other uses for Lightning Talks include:

▲ **Alternative to 'brown bag' lunch meetings.** Instead of a single 30-45 minute talk on a single topic, schedule 4-5 Lightning Talks. Presenters don't have to prepare as much material, and can focus on quality instead of quantity. Moreover, a series of Lightning Talks can be a very good way to break down silos by getting people to share what they work on, and by promoting informal conversations and potential future collaboration.

▲ **Forum for pitching project ideas.** When you want ideas from staff for an upcoming project, campaign or initiative, schedule a series of Lightning Talks, and invite staff to sign up and pitch their idea in 5 minutes. The format encourages a degree of disciplined thinking, without requiring too much investment of time. Popular ideas can be vetted and developed further as needed.



HOW TO APPLY

Prepare in advance

- 1.** If this is your first time organizing Lightning Talks in your office or among your constituents, then the newness of the format may make it necessary to convince others of its value before trying it out. **If this is the case, identify a champion** – ideally, someone who has experienced Lightning Talks or a similar format, and who is willing to promote it.
 - a** Ask the champion to start the conversation with a message (email, social platform, or announcement delivered at a team meeting) about the event, conveying enthusiasm and briefly summarizing the benefits:
 - ▲ Getting the main points from a topic quickly and efficiently.
 - ▲ Exposure to a variety of topics and presenters, leading to networking opportunities.
 - ▲ Avoiding the tedium of lengthy presentations.
 - b** The champion should follow up with informal conversations encouraging people to attend.
- 2. Identify presenters.** Target people who are open to sharing their ideas quickly, and who already subscribe to the notion that too many PowerPoint slides hinder knowledge sharing. You can set up an online sign-up sheet, and you can invite presenters by various themes/topics relevant to your event.

3. Once 4 - 5 people have signed up, provide guidelines to presenting a Lightning Talk:

▲ Each presentation should consist of a maximum of 3 - 5 slides, with a total of one or two key messages for the entire presentation. (See also 'Tips for success' below for more on slides and presenting.)

▲ Each presenter gets only five minutes, no more.

▲ If your presenters are unfamiliar with the Lightning Talks format or are very much used to making lengthy presentations, they may need additional support. Share with them video examples of presentations made with the Lightning Talks format (or with one of the related formats mentioned below, Ignite or Pecha Kucha; search YouTube to find many examples). Provide them with an example presentation using only few words and 1 image per slide. Ask them to share their presentations in advance, and coach them on how to get them into the required time and format.

Set up the room

4. Prepare a meeting room with sufficient chairs, an LCD projector and a laptop computer. Preload all presentations if possible, in order to minimize transition time and keep the event moving quickly.

When you are ready to start

5. Introduce the format very briefly to the audience, e.g. "Now we are beginning a session of Lightning Talks. Each talk will last for no more than 5 minutes, and I will keep

time. We have a total of X presenters, and the entire session will last for Y minutes."

6. Introduce the first speaker and their topic.

Keep time during their presentation, ensuring they stick to the 5-minute rule. Remind them with a red card when they have reached the 4-minute mark.

7. Limit the entire session to less than an hour. If desired, take quick questions at the end, after all the presenters have finished.

Don't take questions after each presentation; do so only at the end, in order to sustain the forward momentum.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



For facilitators:

▲ Keep the number of talks to a maximum of five for a standalone Lightning Talks session. For Lightning Talks during major conferences and workshops, you can have up to 10 speakers in one hour.

▲ Keep a sharp eye on time management during the talks. This is the primary secret of success. Be ruthless in moving people on!

▲ If possible, organize Lightning Talks in thematic sequence, by scheduling talks on similar themes consecutively.

For presenters:

▲ **Use only a few words and 1 large image per slide.** Resist the temptation to cram text into your slides to overcome the 5-minute time limit! Have a pointer to a website at the start or end of the presentation to give your audience more if needed.

▲ Even though the talks are short, speakers should follow standard presentation techniques: stand straight, make eye contact, speak clearly, don't read from your slides, etc.

▲ Don't consider a Lightning Talk to be a 'teaser' where you can just quickly mention a few ideas in a tantalizing way. Instead you must get right to the heart of the topic and present something solid within the 5 minute limit. Is there something innovative about what you do? Does your work have direct impact on the organization or on a community? Have you achieved remarkable results, or learned something really significant? Present your key idea early in your talk.

▲ Tell a story to illustrate your point.

▲ Before presenting, rehearse your talk with your slides. Think about delivery, what you will say and how you will say it. Use a timer to ensure you stick to 5 minutes. Practice

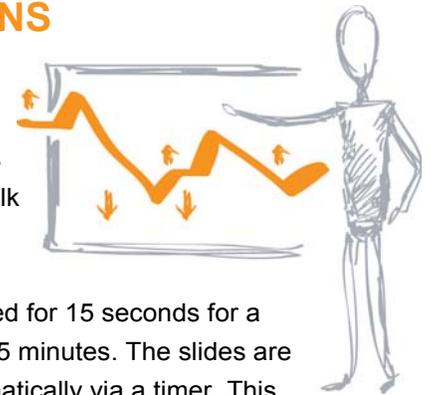
standing up straight and speaking with a loud voice. Despite the 5-minute limit, make sure you go slow and steady. Reduce the amount you say to the essentials only.

▲ Keep it fun and light-hearted if possible. Your audience will be more receptive to listening and learning when they are in a good mood.

▲ Be dynamic to keep energy-levels high, but beware of speaking too fast to cram in everything that you want to say (especially with audiences who may not be native speakers of the language you are presenting in).

VARIATIONS

▲ **Ignite:** This is a Lightning Talk with exactly 20 slides, each of which is displayed for 15 seconds for a total duration of 5 minutes. The slides are advanced automatically via a timer. This makes for a more fast-paced session. Ignite is more challenging for presenters because they must match their words correctly to the pace of the slides, ensuring that they neither run out of time on a given slide, nor have long pauses. If well done, the rapid pace of the slides can make an Ignite session quite entertaining. Rehearsing in advance is even more important than for a standard Lightning Talk. See <http://igniteshow.com/>.



▲ **Pecha Kucha:** This is a very similar commonly used variant, with 20 slides and 20 seconds per slide. Pecha Kucha is a useful format

for project reviews and internal meetings where creative and unexpected ideas are discussed. It can also be used to tell stories about a project or mission; see <http://www.pechakucha.org/>.

▲ **No slides:** If speakers are confident enough, you can also suggest that they forget using slides altogether and present using 'prompt cards', TED-talk style.



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CREDITS

Author: Meena Arivananthan.

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert review panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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MEETING FACILITATION

/ The art of running effective in-person knowledge exchange sessions /

WHAT IS FACILITATION?

Facilitation is the art of supporting a group at a workshop or event to effectively solve problems, make decisions, learn together and achieve its objectives. In order to succeed, a facilitator needs to apply a combination of skills, knowledge, structure and process to the interactions of the group.¹ The most essential skills and knowledge for facilitators are briefly summarized in this overview. The structure and process come from various tools and methods, such as the tools included in this Toolbox. **Every tool in this Toolbox benefits from effective facilitation.**

Facilitation is not itself a tool, rather it is the enabler that makes it possible to succeed in using knowledge exchange tools for sharing, discovery and co-creation. It is crucial when large numbers of individuals come together for a short time and expect to work effectively. Good facilitation improves group dynamics, stimulates creativity, empowers collaborative problem-solving, and in general enables groups and individuals to perform at their best. Facilitation skills improve with practice and through learning from other practitioners.

Facilitators are also often involved in advance planning of sessions (refer to Annex 1: Planning a knowledge exchange session), and should be familiar with materials used at sessions (refer to Annex 2: Materials for face-to-face knowledge exchange sessions)

Facilitation is a large topic, and only its most essential aspects are summarized here. The list of references is a good starting point for those of you who want to learn more.

CONTENTS:

- **The role of a facilitator**
- **Fundamental facilitation skills**
- **Essential knowledge for facilitators**
- **Improving your facilitation skills**
- **Annex 1: Planning a knowledge exchange session**
- **Annex 2: Materials for face-to-face knowledge exchange sessions**

¹ Adapted from Ingrid Bens, *Facilitating with Ease!: A step by step guidebook*, p.viii (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, John Wiley & Sons, 2000).

THE ROLE OF A FACILITATOR

The role of a facilitator at a face-to-face meeting or event includes creating conditions for people to feel relaxed, comfortable and empowered so that they can work well together; maintaining objectivity so that s/he can be an effective process guide; and sustaining momentum towards the agreed objectives. A facilitator should create an atmosphere of trust, encourage active participation, and explore useful differences of opinion while seeking to identify common ground and build consensus. Useful personal characteristics for a facilitator include being:

- ▲ A good listener, listening actively, asking reflective questions, paraphrasing responses to check for understanding, paying attention to participants' body language, and the words used.
- ▲ Engaging, relaxed with groups of people, able to sustain conversations with people from different backgrounds and roles, and using humour appropriately.
- ▲ Empathetic, able to understand how others are feeling, and being aware of group energy levels, body language and any feelings of disparity in discussions and contributions.
- ▲ Assertive with regard to the process (but neutral with regard to the issues), able to confidently guide group activity in constructive ways, defuse conflicts and create equitable opportunities to contribute.
- ▲ Flexible, able to think on their feet and adapt to situations as they evolve.
- ▲ Able to manage difficulties that occur during sessions (loudness, disruptions, cynicism, attempts to dominate the session, self-proclaimed experts, etc.).

FUNDAMENTAL FACILITATION SKILLS

Your success as a facilitator will be underpinned by a number of specific skills, which you should use at any sessions you facilitate:

- ▲ **Preparation, preparation, preparation!** Do your homework beforehand. Speak to the meeting organisers to clarify the objectives and intended outcomes and to understand any major sensitivities or difficult issues which may arise. (See also Annex 1 below, 'Planning a knowledge exchange session', for specific tips on planning.) Consider both the 'hard outcomes' (documents, other outputs, or tasks to be completed by the end of the session) and 'soft outcomes' (engagement, motivation, consensus, etc.) that you want. Prepare the room as much as possible beforehand including ensuring you have a basic 'facilitator's toolkit' of different coloured Post-its or cards, pens, stickers, masking tape, flipcharts, etc. to avoid needing to disrupt the flow looking for these on the day of the event, and setting the room up according to the requirements of the tool you will be using. (See also Annex 2 below, 'Session materials', for a detailed list.)
- ▲ **Know your participants and their context (if possible.)** Knowing a few things about the participants in a knowledge exchange session will enable you to facilitate more effectively:
 - Number of participants, roles and affiliations, demographic information (language, gender, age), any relationships among them, etc.
 - Are the participants working in a hierarchical organizational culture? If so you will need to emphasize the value of diversity and actively encourage contributions from everyone, even more than you usually might, and incorporate corresponding provisions in your ground rules for the session.

- Do you know anything about the social and interaction styles of particular members of the group that might need to be taken into account?
- Are any participants vested in particular solutions, or do any of them feel compelled to support particular viewpoints? If so, take care to promote a balanced approach to the issues.

▲ **Create a congenial environment.** Make people feel genuinely welcome. Build rapport by making clear how the session relates to them, and by sharing any prior experience or knowledge you may have in the areas of discussion. Empathize with their needs and concerns.

▲ **Set house rules.** Identify these and have them agreed by participants at the start of the session. For example, house rules might include: respect all opinions, be tough on the problem and not on the people, no use of phones or laptops except by rapporteurs for their duties, time limits for participants when they talk, and/or other rules.

▲ **Ensure there is group clarity on the objectives and outputs.** In some cases these will be assigned and cannot be changed. In other cases, if objectives and outputs are unclear, the group can discuss, adjust and agree on them.

▲ **Be ready to customize your approach.** Knowing that one size does not fit all, a good facilitator: is prepared to customize tools and processes to fit a group's needs; is flexible in the implementation of tools as each situation warrants; does not force a ready-made solution on participants and instead works with the group to discover a unique solution.

▲ **Engage participants and elicit response.** This is best done through enquiry, that is, by asking questions that are thought-provoking and that resonate with the participants. The most

useful questions for promoting useful discussions are open-ended, i.e. questions that cannot be answered with either Yes/No or with short specific answers. For example:

- What do you think of ...
- How do you feel about ...
- How important is ...
- To what extent do you ...
- How could we improve on ...

These types of questions can lead to wide-ranging conversations about the topics at hand. Once you have a few answers to these questions, you can begin asking others to comment on the responses offered so far. If their views differ, you can ask why. In this way you can sustain the dialogue, promote reflection and gradually build towards a shared understanding and agreement.

▲ **Encourage contributions from everyone.** Key means of encouraging contributions include: having “unconditional positive regard” for all participants, recognizing that each individual is a unique human being with contributions to make; acknowledging the strengths of quiet people to build their confidence to contribute; and channelling the energy of extroverts towards the outputs and objectives, while maintaining equal opportunities for all to contribute.

▲ **Provoke useful controversy.** Get people to look at both sides of an issue before reaching a conclusion. You can do this by asking probing questions, prompting for dissenting opinions, and using tools like Topsy Turvy to explore negative aspects of an issue without censorship. Be sure to include a house rule stating that the group will tackle the problem and not the people.

▲ **Be non-directive with regard to the issues.** In most situations, it is best for facilitators to refrain from giving substantive inputs on the issues (while remaining guardians of an effective process). Playing a dual role as

facilitator and content expert can make it difficult for the facilitator to be perceived as objective by participants. If acting as both facilitator and content expert is unavoidable, then establish clear boundaries and inform participants when acting as an expert, and when you have stepped away from that role to act as facilitator. This requires great restraint.

▲ **Monitor the process.** Ensure the meeting stays on track while responding as needed to emerging ideas and to the energy levels of the group. In addition to using your listening skills, if you need a more formal check on the process, you can use real-time evaluation tools (see the article of the same name in this Toolbox.)

▲ **Energize the group when needed.** If you notice a dip in participants' energy levels, you can use an energizer technique to invigorate them. (See the reference list in the 'Icebreakers' article in this Toolbox for links to energizer techniques.) If specific participants seem to have lost interest, you can re-engage them with requests for their feedback or follow-up questions. If the group as a whole seems disengaged, then bring them back to the purpose of the session, objectives, outputs and benefits to be achieved.

▲ **Build consensus.** Consensus does not mean that there are no disagreements among group members. Instead it means that group members have agreed on a means to achieve the shared objectives of the session. This usually happens by participants first speaking their views openly, then listening to others' views, comparing alternatives, and finally coalescing around a few important decisions. As participants express their views, you should listen for areas of agreement, and rephrase their inputs in order to make implicit agreement more clear. When appropriate, verify that the agreement is genuine and not forced due to time constraints, pressure from others or fear of judgement. Confirm that any consensus reached is in line with the session objectives.

▲ **Avoid arguments.** If a significant disagreement arises, don't be drawn into an emotionally-charged debate on who's right or wrong. Instead, lead the participants away from confrontation by helping identify areas of agreement, or by using open questions that build towards a solution, or that get at the wider implications of the problem. For example: Are there any drawbacks to the proposed solution? How would this approach be implemented in practice? What would need to happen for this to work? Etc.

▲ **Maintain the focus in order to achieve session objectives and goals.** This includes keeping time limits in mind, allocating enough time to the various parts of the discussions, and moving on to the next step when it is time to do so. It also includes connecting participants' inputs to the session outputs and objectives. This can be a challenging task, but it is one of the most important. If the inputs don't seem to be leading towards the outputs or objectives, you may need to get confirmation from participants – verbally, through tone of voice or even body language – as to how essential they really are. If issues are raised that don't contribute to the intended outcomes, 'park' them by noting them down for separate discussion, and keep driving the discussion forward. Don't criticize the non-essential inputs, but do keep the focus of the discussions on the really important ones.

▲ **Use silence well.** Silence has a powerful presence. Don't be concerned by silent pauses; instead, welcome them as space for reflection or as a way of ensuring that the group focuses on what you have asked or said. The silence may seem uncomfortable at first but filling it with inconsequential chatter will not help. However don't prolong silences beyond a reasonable limit of perhaps 45 to 60 seconds. Occasionally you might deliberately create a space for silent reflection of a couple of minutes or so to allow participants to think about a question before responding. This gives introverted participants time to reflect and prepare to contribute.

▲ Know when to push and when not to.

This is one of the more advanced facilitation skills. In some cases, a group can be pushed to do more work or to dig deeper in exploring challenging issues, but no group can be pushed to achieve a solution that it cannot, or does not want to reach independently. Sometimes an issue needs to be set to the side to be dealt with at a later stage if the current discussion is not yielding agreement or new ideas. Good facilitators are able to gauge the willingness of participants to be led, and know when to forge ahead to help them meet the meeting objectives, and when they must let the group itself determine what it can do and how.

ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE FOR FACILITATORS

Repertoire of tools and methods

Facilitators should ideally be familiar with a number of tools and methods, covering the following broad objectives.

- ▲ Helping participants get to know one other (icebreakers).
- ▲ Showcasing information or knowledge products.
- ▲ Presenting new findings and gathering feedback.
- ▲ Discussing issues, solving problems and planning.
- ▲ Generating creative ideas.
- ▲ Identifying lessons from experience.
- ▲ Planning sessions and events (see 'Annex 1: Planning a knowledge exchange session' below).
- ▲ Materials commonly used at sessions (see 'Annex 2: Materials for face-to-face knowledge exchange sessions' below).
- ▲ Monitoring sessions.

For additional guidance on selecting the right tool

for any objective, refer to the Entry Points guide in the Introduction to this Toolbox.

Facilitators should be able to choose a tool that is appropriate for the goals of the meeting sponsor, the size of the group, time constraints, and participants' expertise levels. Facilitators also need the ability to monitor participant reactions, adapt tools based on how well they are working, and even to swap them out for others if they do not work.

Understanding required levels of facilitator involvement

Some tools allow the facilitator to introduce the process and then step back, letting participants' voices predominate (sometimes with support from participant volunteers acting as temporary facilitators or table hosts), and intervening only occasionally with a bit of guidance. Such tools include the World Café, the Fish Bowl, and the Expert Interview, among others. If volunteer moderators are needed, choose them carefully and brief them fully on their roles; they will likely be responsible for collating the outputs from a session.

Other tools, such as Brainstorming, Topsy Turvy or Chat Show, require sustained facilitator involvement, using all of the skills described above, in order to achieve the best results.

Knowledge of organizational behaviour and group dynamics

When individuals gather in a group to produce specific outputs and achieve agreed objectives, one of the most important success factors is trust and respect among participants. All individuals have their own distinct needs and expectations, and it can be hard to reconcile individual

perspectives without first laying a basis for collaboration.

This is the rationale for icebreakers. By overcoming the initial barriers of unfamiliarity or reluctance to engage with others, they open lines of communication and create a kind of loose initial bond of camaraderie. This in turn makes it more likely for the individuals to coalesce into a successful group – a kind of temporary team that seeks to produce the outputs and achieve the objectives of the session, and leverages its diversity for better results.

Mutual understanding and effective collaboration can be further cultivated through small group activities, such as Buzz Groups or the individual tables of a World Café, among others. The actions of the facilitator, employing all the skills described above, will also contribute greatly to the forming, normalizing and subsequent successful performance of the group.

All these processes are most important in groups whose members don't know each other. Groups of persons who know each other very well may come up to speed much quicker, but such groups have their own challenges. Typically, they require extra support to think innovatively and break out of well-worn patterns of interaction. An infusion of new participants, not previously known to most group members, is very helpful in such cases.

IMPROVING YOUR FACILITATION SKILLS

Don't be daunted by the range of skills required to be a good facilitator. The best way to improve is to get started, preferably with one of the simpler tools like Fishbowl, and use your facilitation skills regularly. Combine practice with reading and reflection. Move on to more challenging tools such as Chat Show or Timeline

when you feel confident. If possible, join a facilitation community of practice and learn from other practitioners. The importance of facilitation is increasing in the modern work environment, including in international development, and skilled facilitators have much to offer the teams and organizations they work with.



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CREDITS

Author: Meena Arivananthan.

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert Review Panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha

Kapil, Lina Salazar, Edgar Tan.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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Annex 1: Planning a knowledge exchange session

A knowledge exchange session is an event in which a group of participants and a facilitator apply a knowledge exchange tool, or sometimes a combination of tools, in order to achieve specific objectives. Here are a few examples of sessions and their objectives:

- A brainstorming session can result in new ideas for problem-solving, products or services.
- A SWOT session can help a group to tackle a difficult decision, or to lay the foundation for a strategic plan for a new project or initiative.
- A session using the Retrospect tool can yield valuable lessons impacting how future projects/ initiatives are implemented.

(For more on each of these tools, refer to 'Brainstorming', 'SWOT and PESTEL' and 'Retrospect' in this Toolbox.) Knowledge exchange sessions using the tools in this Toolbox may take place as stand-alone events, or as part of workshops incorporating several sessions. The brief summary presented here focuses on planning for a single session.

Good planning will make facilitation easier and will improve the achievement of group objectives. In some cases, a facilitator may be called in to run a session at short notice, and thus s/he will not have the opportunity to participate in the planning process. But whenever possible facilitators should also be involved in planning.

Steps to planning a knowledge exchange session

1. Initial preparation:

- **Background/context:** Understand the rationale behind organizing the session.
- **Purpose:** Determine the objectives and expected outcomes. These may be given to you, or you may be able to influence or even decide them. Establishing clear objectives and communicating them to participants greatly increases the likelihood of a productive meeting.

- **Participants:** Confirm who should participate. Participants should be those who can achieve the objectives and expected outcomes of the session. Key questions include:
 - What is expected of them? What are their expectations?
 - Do they have the right professional backgrounds?
 - Does the group include sufficiently diverse perspectives to tackle the problem being addressed?
 - How many participants will there be in total?
 - Are there any existing relationships and/or conflicts between the participants which could influence the achievement of outcomes?

2. Session organization:

- **Tool and facilitation:** Identify a facilitator, and together choose a knowledge exchange tool that is appropriate for the context, expected outcomes, facilitator's degree of experience, objectives and participants. Some tools require more than one facilitator, but sometimes these can be drawn from volunteers on the spot. Refer to the detailed guidance for the chosen tool and plan appropriately. Refer to the Introduction, and in particular the Entry Points guidance, for help in choosing the right tool.
- **Venue:** Plan for a venue appropriate to the number of participants and the type of tool selected.
- **Budget:** Funds are not always required, depending on the participants, venue and other factors. But if funds are needed, for example to cover room costs, travel costs, refreshments, or other incidentals, then ensure that budget is available.
- **Specific preparations for the chosen tool:** Each tool in this Toolbox includes a description of the steps it requires for advance preparation (as well as for implementation and for follow-up, if any). **Refer to the chosen tool and follow the recommended steps.**

3. Resources:

- **Rapporteurs:** Assign a person/persons to this role in advance, to capture key points from the discussions as well as outputs. See also 'Reporting' below.
- **Materials:** Many of the tools highlighted in the Knowledge Exchange Toolkit require materials like flipchart stands, flipcharts, pin boards and colour cards. These are suggestions and may be improvised as needed. See list of materials in Annex 2.
- **IT Support:** This is needed not only for tools making extensive use of technology (such as webinars, streamed or televised sessions) but may also be necessary for presentations.

4. Reporting: Documenting facilitated processes can be challenging for people who are unused to the informal nature of the tools used. It requires careful planning and coordination before the session. There are several ways to capture outputs from facilitated sessions, depending on the tools used:

- **Rapporteur notes:** Rapporteurs may be used to capture key highlights from plenary discussions and Q&A sessions. In some cases these may be captured using colour coded cards (pre-determined) and pinned on boards, or clustered either by a knowledgeable rapporteur or with the help of the group. Another option is simply to have the rapporteur take detailed notes. If the session exceeds 1 hour, more than one rapporteur is needed as note-taking is an intensive activity. Notes may need to be edited later if they are to be shared.
- **Session outputs:** Depending on the tool, sessions may produce outputs based on group discussions. These outputs may be structured using pre-planned templates, either on a computer or drawn onto

flipcharts. Flipchart outputs can then be photographed and stored for later use.

- **Social reporting:** Sometimes participants may write up their own accounts of participating in the session and post them on internal social media (such as an organizational social network, an internal blog, etc.). You can encourage this if appropriate, as a supplementary means of reporting. See also 'Real-time monitoring tools' elsewhere in this toolbox.

Annex 2: Materials for face-to-face knowledge exchange sessions

Different tools have different material requirements. Review and select from the following, according to the specific requirements of the tool to be used:

- A room large enough for all participants, preferably with natural light.
- Tables and chairs (preferably not fixed to floor, to facilitate group work).
- For presentations: Laptop with internet connection, projector and screen.
- Flipcharts (preferably the “sticky” kind if available), and plenty of spare flipchart paper.
- Flipchart stands.
- Marker pens (with wide bevel tip), in assorted colours such as black, blue, red, and green.
- Recording materials for rapporteurs according to their preferences and the required outputs of the session, e.g. own laptops, pens and paper.
- Name tags (for groups where people do not know each other).
- Pens and notepads for participants.
- Refreshments, at minimum coffee and water. Whenever possible, include healthy options.
- Wi-Fi for participants.
- Break out rooms (as needed) each with flipcharts and other materials.
- If needed: A centre/top table and stage for making presentations.
- Coloured cards (approx.. 10 x 20 cm/ 4 x 8 inches), or large post-it notes for participants to write out ideas, and for problem solving activities, in at least 4 pastel colours (blue, pink, yellow, green).
- Pins and pin boards for posting cards.
- Masking tape (1 - 2cm or 1 inch wide) or other adhesive materials.
- Clock/watch for timekeeping.
- Gong or similarly loud tool which can cut through the sound of large group chatter and enable you to encourage people to reconvene.
- Digital camera/phone camera to capture work on pin boards and flipcharts. For large meetings or conferences, a camera can be used to take photos of participants at registration (or an e-photo can be sent beforehand). The photos can then be placed on a wall with names underneath to facilitate networking.

ONLINE JAM (INCLUDING ASK ME ANYTHING)

/ Intensive online brainstorming, or Q&A with experts /

WHAT IS AN ONLINE JAM?

An Online Jam is a virtual gathering to exchange ideas and views on a predetermined topic, or to ask questions of a panel of experts. The interaction takes place at a specific time, usually for about one - two hours, on a social network platform – either an enterprise (internal) platform such as Yammer (where these events are called YamJams), or a public (external) platform such as Twitter (Twitter Chats or Tweet Jams). Discussion takes place via text posts, sometimes with images or files attached; audio and video are not normally used.

There are two basic types of Online Jam. The first is for members of a team or community who are geographically separated. The Online Jam allows quickly gathering their inputs and holding a brainstorming session.

The second type of Online Jam is called an ‘Ask Me Anything’ (AMA) session. It involves one or more experts, or persons with unique experiences/insights, responding to questions from interested participants, in real time. AMAs are becoming increasingly popular because they offer an easy way for participants to interact directly with experts and ask them whatever they want.

An Online Jam is different from a Skype/Lync meeting: In an Online Jam, all inputs are documented in writing so the record can be easily shared afterwards without the need for someone to take minutes or listen to a recording. An Online Jam is also different from an E-Discussion: An Online Jam takes an hour or two, and all participants are present at the same time. By contrast, an E-Discussion takes place over days or weeks, with participants contributing on their own schedules.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitators: minimum two; the more participants expected, the more facilitators there should be.*
- *Enterprise social network platform (e.g. Yammer) or public social networking platform (e.g. Twitter).*
- *Participants: from 10 to 100 or even more.*
- *Optional (for an Ask Me Anything): one or more experts/persons to answer participant questions*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

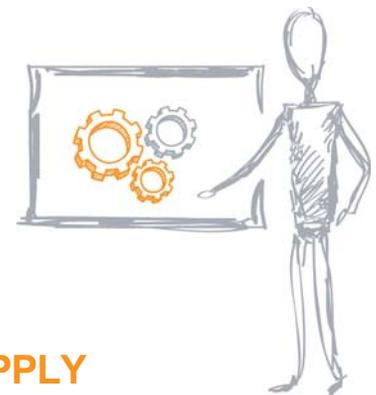
Online Jams are useful for quickly generating ideas and sharing views among members of a team or community. They allow interaction across distances without travel costs, and if well-run they are efficient for addressing lots of topics and for capturing the responses in text on the platform. As a secondary benefit, they also help familiarize team members with using online discussion platforms.

The output of an Online Jam is a record of all questions, answers and discussion, copied directly from the social networking platform and sometimes lightly edited for grammar and spelling (but not changed in substance). In addition, the facilitator can prepare a discussion summary to distil long conversations into a shorter format. The record of an Online Jam can serve as a reference and/or as a basis for planning and implementing related projects/ initiatives.

Online Jams are good when you need to gather ideas quickly and get a team focused on a particular activity or initiative. If you need deep reflection on challenges or issues, e.g. in order to develop policy or refine guidance, then an E-Discussion may work better. Refer to 'E-Discussions' in this Toolbox for more information.

Ask Me Anything sessions are useful for quickly getting answers from experts to lots of questions—sometimes more questions and answers than face-to-face meetings of the same duration. They also offer allow participants to interact directly with experts, without having to fly everyone in to the same location. An expert can be anyone with relevant experience and insights from theory and practice concerning a relevant topic, someone well-known in a particular field, or even a person who has just completed a particularly interesting/important project or assignment. Participation in an AMA session may be open to anyone in an organization, to staff from multiple organizations, or even to the public.

Facilitators of an Online Jam need or AMA to be very familiar with the platform, and all participants, including any experts, need to have at least basic familiarity. Facilitators should be able to identify the key points of an online conversation, and summarize them quickly, in order to effectively guide the session.



HOW TO APPLY

Prepare in advance

This guidance is for planners and facilitators of an Online Jam/AMA.

- 1. Decide on your objective, your audience (participants, plus any experts), and what type of session you need: a standard Online Jam** (to gather inputs and/or brainstorm with specific participants, for purposes of planning) **or an AMA session** (to disseminate knowledge from experts to participants).

▲ If you are doing an AMA, you may make the session open to a specific group within your organization, to your entire organization, or even open to the public.

▲ If you are doing an AMA, you will need experts. Identify one or more, and invite them to participate. Advise them of how the session will work and what their role will be: answering questions online in real time from participants, on predetermined topics in which the experts have particular knowledge or special experience.

2. Decide what discussion platform to use.

▲ If your participants and experts are all internal, you can use the organization's social networking platform (e.g. Yammer). Do not use external platforms for internal-only discussions!

▲ If your participants include some externals (e.g. staff of other organizations), you need to ensure they have access, either by holding the Online Jam on a portion of the organization's social network that allows external participants¹, or by holding it on a public platform such as Twitter.

▲ If the event is open to the public, use a public platform like Twitter.

▲ All participants and experts should have some familiarity with using the platform.

¹ For UNICEF, networks used for accommodating internal and external participants have included Yammer, UNICEF Exchange, the UNICEF Private Sector network, and the UN Knowledge Management Network.

3. Plan the discussion/question topics for the session: Based on your objective, decide on your overall topic of discussion, and then define specific discussion questions or sub-topics. **See Annex 2 for examples.**

▲ **If you are doing a standard Online Jam (no experts), use discussion questions** instead of subtopics, in order to better stimulate contributions from participants.

▲ **If you are doing an AMA, use subtopics,** and involve the experts in choosing them. The subtopics will help guide participants' questions

4. Ensure you have a specific group/ forum/ discussion space in which to hold the Online Jam. If your platform permits, it is recommended to have a dedicated group/discussion space that you use only for Online Jams (in order to better manage the high volume of messages that come from Online Jams). If you don't have such group, create it now. Some platforms, e.g. Twitter, don't have discussion spaces; in that case, create and use a hashtag (see 'Tips for Success' below).

5. Choose a date and time, and determine who should be invited. Keep in mind the different locations and time zones of participants and any experts. If possible, try to hold a single Online Jam/AMA for all participants. This is easier to organize – especially if you are doing an AMA session where the experts must be present – and more likely to generate momentum in the discussion.

6. Advertise the event among the target audience:

▲ If your event is only for a small group, then communicate it directly to them via emails or posts in their existing online group(s). If participation is required – for example, if your Online Jam is a part of a team’s workplan – make this clear in your communications to them.

▲ If your event is for a broad audience, communicate it widely, for example by announcements in multiple groups on the organizational social network, posters, intranet sites, etc. If you are inviting public participation then your outreach should include public communications, starting with a notice on a public website. Include photos and brief bios of key experts if necessary.

▲ In all cases, provide the date/time, description of topic and subtopics, and a link to the group/forum that will host the Online Jam. Describe briefly how the Online Jam will work. If needed, include a reminder of the basic details on how to access and use the platform, and provide links to additional information.

▲ See ‘Annex 1: Sample Online Jam notice’ below for an example.

7. Upload any needed reference materials

to the Online Jam group, including any practical guidance you might have about how to use the platform (e.g. Cheat Sheet, Online Jam etiquette, etc.) and any substantive documents.

8. One day before the discussion, send an email reminder to all required participants and experts.

When you are ready to start

This guidance is for facilitators, experts and participants.

9. About 10 minutes before the scheduled start of the discussion, facilitators send an email to confirmed/ expected participants with a subject line similar to ‘Discussion on [insert topic] begins in 10 minutes’. Include a link to the discussion space/group in the body of the email.

10. At the scheduled time, facilitators begin the discussion with an announcement (a post) in the discussion group, briefly introducing the event, welcoming everyone, summarizing the rules and providing one or two key technical tips (e.g. how to reply correctly, how to turn off email notifications if needed).

▲ With fewer than 20 participants, you can ask all participants to introduce themselves and briefly mention how they are connected to the topic of the Online Jam.

11. If running a standard Online Jam: Facilitators post the first discussion question and ask participants to reply to it with their answers, comments, and related questions.

If running an Ask Me Anything session: Facilitators post the first topic for questions, and invite participants to ask questions about that topic by replying to it. The experts should reply in the same thread. If participants have a completely new question for the experts, they can post it as a new thread.

12. While a standard Online Jam is ongoing:

- ▲ **Facilitators** ensure that the discussions stay on topic, and give guidance and technical help to participants.
- ▲ **Facilitators** also post additional questions for discussion. If there are 5 questions for a one hour Online Jam, then allow about 10 minutes discussion for each – or less, if discussion peters out – before moving on to the next question
- ▲ **Participants** respond to questions from facilitators, give their comments and inputs, and react to inputs from other participants.

While an AMA is ongoing:

- ▲ **Facilitators** ensure that the discussions stay on topic, and give guidance and technical help to participants.
- ▲ **If the objective of your AMA is to answer as many questions as possible**, then assign at least one facilitator to keep track of questions, and allocate unanswered ones to specific experts as needed.²
- ▲ **Experts** follow the discussion and respond to any questions directed at them, by facilitators and/or by participants, in the appropriate discussion thread.
- ▲ **Participants** pose questions directed at experts.

13. When the Online Jam/AMA is over, facilitators post an announcement stating

² If you want to go one step further in managing questions, then have the facilitators and experts connect via voice chat (e.g. Skype) while the AMA is running. A facilitator can then verbally allocate questions, and experts can volunteer to answer specific ones, saving time and making the process more efficient.

that the discussion has concluded, and letting everyone know where the summary note will be available once it is completed.

Follow up

14. Facilitators prepare a recap of the discussion. This is quite easy:³

- ▲ Include in the note all of the questions and responses from the Online Jam. Remove the names of questioners and respondents, and include only the actual questions and responses; if several responses addressed one question, put all the responses together after the question.
- ▲ Do only minor editing to fix any significant grammatical errors. Be sure not to change the meaning of the questions or answers, in order to faithfully preserve the discussion content.
- ▲ At the beginning of the recap, list the date/time of the event, the objective, the topics and subtopics covered, the names of any experts participating, and if desired add some brief comments on participants (number, where they were from; usually, names of participants who were not on a panel of experts are not included.)
- ▲ Optional: Although many Online Jams do not include this step, in some cases you might decide to also draft a brief summary in order to condense long online conversations into a shorter format.

15. Facilitators post the recap, and (if prepared) the summary, and send a message to all participants and experts with a link to it.

³ Some platforms such as Twitter enable use of additional tools such as 'Storify' which automate the process of creating a summary and allow facilitators to create stories or timelines.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



Tips for facilitators

▲ Facilitators should have strong familiarity with the discussion platform to be used. Experts and participants should also have at least some familiarity with it.

▲ Facilitators should be able to summarize conversations on the fly, and able to reframe the discussion when needed, in order to focus on the key issues.

▲ Before the Online Jam, facilitators should privately ask a few knowledgeable and willing participants to help get the discussions started by being the first to respond, ask questions or provide comments during the event. This will encourage other participants.

▲ If there are lots of participants, Online Jams move fast. Facilitators have to guide participants to new questions by posting links to their threads, otherwise the momentum of the discussion may stay behind on older questions.

▲ During the Online Jam, replies to questions should be in the same discussion

thread as the question, and if the platform offers a 'reply' link after any post, this link should be used by anyone replying to the post. Facilitators may need to help inexperienced participants with the mechanics of how to reply correctly.

▲ Some social networking platforms, e.g. Yammer, allow users to receive email notifications of posts. Anyone receiving too many email notifications during an Online Jam should edit their settings; facilitators should be ready to offer guidance on how to do this.

▲ Although facilitators (and experts, if running an AMA) do not need to be in the same room, some may find it easier to manage an Online Jam if they are all physically together.

Tips for experts

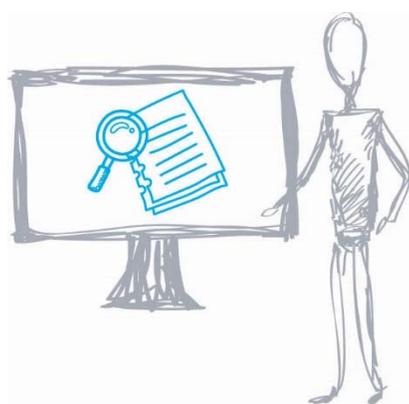
▲ Experts in an AMA session should prepare answers to the most likely questions, but should also be prepared to answer other relevant questions on the spot. Experts may want to have pre-saved links to key references open in a Word document beforehand, to save time in finding links. They may also want to draft key messages they want to convey during the session, and share them at the right opportunity.

Tips on using public platforms

▲ If you are holding an Online Jam on a public platform like Twitter, you will need to define a 'hashtag'. This is a distinctive short word (no spaces) preceded by the hash symbol (#), which every participant should include in every post. Adding the hashtag makes it possible for others to

follow the conversation and for the conversation to be searched later. Example hashtags include #childrights2015 or #WASHBangkoksummit. It is also possible to run a series of online jams using the same hashtag, e.g. see #agchat on Twitter for regular weekly interaction with a community of practice. See this article for more information.

CASE STUDY / EXAMPLE



In July 2014, the UNICEF Office in the Democratic Republic of Congo decided to organize an Online Jam, to gather input on the topic of innovation and how it could be applied and integrated into the work of the Office. The selected platform was the organization's social network on Yammer. The discussion was planned as a standard Online Jam to gather inputs from across all participating staff in the Office.

The plans for the session were presented at an all-staff meeting; in addition the Representative (head of the Office) sent an email to all Office staff with session details and relevant guidance (including how to register on the social network, join the group, and participate in the Jam).

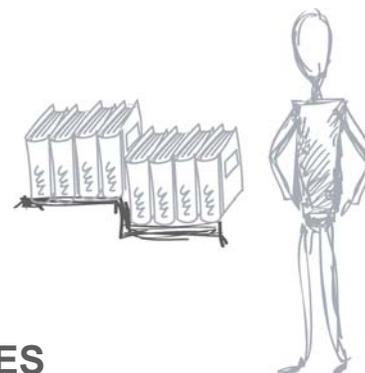
One week in advance, a dedicated group was created to host the Jam, and staff were invited to join, and also to post suggested discussion questions for the Jam. One day before the event,

the facilitators convened, reviewed the suggested questions and summarized them under four primary themes.

The Online Jam was opened by the Representative, who introduced the themes for discussion. The facilitators then took over, guiding the flow of conversation and assisting staff participants (who numbered 25 in total). The session lasted for one hour. Afterwards, the discussion was summarized into a report, and was used as the basis for a staff survey concerning some of the issues that came up during the event.

The Online Jam achieved the following results:

- ▲ Raising awareness of staff with regard to the importance and role of innovation in UNICEF's work.
- ▲ Raising the profile of the team supporting and managing innovation-related activities in the Office.
- ▲ Demonstrably increasing the uptake and use by participants of basic concepts from innovation in programme implementation.



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CREDITS

Author: Eric Mullerbeck.

Author of example: Angèle Bijanu.

Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert review panel: Lucy Braun, Angèle Bijanu, Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

This Toolbox in its latest edition, as well as all individual tools, are available online for free download at <http://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/>

Annex 1: Sample Online Jam notice

This is an example of the information to be included in a notice (email, announcement, etc.) about an upcoming Online Jam. You can adapt this for your specific needs.

On Wednesday 30 September, 12 noon – 1 pm Eastern Daylight Time (GMT-4), the UNICEF Knowledge Management Unit in the Policy, Strategy and Networks Section will host an Online Jam to discuss how to make best use of SWOT and PESTLE analysis for strategic planning. The event is open to all staff in UNICEF. A panel of experts will be online to answer your questions in 'Ask Us Anything' style. Experts will include Imani Cheboi of the School of Business at Wits University, South Africa; Bob Smith from the Stanford Business School, Stanford University, USA; and Wang Tao from the Singapore Management University, Singapore.

This Online Jam will give any interested UNICEF participants the opportunity to interact directly with these experts, ask questions and get answers in real time and have a discussion.

In order to get the most from this event, here is an outline of how the event will proceed, plus a few guidelines.

- o Facilitators: Ian Thorpe and Eric Mullerbeck will serve as hosts and facilitators for the Online Jam, coordinating the flow of questions and answers. Contact either of them if needed for more details, or to suggest topics for discussion.

- o Expert panel: Our three experts are all highly experienced in the application of group planning tools, specifically SWOT, in both the public and private sectors.
- o If you are unfamiliar with the SWOT methodology, read a description in the UNICEF Knowledge Exchange Toolbox, in order to make the most of the Online Jam .
- o The Online Jam will take place in the KE/KM Online Jams group on UNICEF’s external Yammer network, UNICEF Connect. Staff wishing to participate need to be a member of this group (just visit the group and click on ‘Join’).
- o At 12 noon EDT on Wednesday 30 September, a facilitator will kick off the Online Jam with a new thread in the KE/KM Online Jams group. The facilitators will post topics for questions as separate threads. Participants can immediately begin asking questions; our experts will reply.
- o If you have a question that is on a different topic (but still about SWOT) for the experts, please post it as a new thread. Questions on other topics should not be posted in the Online Jam; please visit another appropriate group.
- o Participants should adhere to online etiquette and good practices for the organizational social network. In particular, please use the ‘Reply’ function to pose your questions or give comments/follow-up questions. See links at the end of this message for more information and technical tips on how to use the platform.
- o The Online Jam will end at 1 pm EDT. The discussion contents (questions and answers) will remain available to all group members. In addition, the facilitators will create a summary note and will post it in the ‘Files’ section of the group, a few days after the conclusion of the event.

Thanks and see you all on Wednesday!

Annex 2: Examples of topics with questions or subtopics

A. *Example of topic with questions, for a standard Online Jam:*

Topic of Online Jam: Creating a new website for the UNICEF-sponsored initiative on eradicating violence against children.

Questions to be discussed:

- i. What written content do we need?
- ii. How can we get partners to contribute?
- iii. Do we have any photos illustrating programme activities?
- iv. How can we obtain funding to maintain the site into the future?
- v. How shall we measure, monitor and evaluate the value of the site?

B. *Example of topic with subtopics, for an AMA session with experts:*

Topic of Ask Me Anything Session: Building a protective environment for children in Rodinia

Subtopics – participants can ask anything about any of these:

- i. Legislation and policies
- ii. Alternative care options
- iii. Direct support to families
- iv. Social service workforce capacity building

REAL-TIME EVALUATION TOOLS FOR MEETINGS & WORKSHOPS

/ Taking the pulse of a meeting /

WHAT ARE REAL-TIME EVALUATION TOOLS, AND WHY SHOULD I USE THEM?

Real-time meeting evaluation tools are quick and easy ways to evaluate the effectiveness of a major meeting, event or workshop **while it is happening**, and thereby enable altering the course of the meeting, if necessary in order to meet participant needs and/or fulfil meeting objectives.

By evaluating an on-going meeting for participant learning, level of engagement, general impressions and group dynamics, a facilitator can make real-time course corrections in order to improve meeting outcomes. Real-time evaluation techniques also give time for participants to reflect on their learning, thereby encouraging improved retention and application of meeting content. Major meetings and workshops can be costly, both in time and money; real-time meeting evaluation tools are a way to obtain the best possible results for the investment.

While there are many tried and tested meeting evaluation techniques, these are usually applied at the end of a meeting in order to elicit feedback from participants and help plan for the next meeting. Real-time tools are a great complement to the traditional workshop evaluation process.

Real-time meeting evaluation tools can be used singly or in combination. Each tool has its own requirements. **The following seven tools are described in detail below.**

- A. Mood Meter**
- B. Flash**
- C. Human Scale**
- D. Feedback Board**
- E. Eyes and Ears**
- F. Reflective Feedback**
- G. Final Evaluation using flipcharts**

A. Mood Meter

The Mood Meter is a flipchart table used in multi-day workshops to gauge the general mood of participants each day.

REQUIREMENTS:

- 10 - 30 participants
- Flipchart
- Pin board
- 3 cards (circular, diameter 4 - 6 inches)
- Dot stickers: 1 per day for each event participant, e.g. a 3 day event with 20 participants = 60 stickers minimum
- 5 - 10 minutes per iteration



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

The Mood Meter is a tool for displaying, at a glance, the reactions of meeting or workshop participants. Normally used at the end of each day, the Mood Meter is a visible record that participants can use to quickly share how they feel without using words. Data from the Mood Meter can be analyzed during a plenary session mid-way through a workshop – especially if it suggests that things are not going as well as they should be – or at the end, for reflection, appropriate response by event organizers and future planning.



HOW TO APPLY

- 1. Draw a table on a flipchart sheet with the days of the workshop (or specific events in the workshop) as columns, e.g., Monday, Tuesday, etc. Add three rows to the table and stick the circular cards on each row. Draw a face on each of the circular cards: a happy face, an indifferent/straight face and an unhappy/frustrated face, in descending order. These cards represent the moods of the participants in relation to how the workshop is going.**

2. Pin the flipchart table on a pin board, and place it in a common location that is discreet, preferably near the exit. Leave it there for the duration of the workshop. This will give participants a moment for reflection before they leave the workshop for the day.

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3. At the end of every day, ask participants to pass by the flipchart board as they leave and place a dot sticker to indicate their mood (happy, indifferent or unhappy) for the day.

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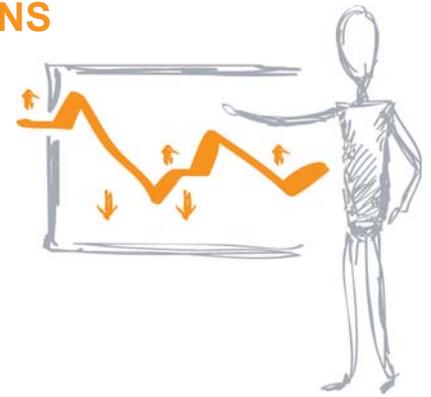
4. Keep track of the results. For the facilitator, the Mood Meter is a useful way to read a group's energy. The dots placed on the meter will show clearly whether or not participants are happy with how the workshop is going. If the Mood Meter shows that a significant number of participants are unhappy, you can enquire further by asking participants in plenary for clarification, and you can use their feedback to improve the remaining sessions in the workshop.

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5. Optional: The Mood Meter can also be used as a debrief tool at the end of a workshop to enable participants to discuss the workshop highs and lows; this provides an opportunity for reflection on workshop content, and can help to improve future workshops.

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VARIATIONS



▲ The Mood Meter can be applied at half-day intervals, in short workshops of no more than 2-3 days duration. Participants put their stickers on the table before lunch and just before they leave for the day.

B. Flash

Flash is a speedy method to gather participant feedback, thoughts or impressions at any time during a plenary meeting. The facilitator asks a direct question, and participants respond quickly with short answers, i.e., in a 'flash'. This is an easy way for facilitators to gauge participants' reactions during or after a plenary activity.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *10 - 20 participants (suggested maximum, in order to keep the Flash quick)*
- *Pin board (optional)*
- *Cards and marker pens (optional)*
- *5 - 10 minutes (depending on number of participants) 4 flipchart sheets*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

Best used sparingly, the Flash method can provide quick, and sometimes deep, insights into how all participants feel about an activity just concluded or an issue being discussed.

- ▲ Use Flash to get participants to reflect on a meeting or workshop session that has had a strong impact on them.
- ▲ Use Flash surface people's thoughts on important or sensitive issues when there are dominant voices in the group who may tend to shut out others.

- ▲ Get direct feedback from each meeting participant in a short time.
- ▲ Close a meeting or workshop in an effective, impactful way. The Flash method encourages participants to reflect on how the sessions have affected them and articulate their learning, without taking a lot of time.



HOW TO APPLY

1. Sit with all participants in a close circle.

2. Ask a straightforward question, e.g., “How do you feel about the activity you just experienced?” “What is the one thing you will take away from this workshop?” “What do you expect to learn?” If using Flash to close a meeting, give participants a minute or two to reflect.

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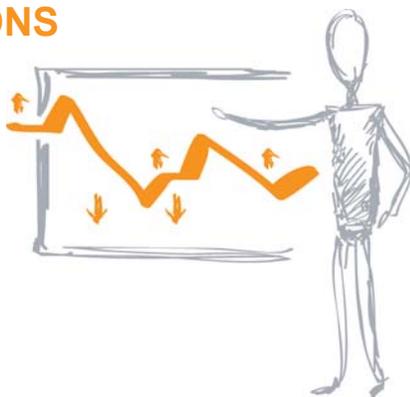
3. Request each participant to answer in no more than 5 seconds. Beginning at any point in the circle, have participants give their answers in rapid succession (in a ‘flash’) from one to the next, going around the circle.

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4. Optional: You or a rapporteur may write down keywords from the responses on cards, pin them to a board, and cluster the cards to show the similarities or diversity in thinking among participants.

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VARIATIONS



▲ **Flash one-word:** Each participant is only allowed a one-word response. The question must be appropriate, e.g., “Share with us in one word, what you think of the activity you just experienced.” “In one word, tell us how you are feeling right now.”

▲ **Anonymous non-verbal Flash:** This is good for getting responses to sensitive questions such as “Was this session worth your time?” Ask participants to write their responses – either one word or a short statement – on cards before handing them to you face-down. Shuffle the cards and post them on a pin board, clustering cards with similar responses together. The non-verbal Flash is conducted anonymously, so use identical cards and ensure all participants have pens of the same colour.

C. Human Scale

Human Scale is a simple method for evaluating participant learning in a non-written way, while opening the door for dialogue concerning the item or topic being evaluated. Participants respond to questions from the facilitator by taking positions along a large measurement scale marked on the floor with tape. This exercise can lead to interesting discussions on why participants have chosen to stand in a particular spot on the scale, and what could be done differently.

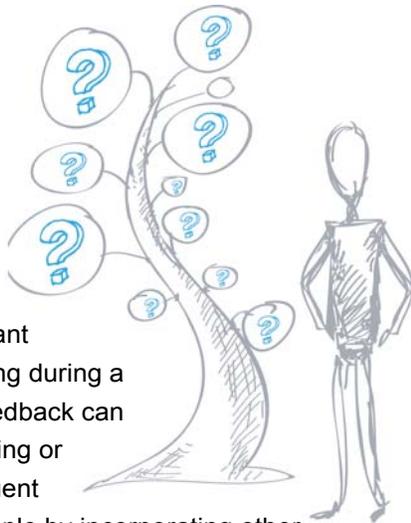
REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *15 - 30 participants*
- *Large room*
- *Masking tape (or other tape that will not leave a residue)*
- *Cards and marker pens*
- *10 minutes (less formal) or 20 - 30 minutes (more formal; see below)*

WHEN AND WHY TO USE

Human Scale allows a facilitator to monitor participant interest and learning during a workshop. This feedback can be helpful in planning or modifying subsequent sessions, for example by incorporating other learning methods or introducing interactive sessions in order to sustain interest levels. It can also be useful to re-energise a workshop as participants are forced to stand up and move about the room.

Human Scale can also be used at the end of a workshop as an interactive evaluation tool. It offers a relaxed and informal way to get feedback, and can increase the quantity and quality of feedback received – compared to the use of paper or online feedback forms – because participants are often more willing to share



feedback pro-actively in plenary, and because you can ask them questions to clarify their choices or ratings.

Note that Human Scale is not an anonymous method. Therefore take care to ask questions that are not too sensitive. Similarly, don't ask questions that are liable to false positives, e.g. if the senior person who sponsored the session is in the room while the session is being evaluated, it may be OK to ask what parts of the session worked well, but it is probably not a good idea to ask whether it was a useful session overall.



HOW TO APPLY

1. **Create a straight line on the floor using masking tape.** Ensure the line is long enough for participants to cluster around comfortably, i.e., 10 -15 feet long. Using cards, label one end of the

line as 0% and the other as 100%. Label at regular intervals within the line, e.g. 25%, 50% and 75%.

(If using Human scale to evaluate a single session, proceed to 2A. If using it for final evaluation at the end of a workshop, proceed to 2B).

2A. (Evaluating a single session – less formal approach). **Ask 2 - 3 questions that help participants reflect on the activity/ session they have just experienced.** Each question should start with “How well do you know/ think/ feel...”, and focus on only one point. Give participants time (perhaps 1 minute) to decide where on the scale they would like to stand in response to the question.

Once all participants have taken position on the scale, look for patterns and clusters. Choose a few participants and ask them why they chose to stand at a particular spot on the scale; this will help them and others to clarify their own understanding, as well as providing a potential basis for adjustments in subsequent sessions. Repeat the process for all of your questions. Record responses on a flipchart, if desired.

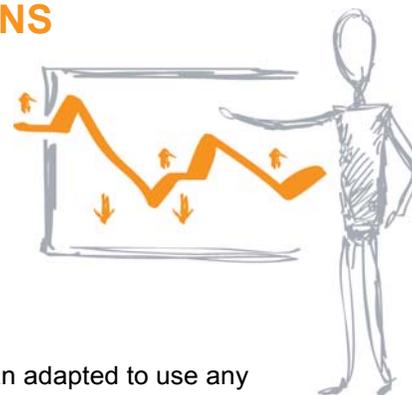
2B. (Evaluating an entire workshop – more formal approach.) **Write 4-5 evaluation questions on a flipchart sheet (or have them pre-written).** Questions should address the major aspects of the workshop. For example:

- ▲ To what extent did the content match your needs?
- ▲ How much did the facilitation process help you with your learning?
- ▲ How far were your objectives met?
- ▲ Etc.

Pose the questions one by one, asking participants to take an appropriate place along the scale according to their own assessment. **Make sure to obtain meaningful explanations as to why people have positioned themselves at various points on the line, especially if there are clumps or outliers.** This gives the Human Scale its value.

Work out a quick average based on where the participants stand and record this on the flipchart next to the corresponding question. Spend about 20 - 30 minutes in total. **Once all questions have been answered, discuss and analyze the results in plenary**, and use them as appropriate for reporting and planning future events.

VARIATIONS



Human Scale can adapted to use any kind of scale:

- ▲ Scale of 0 to 1, i.e., 0, $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, 1
- ▲ Battery points: Positive and Negative, with gradations in between
- ▲ North and South Pole
- ▲ Or define your own range.

Adapt your questions as well, so that participants can organize themselves against the scale used.

D. Feedback Board

A Feedback Board provides a simple way to collect anonymous feedback from participants, especially during long workshops.

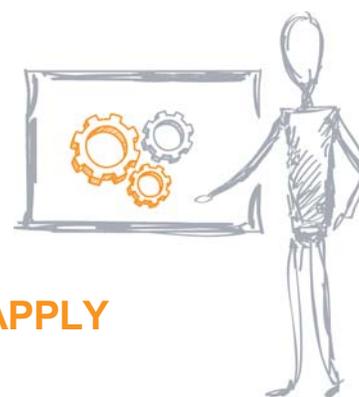
REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *15 - 40 participants*
- *Pin board*
- *Cards and marker pens*
- *No specific time requirement: Participants are free to share their feedback on the board at any time, either during breaks or when they come in or leave for the day*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

A Feedback Board is useful for gathering ideas and suggestions anonymously about any aspect of an event (content, process, etc.). It offers a low-pressure means of getting inputs and is great for multi-day workshops.



HOW TO APPLY

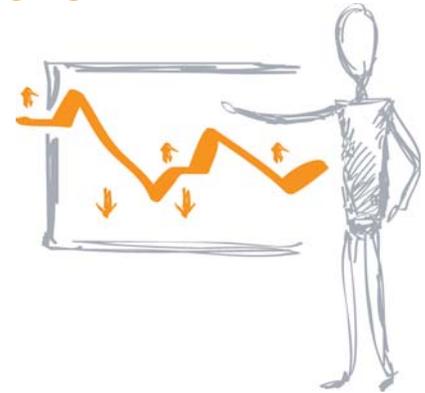
- 1. Set up an empty pin board with cards and marker pens** in a location allowing participants to provide feedback discreetly, for example behind the work room or near where people take their coffee breaks.
- 2. Let participants know that the Feedback Board is available for anonymous comments and suggestions at any time during the workshop, and that you will be looking at the feedback with a view to applying it where possible.** Inform them that the feedback can be on any topic related to the workshop, i.e. facilitation process, content, topics discussed, pointers for improvement, etc. If desired, you can

put cards with these and other topics on the feedback board as a guide to participants on all the areas they can consider when providing feedback. Leave it up to the participants as to when, and how often, to leave feedback.

3. Check the board at intervals. Discuss any interesting/ useful comments in plenary. If appropriate, you can incorporate suggestions into the workshop.

Note: The Feedback Board is an anonymous process, hence there should not be any pressure or effort to identify the authors of any of the cards (they may voluntarily step forward if they so choose).

VARIATIONS



The Feedback board can be adapted for other purposes beyond evaluation. These could include.

- ▲ Gathering ideas on an issue
- ▲ Creating a wish list
- ▲ As a parking space for issues or topics that do not fit in with the objectives of the event but could be incorporated in a future one.

E. Eyes and Ears

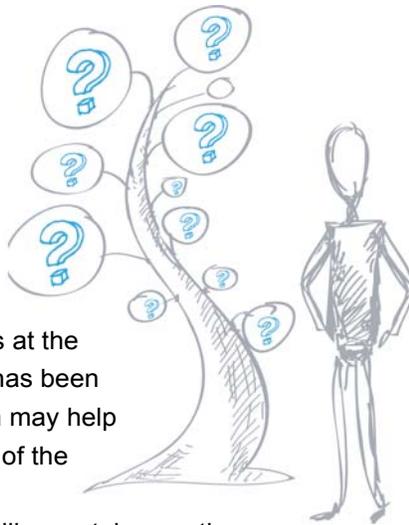
The simple method is a way for participants to get impressions from their peers on the content and impact of a multi-day event/workshop.

REQUIREMENTS:

- 10 - 60 participants
- 2 volunteers per day of a multi-day event
- 5 - 10 minutes in plenary, at the start of the 2nd and subsequent days
- Optional: Projector to share smartphone pictures of the event

WHEN AND WHY TO USE

Eyes and Ears allows participants to hear from others at the event about what has been happening – which may help to clarify the value of the event, give a new perspective, crystallize certain questions or issues, and provide a useful supplementary means of assessment for the facilitators.



HOW TO APPLY

1. Each morning before the workshop begins, ask for two volunteers to be the 'Eyes' and 'Ears' for the day. The 'Eyes' will observe the goings-on at the workshop – what is seen, e.g., participants' mood, level of

engagement, energy levels, attendance, distribution in sub-groups, etc. Optionally, the 'Eyes' can supplement their work by taking smartphone pictures. Meanwhile the 'Ears' will listen to what participants say, e.g., type of questions asked, comments during the breaks on the quality and utility of the workshop, etc., and can ask them questions for clarification if needed.

2. The next morning, ask the 'Eyes' and 'Ears' to share what they saw/heard in plenary. Their report may include participant behaviours and reactions to the content and process; how the facilitator/s fared, in their opinion; or other relevant impressions, including those they may have gleaned from other participants. If the 'Eyes' took photos, they can be shown with a projector.

F. Reflective Feedback

Reflective Feedback leverages participant-created multimedia to inspire reflection and brief reviews of happenings during a multi-day event.

REQUIREMENTS:

- 10 - 30 participants (can be adapted for more participants as this is a static tool, requiring minimal involvement from the facilitator)
- 2 volunteers per day of a multi-day event, with basic photography and PowerPoint skills
- Digital camera
- Computer laptop
- Digital projector
- Flipchart
- 5 - 10 minutes in plenary, at the start of the 2nd and subsequent days



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

Reflective Feedback allows participants to lead a reflection/ review process on each day of a workshop. People tend to trust their peers; a peer-led review process can help obtain useful feedback that a standard facilitator-led process might not elicit.

The photos and music incorporated into the multimedia slide show help to stimulate participants' memory of the previous day, and also encourage them to be forthcoming with their feedback.

Best used in multi-day workshops, Reflective Feedback is conducted every day successively, with the last iteration taking place on the morning of the final day.



HOW TO APPLY

- 1. On the morning of the first day, ask for volunteers to conduct the Reflective Feedback process** – one pair of volunteers to work together for each day of the workshop. Once you have enough volunteers, brief them on their tasks according to the steps below. If your event is small (10 - 15 participants) you could

have only one (appropriately energetic) person to do each day's review.

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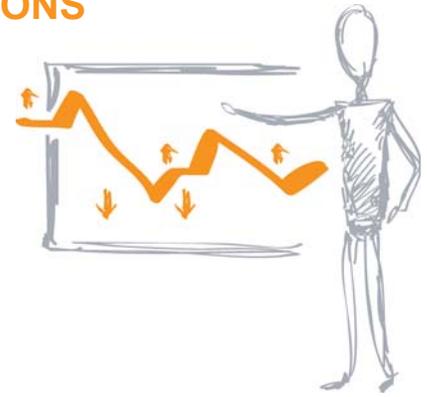
2. Ask the volunteers to take photos during the day, preferably photos of participants in action or interesting moments, and incorporate a selection of these into a 1 - 2 min PowerPoint slideshow, set to music. It does not have to be professional, but it should be lively and enjoyable. The volunteers would work on this in the evening after the workshop day ends and should take no more than 30 minutes to prepare a two-minute presentation.

.....

3. In the morning of the next day, give the volunteers a total of up to 10 minutes to show their Reflective Feedback presentation, and to follow up with questions to other participants, in order to get them talking about the previous day's events. Best are simple questions like "What did you learn?", "What did you enjoy?", "Was there anything you did not enjoy?", etc. Capture the highlights on a flipchart.

.....

VARIATIONS



After presenting their slideshow, instead of asking plenary questions the volunteers may use the Flash technique, by asking participants to share their one major learning/ highlight from the previous day, in just a few seconds each. The highlights/keywords can be captured on flipchart.

G. Final Evaluation using flipcharts

This method is not as much 'on the go' as are the others in this collection, since it is conducted at the end of a workshop. It replaces the traditional use of individual feedback forms with a visual and interactive feedback process using flipcharts.

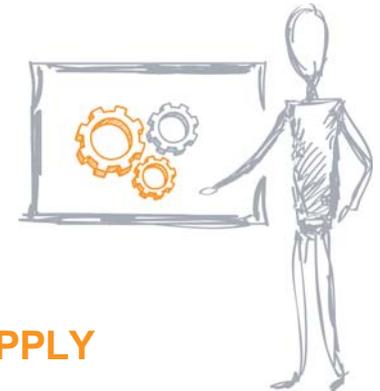
REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *10 - 30 participants*
- *Pin board*
- *Flipchart sheets*
- *Marker pens*
- *Dot stickers (one colour, enough for all participants for 5 - 6 questions each)*
- *30 - 45 minutes*
- *20- 30 participants*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

Use this method at the end of a meeting or workshop event. It is particularly valuable for evaluating novel workshop activities or innovative approaches that you may have used. It provides a transparent, visual record of an event's strengths and weaknesses, encouraging open exchange and meaningful contributions from participants. The concluding discussion will help in applying the findings of the evaluation for planning future meetings and workshops.



HOW TO APPLY

1. Compile a set of 5 - 6 relevant evaluation questions. For example.

- ▲ "To what extent did we achieve the objectives?" Then list each objective of the event.
- ▲ "To what extent were your expectations for this event met?"
- ▲ "How effective was the facilitation?"
- ▲ "How would you rate the logistics of the event?"
- ▲ And other relevant questions, depending on your event.

2. Write all of your evaluation questions on flipchart sheets, in advance. Below each question, add five rows labelled with an evaluation scale, such as:

- ▲ Excellent; Good; Average; Fair; Poor
- ▲ 5 (best) to 1 (worst)

Example:

Questions	Poor	Fair	Average	Good	Excellent
To what degree did we achieve the goals? • Goal 1 • Goal 2					
To what extent were your expectations for this event met?					
How effective was the facilitation?					
How would you rate the logistics of the event?"					

3. Pin the flipchart sheets to a pin board. Place the pin board in a discreet location away from the organizers and facilitators view.

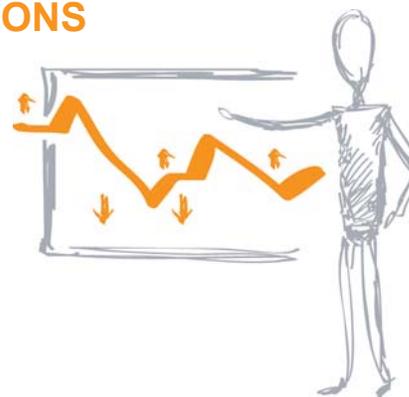
4. When it is time for the evaluation exercise, ask participants to individually rate the questions by placing dot stickers in the appropriate column for each question. Give them enough time to do so; don't observe them, rather remain apart or even leave the room for a time.

5. After everyone has completed their evaluation, place the pin board in full view of all, and do an analysis in plenary. Take note of the majority ratings and any clusters, and ask

questions for clarification. In situations where a question is rated poorly, be objective, ask for feedback and gather suggestions for improvements. Even if a question is rated well, ask if anything could have been improved. As long as the process is fair and does not pinpoint or assign blame, participants will share honest feedback.

Note: It is important for the facilitator to remain objective despite any negative feedback. A good way to do so might be to look first at the positives and celebrate the successes. Then tackle carefully any ratings that are poor, so that people feel comfortable sharing the reasons for a low rating. You are trying to obtain meaningful feedback, and this will require some sensitivity.

VARIATIONS



▲ **Have participants determine the criteria for evaluating the event:** Give each participant a card to pick one criterion. Collect the cards and pin them to the board, then cluster the similar ones and derive a question from each. Thereafter the evaluation scale and rating process can be applied as described above.

For more than 15 participants, it may be possible to group them into pairs or threes and ask them to come up with one or two criteria of their choice. This may take up to 10 minutes for group work though

▲ **Match-stick feedback method:** Write 5-6 relevant questions on cards (such as VIPP cards). Instead of dots on a flipchart, participants use matches placed into paper plates to choose their responses. At the end of the session/day, place the questions on a table, lined up side by side along the top edge. Below each question, place a row of three saucers or paper plates. You will end up with a row of cards with questions, and three rows of saucers/plates. The rows of plates correspond to 'high', 'medium' and 'low' options. Give participants each a handful of matches (or paper clips, or other small identical objects). Ask them to choose the high, medium or low option for each question, by passing by the table and placing their matchsticks in the corresponding plate. Once voting is complete, ask a few volunteers to give comments. Record the results for future reference

▲ **More, less or the same:** a flip chart into three columns, labelled 'More', 'Less' and 'Same'. At the end of the session/day, place the flipchart near the exit (or even out in the hall), hand out marker pens and ask participants to briefly write down things that worked well for them in the Same column; things they wanted to see less of, e.g. 'use of jargon', in the Less column; and things they wanted more of, e.g. 'chances to practice new skills', in the More column. Encourage them to include reasons for their choices. Don't linger near the flipchart; participants should feel that they are free to write what they want, in order to encourage honest feedback.



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CREDITS

Author: Meena Arivananthan.

Contributing Author: Paula Balancea (*Match-Stick feedback method; More, less or the same*).

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert review panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Balancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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RETROSPECT

/ In-depth reflection on project experiences, to improve results /

WHAT IS A RETROSPECT?

A Retrospect is a process to capture team-based learning from an important project/ initiative of any kind, upon its completion. The goal is to identify key success factors and recommendations for continuous improvement and more effective future action. These are turned into a knowledge resource, for use by the team or by others when tackling a new project cycle or a similar initiative in the future.

A Retrospect ideally occurs soon after a project/ initiative concludes, or sometimes at major project milestones. Team members meet face-to-face to revisit the project's purpose, objectives and deliverables, and trace the proposed plan against what actually happened, in depth. The Retrospect identifies the key factors and actions that contributed to success or failure, and helps ascertain, in detail and across all relevant project activities, what could be done to improve results in the future. The recommendations that come from a Retrospect have been validated by the experience of the team.

The Retrospect and the After-Action Review (AAR, described elsewhere in this Toolbox) are complementary: The Retrospect is for in-depth reflection and comprehensive learning at the end of a project or at major milestones, focuses on its overall outputs and outcomes, and produces a formal meeting record and lessons learned that are written up and disseminated. By contrast, the AAR focuses on specific activities, is for short-term learning and quick course corrections at any point during a project, and results in an informal and typically very brief action plan shared within the project team only.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator, not previously involved with the project and having solid facilitation skills*
- *4 – 12 people: members of project/initiative/programme team*
- *Flipchart*
- *Cards and marker pens*
- *2 hours or more (up to a full day for major initiatives)*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

A fundamental method for achieving continuous improvement in any work activity is to reflect on what has been done, in order to find ways to improve results in the future. The Retrospect and the After-Action Review are powerful reflective tools that offer simple and systematic approaches to improvement. They can be combined: A project can include several quick moments of reflection (AAR) with a final in-depth analysis (Retrospect). Both tools can be applied to any area of team-based work where improvement is desired and possible.¹

If done correctly and regularly, Retrospects can lead to an increase in openness, the establishment of a learning culture, and an increase in performance focus.

The best candidates for a Retrospect include:

- ▲ Projects/ initiatives that consumed a lot of time and/or resources.
- ▲ Pilot or demonstrative projects (because they will be scaled up).
- ▲ Projects that were seen as very successful, or ones that 'failed' (although appropriate acknowledgement of sensitivities is

needed to ensure that the Retrospect does not become a 'blame game'; remember that it is not for audit or performance evaluation).

- ▲ Projects that were in any way innovative – either in terms of issues addressed, population groups or partners involved in the project, new ways of working, or any other innovative aspect of work.

The primary outputs of a Retrospect are recommendations for future action. These recommendations are based on the team's knowledge of what worked, what didn't work, why, and insights into what could be done differently next time. For this reason, a Retrospect offers great value when the same team or Office will be undertaking similar work in future: in this case the lessons will be both easier to assimilate (because team members were part of the project themselves) and easier to apply (because they will be involved in a new, similar project). However, the recommendations resulting from a Retrospect can also be useful for other teams or organizations conducting similar work.

A Retrospect is not an audit tool, nor should it ever be used for performance evaluation; doing so would undermine the openness and sharing spirit which is essential for success. Neither should it be taken as a way of writing reports. In a Retrospect, learning takes first place.

¹ The pairing of short After Action Reviews with a single Retrospect at the end of the project follows the methodology of Knoco; see References. Agile software development

methods use a technique called the 'Retrospective', which is most similar to the After Action Review rather than the Retrospect.



HOW TO APPLY

Prepare in advance

These instructions are for the organizer of the Retrospect.

1. Schedule a Retrospect soon after the conclusion of the project/ initiative (or achievement of a major project milestone), ideally within 1-2 weeks. This means you will need to be thinking about when to hold the Retrospect even before the project's/ initiative's conclusion.

- ▲ **Conduct the Retrospect as a face-to-face meeting**, not over email or via teleconference.
- ▲ **Allow sufficient time at the Retrospect for all team members to share their learning.** This typically requires 15 - 30 minutes per team member, based on the project's complexity and the participant's level of engagement. In total, you will need from 2 hours to a full day.
- ▲ **Engage a facilitator who was not involved in the project.** Such a facilitator will be in a good position to ask probing questions and get meaningful responses. If a project leader acts as facilitator, then participants may give the responses they believe the leader wants to hear, which will impede learning.
- ▲ **Facilitators with very limited background in the subject matter of the project may need to do some preparatory reading and have a few preliminary briefings, before the Retrospect,** with the

project leader and key participants. These briefings should focus on the background, stakeholders, timeline and results of the project, and potential areas of improvement. They should also cover any possible sensitivities among the project team, in order to help the facilitator keep the Retrospect focused on learning rather than 'blaming'.

2. Invite participants and observers.

- ▲ **Invitations should come from the project leader(s)** and should clearly state the rules and objectives of the Retrospect, emphasizing that it is a learning exercise and not an audit or performance review.
- ▲ **Participants should include the project leader(s) and members of the implementation team, including outside partners, up to a maximum of about 12 people.** If community members or beneficiaries were involved as implementers, then they should also be invited as participants. Choose community members with the maximum degree of involvement in actual implementation.
- ▲ **If the number of participants would exceed 12, then either invite only the key players, or – if the project work can be suitably divided – organize Sub-Retrospects** on different aspects of the project (see 'Variations' below for details). Sub-Retrospects may be necessary if there were many project stakeholders that had key roles
- ▲ **Designate a rapporteur (or two rapporteurs, if the Retrospect will run more than 4 hours or if the topic is very technical) to record the conversations and learning at the session.** Taking notes is essential for creating the key output of the Retrospect: the meeting record, which summarizes the recommendations for future action. Taking notes

is also required for producing other potential Retrospect outputs, such as briefs, guidelines, lessons learned reports, checklists, etc.

▲ Consider inviting up to 3 - 4 observers. The Retrospect is conducted for the benefit of future project cycles or similar undertakings elsewhere in the organization. The presence of observers from other similar projects, whether planned or ongoing, can sharpen the focus on the Retrospect's learning objectives. But sometimes it can also inhibit the free sharing of experiences and insights, especially when the project addressed sensitive issues or ran into significant challenges, or if the observers are senior or influential. Weigh the benefits and, if you do decide to invite a few observers, they do **not** count against the suggested limit of 12.

3. Ask the project leader(s) to prepare 2 short (maximum 15 minutes, perhaps shorter) presentations. The first covers the context, objectives and expected deliverables of the project. The second summarizes what actually happened: the results achieved, whether objectives and deadlines were met, and any relevant measurements. The second presentation could also include a draft timeline of the project; see reference to the Timeline tool below. Both presentations may be circulated in advance, or presented only at the Retrospect.

4. Book a room. If possible, maintain the context of the project by organizing the Retrospect in the project meeting room. If that is too small, then find a larger meeting room ideally with a round or oval table that seats all team members.

5. Prepare the agenda. As a rough guide, aside from a 10-minute introductory segment and time for breaks and lunch, allocate your available time at the event (from 2 hours to 1 day) as follows.

- What were the objectives: 10% of time
- What was achieved: 25%
- What went well, and why: 25%
- What could have gone better, and how: 25%
- What still puzzles us: 5%
- Project rating (see below), closing and session evaluation: 10%.

When you are ready to start

These instructions are for the facilitator.

6. After welcoming participants and doing any needed introductions, briefly summarize the objectives and methods of the meeting for all:

The Retrospect is for learning and improvement of future action, not for performance review or reporting. It achieves these objectives by means of transparent, open sharing of experiences, impressions and insights; and joint reflection on lessons and recommendations for the future.

7. Ensure the rapporteurs are ready to record all significant points made by the participants, and in particular the key recommendations for future projects. Then conduct the Retrospect by posing a series of key questions:

▲ **What were the objectives and intended deliverables of the project?** You may also ask related questions including: What did you set out to do? What was the vision at the start of the project? What were the intended deliverables? Begin the answer to this question by having the team leader deliver their first presentation (on the objectives and context of the project; see #3 above), or simply have a list of objectives posted

on a flipchart. Then hold a group discussion to identify whether there were any differences in the understanding of the objectives among team members. If so, these may suggest important lessons.

▲ **What was actually achieved?** Related questions include: Were the deliverables produced? Were deadlines met? Have the team leader deliver their second presentation (summary of results; see #3 above), or post a summary on a flipchart. Then hold a group discussion to ensure that the team has a fairly complete and shared understanding of the results. For more complex projects, create a Timeline (refer to the Timeline tool in this Toolbox for guidance) to help identify the key events, milestones, actors, external factors and obstacles. The process of jointly piecing together what actually happened in the project helps draw out knowledge that would have been hard for any individual working alone, even the team leader, to pinpoint.

▲ **What went well? Why?** Related questions include: What were the moments or actions that were most important for success? This is an open discussion to determine the important successes and the key factors that contributed to them, so that these can be sustained or recreated in future projects. Ensure that each participant gets a chance to contribute, and that you stay on schedule. Often people may not immediately realise why things worked out well. It is often useful to ask 'why' more than once for every success, in order to get at the real reasons. This will stimulate reflection, deeper insight, and possibly also prompt the realization that not everything went as well as possible. Don't linger on the routine, expected successes; they can be mentioned, but spend most of the time focusing on the successes that appeared uncertain earlier on, or those

that were bigger than expected, or those that were achieved with unconventional approaches.

▲ **What could have been improved, and how?** Related questions include: What internal obstacles, and what external factors, hindered the project? How could they have been overcome? Knowing what we know now, what would we do differently to improve results? This may be a difficult or sensitive portion of the discussion, so ensure that all participants understand the objective as finding recommendations for future improvement. This will help get objective responses without assigning blame. **Ask the project leader(s) to speak first. A leader's openness about challenges encountered and ways to improve will help dispel discomfort among team members about discussing negative aspects of the project.**

After the leaders give their inputs, give each participant a chance to speak. Encourage the contribution of practical ideas for change, and ensure that you stay on schedule.

▲ **Is there anything that still puzzles us?** Related question: Are there still any relevant project-related issues that we don't know how to address? Don't spend too long on this part of the session, but do include it as it is potentially very valuable for guiding future research, planning and action. Some participants may feel uncomfortable with admitting that there are unanswered questions, just as they might with discussing how things could have gone better. Don't force participants to contribute; rather, just give them the opportunity.

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8. Optional: Create action plan. If (and only if) there is an opportunity for the team members present to immediately apply the recommendations from the Retrospect, then the group can create an action plan. The action plan should be as simple

as your organizational context and objectives allow it to be.

9. Conclude the Retrospect. Tie up any loose ends from the discussion of the project. Let participants know about next steps, including the need for their comments on the draft meeting record (see next item below), and anything else relevant regarding future actions. Then ask participants to share their impressions of the session.

▲ **Optional but recommended: Project rating.** When concluding the project discussion, ask each participant to rate the project on a scale of 1 to 10. Then ask each what would have been needed for them to give a rating of 10. This represents a final opportunity for participants to raise any lingering issues.

Follow-up after the event

These instructions are for the organizer.

10. Have the meeting record written up. Refer to 'Annex: Meeting Record' below for a suggested structure for the document. Compile the meeting notes and edit them into a single meeting record, summarizing the proceedings and stating the lessons and clear, practical recommendations for the future. The record should be sufficiently clear and well-written that it can function as a resource document for someone starting a new project cycle. Share the draft meeting record with participants for comment and to ensure their views are properly reflected.

▲ The written meeting record, with clear and practical recommendations for improved action and results, is the most concrete output from a Retrospect. In addition, a well-run Retrospect will yield in-depth team learning and improvements in team cohesion and transparency.

11. After final edit, make the meeting record available: If confidentiality is an issue, then share it on an internal site or community with limited access. But otherwise share it widely, e.g. by posting it on an intranet site or community site that is accessible to all staff, or on a website accessible by both staff and partners.

▲ In addition, you can also distill the recommendations into other knowledge, capacity building and communication resources, and disseminate these widely to different audiences as needed. For example, lessons learned can be captured in any suitable format, including official lessons learned templates that may be used in the organization.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



▲ The most fundamental tip for success – applicable to the work of the organizer, the facilitator and the project leader(s) – is to ensure that all participants clearly understand ahead of time that the Retrospect is a time for learning, and that it will be assumed that 'everyone did as well as they could in the situation they faced.' Maintain this perspective during the meeting, and ensure that the discussion reflects it. Otherwise, learning will not be possible. Performance issues should only be raised in the context of individual performance reviews. Do not use the Retrospect for performance evaluation; doing so will likely ensure failure.

▲ It is easier to succeed with a Retrospect if the project itself succeeded; if the project leader truly wants to learn and share; and if the project team communicates well and has strong team spirit. If only some or none of these are true, then it is still possible to have a successful Retrospect but it will be more challenging and will demand significantly more skill and effort from the facilitator.

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▲ Be careful not to delve too much into the micro-level lessons. A Retrospect is not an After Action Review; it has a broader and more long-term focus.

.....

▲ Look for ideas for improvement that are both specific and actionable. If some ideas seem promising to the group, but are still general or vague, try to sharpen them up, e.g. instead of 'we should be on the ground quickly' try for 'the emergency team should be on the ground within 24 hours'.

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▲ Ensure the conversation stays focused on the process and results, not on the roles of specific persons. If comments start to become personal, remind the group of the Retrospect's purpose and bring the discussion back to the process.

.....

▲ Be sure to give everyone an opportunity to talk. Don't let the conversation be dominated by the loudest voices. One way to give everyone an opportunity to speak – especially in cases where there are domineering personalities – is to introduce a "talking stick": only the person holding the talking stick may speak while others must listen.

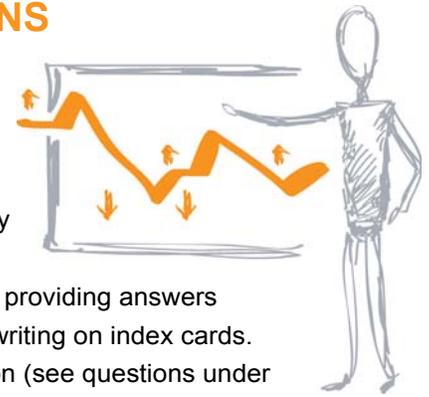
VARIATIONS

▲ Providing input on cards.

Some teams may be more

comfortable with providing answers to questions by writing on index cards.

For each question (see questions under #7 above), the facilitator gathers the cards, reads them out, and then organizes the responses into themes with the group's help, writing them on a flipchart. (See also VIPP Card Collection and Clustering elsewhere in this Toolkit.)



▲ **Sub-Retrospects:** If you have too many key team members (i.e., more than about 12), begin the Retrospect in plenary with the summary of the objectives. Then divide the team along functional lines, project components or phases and run multiple Sub-Retrospects, each of which will review progress and ask what went well and what didn't, within their respective spheres. Each sub-Retrospect will need a facilitator and a rapporteur. Depending on the design of the session, you may wish either to use breakout rooms and convene at the beginning and end in a larger room, or use a single room with movable furniture that can be configured as needed. Reconvene briefly at the end to close the meeting (as described above). A single meeting record should be prepared from all sub-groups' inputs.

If you use Sub-Retrospects, then ensure that the rapporteur of each group uses the same methods for recording the discussions (e.g. a flipchart, computer-based note-taking, group members writing on cards, etc.) This will greatly facilitate aggregating and/or comparing the outputs of the various groups.

▲ **Video summary:** As an additional output, team members with insights to share may be invited to give a short 2 minute video comment/interview that is made widely available for viewing within the organization.

CASE STUDY / EXAMPLE



Example: UNICEF's Nepal Earthquake Response

The example below is drawn from UNICEF's emergency response work. In addition to creating recommendations for future action it also identified immediate actions relevant for participants in the response. The Retrospect was adapted for organizational context by engaging management through a subsequent review process, and also by inviting additional input from staff not present at the Retrospect, via a Wiki. These additional elements are not obligatory for a Retrospect; rather they illustrate how it can be adapted when necessary, without compromising the fundamental principles outlined above.

After the first few weeks of the emergency response to the April 2015 Nepal earthquake, the UNICEF Nepal Country Office decided that a Retrospect would offer a critical learning and stock-taking opportunity. Therefore a one-day Retrospect was organized on 26 May 2015, just over 4 weeks into the response. Participants included members of the UNICEF Country Management Team, District Emergency Coordinators and staff from the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, all of whom were involved with the response.

In order to broaden the range of available inputs, one week prior to the Retrospect all

staff involved in the response (whether invited to the Retrospect or not) were given the opportunity to provide feedback on what was working well and what challenges were being encountered, through an anonymous online Wiki platform which received more than 230 contributions.

The Retrospect had the following objectives:

1. Assess the **effectiveness** of the immediate response during the first 4 weeks after the earthquake, highlighting in particular the strengths and weaknesses of the actual as compared to the planned response;
2. **Contribute to improvements for the ongoing response**, yielding immediate action points for key response participants and strengthening the focus on rehabilitation, resilience and Disaster Risk Reduction;
3. Identify recommendations for UNICEF staff to **strengthen future humanitarian action**, by analyzing strengths and weaknesses of the response and why they occurred, and drawing out lessons on what to sustain and replicate, as well as what to do differently next time.

At the Retrospect, an external facilitator guided participants through a day-long process of assessing progress to date against the 90-day response plan, looking at what had worked well and why, what had not worked well and why, and formulating concrete recommendations for addressing bottlenecks to strengthen response moving forward.

The Retrospect resulted in a set of proposed recommendations by staff for improving the emergency response. The recommendations were reviewed by management, who subsequently decided which of them would be acted upon and how. The follow-up actions to implement recommendations were thereafter tracked as to their status, who is responsible and by when.



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CREDITS

Authors: Meena Arivananthan.

Author of example (Nepal earthquake response): Diksha Mudbhary-Sitaula.

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert Review Panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar, Edgar Tan.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA

knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

This Toolbox in its latest edition, as well as all individual tools, are available online for free download at

<http://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/>

Annex: Meeting record

Every Retrospect should result in a meeting record – a document summarizing the discussion and capturing the recommendations. Below is a suggested structure for the document. You may include additional headings as required by your organizational context, but keep the document fairly simple so that it will be easy to create and easy to read and use.

Name of project

Date of Retrospect

Retrospect participants:

Team leader(s)

Team members

Facilitator

Observers (if any)

Summary of project objectives

Base this on the team leader's presentation at the Retrospect

Summary of project results

Base this on the team leader's comments and the discussion. Keep it short: it is a summary, not a report.

What went well

What could have gone better

Recommendations

These are drawn from both the discussion of what went well, and from the discussion of what could have gone better. Present them as brief statements or short paragraphs.

(Optional) Unanswered questions

(Optional) Supporting documents

These may include ToRs, monitoring reports, notes from project meetings, etc., if available and relevant to the recommendations (don't include them just for completeness).

If a Timeline is prepared during the meeting, it can be captured with photos.

SURVEYS (ONLINE & INFORMAL)

/ Getting a broad cross-section of inputs from staff and partners /

WHAT IS A SURVEY?

This module offers guidance on conducting **informal** surveys online. These are surveys with respondents that include staff and partners only, and which are used for internal planning and management. This module is **not applicable** for **formal** surveys. Formal surveys include any with beneficiaries (such as children, mothers or families) as respondents, any surveys for the purpose of research, for collection of statistically representative data (for example, on the situation of beneficiaries), for any kind of publication, or as part of formal evaluations. To obtain guidance on formal surveys, consult experts in research design and standards, evaluation, or data and analytics, and adhere to any relevant and applicable organizational guidance on these topics, including ethics procedures

A well-run informal survey can act as a primary source of information for understanding the needs, opinions and experiences of a group of staff and partners; monitoring or assessing their views concerning relevant projects/ initiatives; and informing future planning.

A survey begins with a set of well-formulated questions. Each survey respondent answers the questions independently. Together the responses from all participants make up the survey results, which are analyzed and presented through a report combining text with appropriate visuals.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Online survey tool (SurveyMonkey, Excel online (part of Office 365), Google Forms, Typeform, etc.)*
- *15 or more respondents*
- *Preparation time: several weeks (time to prepare the survey, then up to 2 weeks for the survey to run, and then time for analysis and presentation of the results)*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

While there are several ways to administer informal surveys, this article will focus on how to do them **online**. Online informal surveys are easy, quick and cost-effective to run, and can be distributed globally. Online surveys can target a large participant base if needed. They offer participants the advantage of being able to complete the survey at their convenience from any location with internet access:

Online informal surveys are best used:

- ▲ To understand the needs and practices of a group of staff, or staff and partners, as a basis for effective planning of a project or initiative. Such surveys should be run before the project work begins.
- ▲ To obtain feedback from participants after an event (such as a workshop and or training session), in order to improve future events.
- ▲ To elicit opinions and perceptions anonymously from staff and partners on issues where they may feel more comfortable sharing their views confidentially. (With such issues, be sure to frame questions neutrally, inform respondents clearly on how the information will be used and indicate whether or not their response will be kept anonymous. If in doubt, consult a survey expert for guidance.

- ▲ For on-going project monitoring, to assess how well the project is being implemented, whether it is achieving the desired results, and to gauge the reaction from staff and partners who are implementing, or being affected by, the project.
- ▲ To help evaluate the impact of an initiative or activity, including knowledge exchange activities.

Any surveys supporting formal research, statistical data collection, evaluation, addressing potentially sensitive issues, or that will be published externally, are outside the scope of this module; instead, consult with the corresponding organizational experts and responsible offices for guidance.¹



HOW TO APPLY

Planning

1. Decide whether a survey is the best option.

- ▲ What do you want to learn or measure? Surveys are better for collecting information that can easily be categorized or quantified. More qualitative or open-ended information is better collected through other means such as interviews or focus groups.

¹ For UNICEF staff, the relevant offices to be consulted regarding formal surveys include the Office of Research, the Evaluation Office, and the Data and Analytics Section.

▲ Whom among your organization's staff or partners do you want to reach? How many people? Do they all speak the language that a survey would be conducted in? An online survey can work well with a large number of respondents, who may be geographically dispersed, and who speak a common language.

▲ Are they likely to actually respond to an online survey? This depends on their available time, motivations, etc. While there are things you can do (see 'Steps you can take to increase response rates' below), first you should be confident that you can at least potentially get the attention and participation of the target audience.

▲ Have you recently surveyed the same group? Don't inflict 'survey fatigue' or your response rates will drop.

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2. Having decided on a survey, define the goals and ensure you have a good understanding of the respondents. This will help in designing the questions.

▲ What do you want to find out? Surveys (and survey questions) typically fall into one of three categories: **exploratory** (building understanding of an issue and gathering insights), **descriptive** (determining opinions and behaviours of the audience, usually quantitatively), or **causal** (clarifying causes and effects).

▲ Who are the end users of the results (e.g. project managers), and how will they use them? Questions should be crafted with a view to generating results that will be useful for end users but should still be objective and should not 'lead' the respondent towards giving certain answers.

▲ Know the respondents. The language of the survey and the type of questions should be tailored to them. Your knowledge of your organization's culture and language usages will be very useful for this.

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3. Choose an online survey tool. Free public survey tools usually have limitations on numbers of questions or formats, while paid survey tools offer more features; hence your choice of tool can impact your question design (see #4 below). You may have access to organizational survey tools that you can use for internal survey audiences of staff and partners (which are the only audiences considered in this guidance). Consider a survey tool that incorporates a feature showing respondents the percentage of the survey completed as an incentive to finish it. Examples of survey tools include:

▲ **SurveyMonkey:** The free version allows 10 questions, with 15 formats to choose from, and 100 respondents, but without data exports.

▲ **Typeform:** The free version offers unlimited questions and answers, and allows data export and basic reporting.

▲ **Google Forms:** The tool is completely free, allows unlimited surveys and respondents. Data is automatically collected in Google Spreadsheets.

▲ **Excel Online:** This has a survey forms tool which is similar to Google forms. Excel Online is a useful option if your organization uses Microsoft Office.

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Design the survey questions

4. Prepare questions for the survey, keeping in mind the goals, end users and respondents. Once complete, enter them on the online tool for testing. See Annex 1 below, 'Commonly used question formats'.

a Questions should be short and specific so that respondents can quickly understand what you are asking.

- ▲ Keep the language of the questions simple. Avoid lengthy questions, jargon, and potentially ambiguous words.

- ▲ Ask one question at a time. Do not use compound questions. For example, do not ask 'What did you think of the event's format and its outcomes?' Instead ask separate questions about the format and the outcomes.

- ▲ Do not ask leading questions (i.e. questions which hint at specific responses). For example, do not ask 'Do you agree that this project has been successful?' Instead, ask 'How would you rate the success of this project?' and provide a rating scale.

- ▲ Personalise the questions by using the pronoun 'you' in questions (as in 'what do you think of...?'). Use the pronoun 'I' in statements that you ask respondents to rate (as in 'I enjoy the work I do').

b Structure your questions in order to make it easy to interpret the results.

- ▲ Make sure the question formats you want are supported by the online survey tool.

- ▲ Closed questions (which can be answered yes/no or by choosing from a limited list of choices) are popular for use in surveys, because they provide data that are

easy to quantify and analyze. Open questions (which require the respondent to compose an answer) require more work to interpret, and may be best left for use in other methods like interviews.

- ▲ Provide consistent answer choices for closed questions: if you decide to use a five-point rating scale for one question, with 5 signifying 'best' or 'strongly agree', then use the same scale for all other similar questions.

- ▲ Provide 4 - 5 choices for multiple choice questions. While it may be tempting to offer 6 - 8 choices in order to draw finer distinctions, this risks diluting the data as the responses will be scattered among the many choices.

- ▲ Include a few relevant demographic questions to help with interpretation of results. These may include questions on the job function, professional level and geographic location of the respondent.

c Ensure there is a logical flow to the questions:

- ▲ Organize the questions into sections by theme.

- ▲ Start with simple questions, then move to more substantial ones, and finally return to simple questions to close the survey.

- ▲ For anonymous surveys, place demographic questions such as age, marital status, professional level, etc., at the end of the survey. Experience shows that doing so improves response rates.

d As an incentive to respondents, keep the total length of the survey as short as possible.

- ▲ For surveys to evaluate events (workshops or trainings), or other simple surveys, 5 - 10 questions (~ 5 minutes to complete) is enough.

▲ For most other surveys, limit the number of questions to about 25 (~ 10 minutes to complete). Exceeding this number may result in declining response rate and/or quality of contributions.

▲ Only exceed 25 questions, or an estimated 10 minutes to complete, when you know your audience well and can expect good response rates despite a long survey. Ensure that respondents can save their answers online and return at a later time to finish.

5. Test the survey.

▲ Ask several people to take the survey. Is it easy to understand and answer? Are the responses suitable for the question posed? Can the questions or answers be made more concise? Revise the questions as needed, to ensure that a survey respondent sitting alone at their desk can understand them easily and answer promptly.

▲ Optional: Another way to test the survey is via a meeting with five people who fit the profile of the survey's target audience. Read and discuss the questions and available answers one by one, and look for problems or ways to improve.

▲ Using results from these tests, confirm that the kind of data the survey will provide is useful, and is in the format you need.

▲ Confirm how long the survey takes to complete, and include this information in the introductory message that opens the survey.

6. Prepare an introductory message to be placed on the first survey page. Include who is running the survey, the goals of the survey, how the results will be used, how long it will take to complete, and the deadline or closing date.

Run the survey

7. Launch the survey when your target audience (of staff and partners) is most responsive; avoid holidays and periods of low activity. Email the survey link to the members of your target audience; if possible, have the message sent out by a senior manager, in order to increase response rates.² If the survey covers multiple offices or functional areas you might ask senior leaders in those areas to resend the message to their location or thematic group.

▲ If you cannot identify specific members of a target audience, you can post the survey link with an appropriate message on a website, intranet site, community site, etc.

▲ Optional: To increase response rates, you can send a reminder a few days before closing the survey. If your survey is non-anonymous and targets only a limited number of respondents, then you can direct the email only to those who have not yet completed it.

▲ For feedback surveys on meetings and events, launch them as soon as possible after the event, or even during the event itself, and set a relatively short deadline for response. (For more on evaluating meetings, see 'Real-Time Evaluation Tools for Meetings and Workshops' in this Toolbox.)

8. Monitor the response while the survey is

² Alternatively, if your survey is not anonymous, you can also enter respondents' email addresses into a survey tool like SurveyMonkey which can send individual invitations.

running, typically for one to two weeks. If response rates are low, you might find that you need to extend the deadline, so factor this into your planning.

Analyse and report on the survey

9. Analyse the results (which are compiled for you by the online tool) and prepare a report. The report should include:

a **An introduction** outlining the goals of the survey, the target audience/respondents, and briefly describing how the survey was carried out. Be sure to mention the informal nature of the survey.

b **The survey questions** (including response choices for multiple choice questions).

c **An analysis**, including data tables and charts to make it easier for readers to understand the results. This is the most important part of the report.

▲ In the analysis, remember to compare responses for different demographic groups, e.g., from different regions, functions, age groups, etc.

▲ Look for the “stories” in the data, i.e. where something in the results conveys a clear message (such as a frequent complaint), is striking, or perhaps is unexpected.

▲ Although the survey package may have tools for data analysis and visualization, it is often best to use the tool to do the analysis but then export or copy the key charts into another package to present the results clearly and attractively.

▲ State key results and findings both in text and using charts.

▲ If your survey included open questions, consider categorizing the responses (e.g. ‘favourable’, ‘neutral’, ‘unfavourable’). This will require careful review of answer text.

▲ Consider the response rate when doing the analysis: Surveys with very low response rate (e.g. less than 15%) may not be representative of the group surveyed. If you have a very low response rate, you may wish to consider rerunning the survey at a later date if time allows. If not, then be prepared to take the findings with a pinch of salt.

d **Optional:** The complete survey results. If your survey included open questions, then the results may be lengthy.

10. Share the report with the end users, help them interpret the results and support them in deciding on recommended actions in response to what has been learned. Also consider presenting the results via a Webinar or Lightning Talk, or using them as inputs into a face-to-face knowledge exchange process such as a World Café, an E-discussion, a Retrospect or another relevant process. It is also good practice to share the results with the respondents and let them know what plans or actions have been undertaken in consequence.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



Writing effective questions

▲ One way to write strong questions is to brainstorm questions around the theme or focus of the survey. Formulate as many as you can, both closed questions and open questions. Next, transform the open questions into closed ones – e.g. change ‘How do you share knowledge?’ into ‘Which of these approaches do you use for sharing knowledge?’ (plus a list of likely approaches). Then take the original closed questions and turn them into open ones – e.g. change ‘Which of the following are your reasons for participating in communities of practice?’ into ‘Why do you use communities of practice?’ The idea is to see each question from different perspectives, to allow you to pick the best approach overall. Pick the best of the questions you create and use them in your survey.

▲ See also Annex 1 below, ‘Commonly Used Question Formats’.

Response rates

▲ Response rates for online surveys vary and can sometimes be quite low. Internal surveys (i.e., targeting an organization’s own staff) can achieve rates of up to 30-40% or even more. Reasons may include a sense of obligation by staff to respond, or that it is considerably easier to design effective surveys for familiar audiences, such as work colleagues.

Steps you can take to increase response rates:

- Let respondents know, in the survey email and in the introductory message at the beginning of the survey, about the value of their feedback and how the results will be used. This will help them recognize that the time they spend to complete the survey is meaningful.
- Keep the survey short and focused. Eliminate any questions that don’t help meet survey goals.
- Test the survey with representative respondents, and modify it based on their feedback.
- Send out multiple reminders.



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CREDITS

Author: Meena Arivananthan.

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert Review Panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar.

Additional expert reviewers: Paola Storchi.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

This Toolbox in its latest edition, as well as all individual tools, are available online for free download at <http://www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/>

Annex 1: Commonly used question formats

Question format	Description	Use for
Closed multiple choice questions, single answer only	Several concise answers are provided; respondents choose only one answer.	Questions with several mutually exclusive answers. These kinds of questions can facilitate analysis by providing clear, unambiguous differentiation.
Closed multiple choice questions, multiple answer	Several concise answers are provided; respondents can choose more than one answer.	Questions with answers that can be valid at the same time. These kinds of questions capture a broader range of data but can lead to results that are harder to analyse.
Open questions	Answers are free-form text (possibly with limits such as maximum character count).	Questions with answers that cannot be predetermined, or that require richer inputs from respondents. Use sparingly since these responses cannot be analyzed quantitatively. Perhaps best suited for small targeted groups of respondents.
Ranking questions	Respondents are asked to rank several pre-determined responses in order (of importance, priority, preference, etc.).	Evaluating a set of choices against one another. Turning subjective preferences into quantitative data.
Dichotomous questions	Answers are binary: either True or False, Yes or No.	For helping subdivide the results into relevant categories. Use sparingly as these questions are limiting.
Numeric questions	Answers are continuous variables like age, number of years, etc.	Obtaining demographic information and identifying subgroups among the respondents.

SWOT AND PESTEL

/ Understanding your external and internal context for better planning and decision-making /

WHAT ARE SWOT AND PESTEL?

SWOT and PESTEL are analytical tools that help identify the key external and internal factors that should be taken into account in order to achieve success in a project or initiative. They are usually used together, and are applied in a group setting to support effective strategic planning, decision-making and action planning. SWOT and PESTEL are cost- and time-efficient means for highlighting key issues relating to the context of a project or initiative which, if not identified and addressed, could critically affect the chances of success. They also offer the benefit of framing these issues in a way that is easy for participants to understand and discuss.

REQUIREMENTS FOR SWOT:

- *Experienced facilitator*
- *Rapporteur.*
- *Flip chart with plenty of paper and marker pens.*
- *Optional: Laptop and projector.*
- *8 - 12 participants representing diverse relevant roles and ideally including decision-makers. (Alternatively, up to 40 participants if using subgroups; see Variations below.)*
- *1 hour for quick SWOT; 2 hours for normal SWOT, or up to a half-day SWOT workshop for major initiatives; plus preparation time.*

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS, IF ADDING PESTEL:

- *1 - 6 persons with good research/analysis skills, to conduct initial research on the six PESTEL domains before the meeting and also participate at the meeting (they do count against the suggested limit of 12 participants).*
- *1 - 2 hours to review, expand and rank PESTEL inputs from research, before continuing with SWOT.*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

SWOT: Turning around the order for better results

The term 'SWOT' refers to Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors: they exist inside the organization (or within the partnership, if relevant to the project being analysed). Opportunities and threats are external: They exist outside the organization. SWOT is a widely used and fairly well-known tool; the method described here incorporates a couple of changes from the ordinary SWOT, intended to produce the strongest possible results.

SWOT has often been done in the order implied by the name: first examining strengths, then weaknesses, opportunities and finally threats. **However, it is recommended instead to first examine the external factors – opportunities and threats – and then proceed to the internal ones.** This helps keep a stronger focus on results, and helps you identify which threats are 'critical threats' (i.e. those that are compounded by corresponding weaknesses) and which opportunities are 'promising opportunities' (i.e. those that are matched by corresponding strengths). Those who have changed the order of work in SWOT, by examining opportunities and threats first,

often report being amazed at the improvement in the value of the SWOT process.¹

Any project/initiative that is to be assessed using SWOT must have clearly defined objectives which are well understood by participants. Clear objectives are a kind of lens, through which the various external and internal factors relevant to your project can be identified as Strengths or Weaknesses, Opportunities or Threats. If the objectives seem to be unclear, then have them clarified and agreed before embarking on a SWOT.

The SWOT framework can be thought of as a matrix. Here it is presented with external factors first.

	Favourable for achieving the objectives	Unfavourable for achieving the objectives
External origin	Opportunities	Threats
Internal origin	Strengths	Weaknesses

PESTEL: A powerful complement to SWOT

PESTEL, a complementary tool to SWOT, expands on the analysis of external context by looking in detail at specific types of issues that frequently have an impact on implementation of project/ initiatives. The term 'PESTEL' refers to the domains it considers: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal. PESTEL involves identifying the factors in each of these six domains that are relevant for the project being considered. A special focus of PESTEL is identifying trends. Thus it is helpful for thinking proactively and anticipating change, rather than being overtaken by it.

It is recommended to use PESTEL and SWOT together. PESTEL complements SWOT by

¹ For example, see Michael Watkins, "From SWOT to TOWS: Answering a Reader's Strategy Question", in Harvard Business Review online, <https://hbr.org/2007/03/from-swot-to-tows-answering-a-readers-strategy-question/>

identifying specific relevant factors (such as economic trends, social attitudes, technological developments, etc.) that are significant for the project being considered, and SWOT then classifies them as either Opportunities or Threats. The more complex your context or operating environment is, the more value PESTEL can offer, by identifying factors that would be missed by SWOT alone.

Applying PESTEL is fairly simple: Of the nine steps to do a SWOT described below, only steps 2 and 5 are done differently when using PESTEL. An extensive set of PESTEL questions is provided in Annex 2 (see below), to help participants identify more quickly and easily the relevant factors in each of its six domains. If you're short of time, you can just do a SWOT. But if time permits, then applying PESTEL and SWOT together results in a stronger analysis, a better understanding of the current situation, and the potential for improved decision-making.

Applications and benefits

SWOT (and, where possible, PESTEL) can be applied for the following purposes:

- ▲ Creating, or helping create, a strategic plan or an action plan when launching a project/initiative. This is perhaps the most common application of SWOT.
- ▲ Weighing the pros and cons of major decisions. For example, use them to help decide on whether to create or join in a new initiative, to establish a significant new partnership, to implement new methods or tools (technological or non-technological), to help plan a reorganization, to assess use of resources and decide on how to improve operational efficiency, etc.
- ▲ Reviewing positioning on an ongoing project/initiative at a key moments of reflection,

identifying needed change in the approach or methods being used, and making adjustments.

SWOT and PESTEL are flexible: They can be applied for planning or decision-making concerning an entire project/initiative, or alternatively it can be used to focus on specific stages or components of a project. For example, if you are working on an immunization campaign, you could address all the various programmatic aspects (supply and cold chain, any needed training of health workers, collaboration with government and partners, public communication, etc.) in a single SWOT, or you could break out the public communication aspect and deal with that separately from the other aspects.

Similarly, SWOT and PESTEL can be applied to large or small (but significant) projects or decisions. If time is very limited, or for small projects, do a quick SWOT in an hour (remembering to identify the Opportunities and Threats first, and then the Strengths and Weaknesses). With more time, or for projects/decisions with larger implications, do a full SWOT and PESTEL in about 3 hours, plus preparation time. With even more time, or for very significant projects/decisions, expand the time accordingly, up to a full day workshop.

For a simple issue or question, SWOT and PESTEL may provide sufficient basis for making final decisions or creating an action plan. For complex questions, SWOT and PESTEL will at least lay a solid foundation, at low cost, for any further in-depth research and analysis that may be required. Prioritization of the issues in a PESTEL and SWOT is typically quick and may need to be refined when dealing with a really complex challenge.

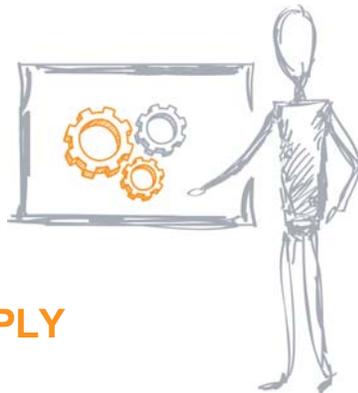
The fact that SWOT and PESTEL are group processes means that they also offer the following benefits:

- ▲ The breadth of perspectives in the group will make the analysis broader and deeper than what

an individual could produce in the same time, and will help overcome individual bias and limited viewpoints.

▲ The process will help get a team onto the same page by creating a shared understanding of the project context and key external and internal factors. SWOT participants often report being surprised by the views of others on even simple issues and challenges. It is best to surface those surprises early before they can impede effective action.

▲ The process will also start the key conversations that are needed to achieve project success. The connections and conversations can continue as needed after the SWOT concludes, throughout the duration of the project.



HOW TO APPLY

The following are the steps for a SWOT. The more time you have for the SWOT, the more time you should spend on the analysis and discussion steps (steps 5-9 below). If you are doing PESTEL, a little additional preparatory research will be needed before the session.

Prepare in advance

1. Prepare a clear, brief draft statement of the project objectives/decision to be analysed in the SWOT. The statement should consist of only a few sentences. If you already have a project plan or proposal that is longer than one page, shorten it for purposes of the

SWOT. You don't need to capture every detail: include only the essence of the project objectives and expected outcomes or of the decision that is under consideration.

2. Invite participants (about 8-12 for a normal SWOT) who will be directly involved in the project, or in the implementation of the decision. Share with them, in advance, the draft statement of the objectives and outcomes. Help the participants prepare for the SWOT in one of the two following ways:

▲ **Option 1: Assign some or all participants to conduct PESTEL research and to share their findings with you a few days before the event.** Assign responsibility for surveying factors in each of the six PESTEL domains: give each of the domains to one person, or split them among 2-3 people, or assign one person who is very familiar with the context to cover them all. The output of the PESTEL research is, for each domain, a simple list of the key factors with just enough information to clearly define each of them. This could be a sentence, or a brief paragraph. PESTEL research for one domain (political, or economic, etc.) could run anywhere from half a page to a few pages.

▲ **Option 2: Simply ask participants to think about threats, opportunities, strengths and weaknesses** before the event. Although not as powerful as PESTEL, this will still help the SWOT to be more relevant.

When you are ready to start

3. Convene the meeting and briefly describe the method. Ensure the rapporteur(s) are ready; their notes will complement the flipchart sheets that you will write during the meeting.

4. Confirm the group's understanding of the objectives and outcomes to be analysed in the SWOT, and which team (organization, partnership) would take action to implement them.

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5. Brainstorm the external categories (Threats and Opportunities):

▲ **If you used PESTEL, then its results should be the starting point.** Share the lists of PESTEL factors identified by those who carried out the PESTEL analysis (political, economic, social, etc.), by posting them all at once on flipchart sheets for all to see, or displaying them on PowerPoint slides. Ask other participants to complement the PESTEL research by suggesting additional factors; this helps take advantage of different knowledge among participants. Next, brainstorm each PESTEL factor as to what opportunities it offers and what threats it carries. Record the results on flipchart sheets. At this stage you are looking for lots of relevant ideas.

Once all the PESTEL inputs have been discussed, ask the group whether they can identify any additional Threats, and then additional Opportunities; you can prompt them using the questions in Annex 1 below.

▲ **If you did not use PESTEL, simply brainstorm the Threats and Opportunities, prompting participants using the relevant questions in Annex 1.** Look for lots of ideas; don't filter for importance yet. Use a sheet of flipchart paper (or even more than one) for each category.

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6. Next, brainstorm the internal categories (Weaknesses and Strengths), using the

corresponding questions in Annex 1 as prompts, and looking for lots of relevant ideas.

.....

7. Rank the factors (O, T, S and W) by importance. Remind participants that the importance is linked to the potential impact of the factor on the objectives and outcomes of the project or decision, and to the likelihood of such impact. Once all the categories have been brainstormed, you will have four separate lists. Post all sheets so that participants can see them. Then discuss them to rank the ideas by importance, and mark each idea with symbols to indicate the group's overall opinion, e.g. ++ for very important factors, + for ones with some importance, or 0 for unimportant factors. Keep the discussion informal; you can ask for a show of hands, but don't take written ballots for ranking. Or give all participants sticky dots with 3 different colours and have them assign their ratings to each of the ideas.

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8. Discuss how the highly rated items in the categories relate to each other. For example, a certain strength may relate to a certain opportunity, or a certain threat may be made more significant because of a certain weakness. This is easier if you have used PESTEL and discussed Threats and Opportunities first (because those factors will make the impact of various Strengths and Weaknesses more clear.

.....

9. Optional but recommended: At the end of the session, if your group has decision-making power, outline a short action plan based on your analysis and on the objectives of the project or decision. If your group is acting only in an advisory capacity, suggest a few plausible options for action. Or if your objective was to make

a yes/no decision, summarize your recommendation and reasons. Your action plan/ recommendation should:

- pursue opportunities;
- overcome, prevent or avoid threats;
- use or capitalize on strengths;
- overcome, minimize or compensate for weaknesses.

Follow-up

10. After the SWOT, prepare a written summary with decisions/ recommendations, based on the flipchart sheets and notes from the note-taker, and distribute it to participants, decision-makers and other relevant recipients

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



SWOT

▲ Don't make the subject of a SWOT too broad; for example, don't try to assess every aspect of an Office's or Division's work. Instead focus on specific, significant projects and decisions, and conduct separate analyses for each, as time permits.

▲ Ensure you have diversity among participants in a SWOT. A group composed of participants with diverse backgrounds and

different perspectives can identify more of the critical factors, more quickly, than can a homogeneous group.

▲ For every project, some opportunities and threats are obvious, but others are hard to see because they are still developing and will have their full impact in the future. The latter kind of opportunities and threats are more difficult to identify and properly assess, but are potentially the most significant of all.

▲ Although SWOT is an analytical exercise, its success depends on a flow of ideas from participants. Therefore try to establish a relaxed and participatory tone; consider using an icebreaker if team members don't know each other well (see Icebreakers elsewhere in this Toolbox).

▲ During the discussion, keep the focus on the objectives and expected outcomes of the project/decision, and how the various factors relate to the objectives.

▲ If you are doing a quick SWOT (less than 1 hour), then it is OK for the statements of external factors and internal strengths/weaknesses to be somewhat general (though they should always be accurate), and for the final ranking of the factors (step 7 above) to be done quickly and somewhat informally.

▲ If you are doing an in-depth SWOT (3 hours or more, including PESTEL) then get multiple perspectives by involving participants from diverse, relevant backgrounds. Involve team leaders and decision-makers in the SWOT; without them, you will run the risk of your analysis and

recommendations being ignored. Try to ensure that the statements of external factors and internal strengths and weaknesses are both precise and verifiable. Do the ranking exercise (step 7) thoroughly, so that the most significant factors emerge clearly.

PESTEL

▲ When assigning persons to do PESTEL research before the SWOT session, try to match the PESTEL domains with persons who have knowledge of those domains. (See Annex 1 for details of all six domains.) Thus a media expert would be strongest in the Social domain, a lawyer or someone with legal background in the Legal domain, etc. Those who do the PESTEL analysis should also participate at the SWOT so that they can explain and support their choice of factors.

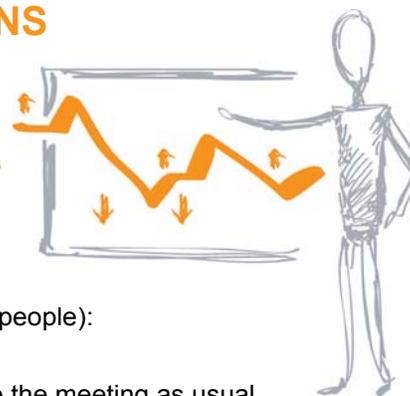
▲ To help identify PESTEL factors and trends, make use of any relevant and high-quality analyses that already exist from internal or external sources.

▲ Give weight to the factors identified in PESTEL according to your objectives; for example, if your objective involves increasing birth registration, then legal factors are obviously of prime importance; if your objective is community mobilization for sanitation, then social factors are critical; and so forth.

VARIATIONS

▲ Subgroups on the same issue.

If your group is large (more than 8-10 people):



1. Convene the meeting as usual and confirm the understanding of the objectives and expected outcomes. Then divide the group into 2-4 subgroups of up to 8-10 people, each with a facilitator, a note taker and a flip chart.
2. Have each group brainstorm each category (O, T, S, and W) for the objective/decision being discussed, in parallel. Encourage the small groups to be very informal and to generate as many ideas as possible. **Ensure that each subgroup uses the same methods for recording the discussions** (e.g. a flipchart, computer-based note-taking, group members writing on cards, etc.) This will greatly facilitate aggregating and/or comparing the outputs of the various groups.
3. Reconvene in plenary and gather all ideas from all groups, one group at a time for each of O, T, S and W. Through discussion, rank the items in each category, discuss how they related to each other, and if possible prepare an action plan/recommendation.

▲ **Subgroups on related issues/challenges.** If you have a few related key objectives, you can do parallel SWOTs on each of them, followed by a plenary session to summarize the key thinking from each. The plenary session may identify commonalities across objectives -- actions relevant for each objective, threats to each, weaknesses or strengths important for each, etc. -- which can then

be priorities for action as a result of their cross-cutting significance.

▲ **Icebreaker SWOT:** The simple and quick variant can be used as an icebreaker among people who will be working together in a planning session, but who may not know each other well. It is also suitable for kicking off a strategic discussion that will continue later, for example in other sessions of a longer event. Do not mistake an Icebreaker SWOT for a full analysis; it is at most a very quick introduction to the issues. To implement it, begin by simply introducing the objective under consideration in 1 sentence, at the event (no advance preparation required). Brainstorm and discuss only briefly – perhaps only for 5-10 minutes each – the relevant threats, opportunities, strengths, and weaknesses. To close the exercise, choose the top 1-3 items in each category by group vote.

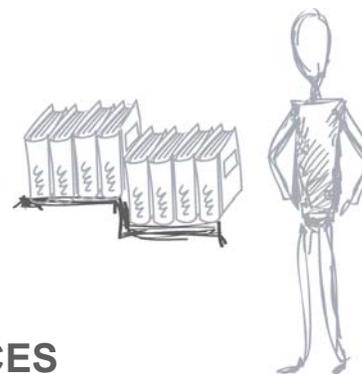
▲ **Expanded PESTEL:** You can amplify the power of the PESTEL exercise in several ways:

▲ Assign additional persons to conduct research and identify the relevant factors. You may even engage consultants to do such work, if the project or initiative being considered is a major organizational priority.

▲ Add an additional group work session dedicated only to discussing and expanding on the PESTEL factors. This should take place before the SWOT analysis, so that it can feed in to the identification of Threats and Opportunities.

▲ **Online SWOT:** If your participants have adequate internet connections, you can convene a SWOT in a web conferencing tool (e.g. Skype for Business, Adobe Connect, GoToMeeting, etc.). Use audio, not text chat, to gather inputs, but prefer no video unless all participants have excellent bandwidth. Do not exceed 10-12 participants. Check periodically

with the rapporteur to ensure that the discussions are being captured. Online SWOTs are more challenging than the in-person version but may sometimes be the only option.



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CREDITS

Author: Eric Mullerbeck.

Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert Review Panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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Annex 1: Factors to consider in PESTEL

These lists of factors are intended to help inspire and guide your PESTEL analysis in each of the six domains: Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal. Share them with those who will be conducting the analysis, and ask them to identify specific relevant examples in the operational context of the project or initiative that you are considering. Remember, all PESTEL factors have relevance only in the specific operational context. Therefore, identify the ones that could impact your project and focus your analysis on them.

Political

- Government policies: National, state/provincial, local, other.
- Government resource allocations.
- Stakeholder needs or demands.
- Lobbying/campaigning by interest groups: local, national, international. Influences/pressures from international actors, e.g. other governments, international organizations, etc.
- Armed conflicts.
- Changes in power, influence, connectedness of key relevant actors/groups.
- Expected direction of future political change: future policy prospects; upcoming elections and possible change in government (local, state, national) and its consequences; other relevant political trends.

Economic

- Economic situation: local, national, regional, global.
- Economic situation of specific relevant communities or population groups (including employment, taxation, mobility, etc.).
- Economic situation and prospects of any relevant industries.
- Infrastructure: local, national, other.
- Financial situation of key partners or other relevant entities.
- Availability of private sector resources relevant for the project/initiative.
- Expected direction of economic change: prevailing economic trends, trade and market cycles; expected economic interventions by governments and their consequences; other relevant economic trends.

Social

- Demographics and population trends.

- Health among populations.
- Education levels.
- Access to essential services.
- Public perceptions (of an issue, an initiative, an organization or other actor).
- Relevant customs, traditional beliefs, attitudes (e.g. towards children, adolescents, gender, etc.)
- Media views.
- Role models, celebrities, spokespersons.
- Knowledge, attitudes and practices of a particular population group (with regard to a relevant issue).
- Potential for knowledge exchange.
- Migration (which also has political, economic and legal dimensions).
- Major relevant events (upcoming or already happening) and cultural trends.
- History, to the extent that it affects social attitudes and perceptions.
- Factors in social identity, e.g. religious, socio-ethnic, cultural, etc.
- Dynamics of how social change happens in the given context.
- Management style, staff attitudes, organizational culture (within a major relevant organization).
- Expected direction of social change: broad trends in change of social attitudes (e.g. towards a relevant issue); other relevant social trends.
- Credibility of information sources or communication channels (e.g. media outlets, well-known individuals, etc.) among a target population. Reach of information sources/communication channels among a target population.

Technological

- Population groups' access to technologies.
- Patterns of use of existing technologies (which may be changing, e.g. evolving use of mobile phones).
- New technologies that could impact the context significantly, or that could be used to achieve objectives.
- Technologies and related infrastructure/manufacturing / importing requirements for an initiative to succeed
- Possible replacement/alternative technologies
- Potential for innovation
- Technology transfer, access, licensing issues, other issues related to intellectual property rights.
- Foreseeable technological trends: economic and social impact of adoption of existing technologies; rate of technological change; other technological trends.

Environmental

- Contextually relevant environmental issues: global (e.g. climate change), regional (e.g. flooding, droughts, etc.) or local (e.g. contamination of water supplies).
- Relevant environmental regulations or requirements (e.g. for assessing potential climate change impacts of specific activities, conforming to national or international environmental regimes, etc.).
- Environmental impacts of planned or ongoing activities.
- Climate, seasonality, potential impacts of weather.
- Trends or expected future developments in the environment.
- Geographical location

Legal

- Human rights (including but not limited to child rights and gender rights).
- Existing legislation having an impact on any relevant factors (economic, social, technological, environmental or other factors relevant to the issue), or affecting population groups relevant to the issue, or impacting the work of the organization or its partnerships.
- Pending or future legislation.
- International treaties/agreements, either existing or in preparation.
- Standards, oversight, regulation and regulatory bodies, and expected changes in these.
- Ethical issues.

Annex 2: Factors to consider in SWOT

These lists of factors are intended to help inspire and guide your SWOT discussion in each of the four categories: Opportunities, Threats, Strengths and Weaknesses. Share them with participants at your SWOT session, and brainstorm for examples relevant to the project or initiative you are considering.

If you used PESTEL, then the review of the PESTEL outputs will provide your first inputs into SWOT; in that case the lists of SWOT factors given here are supplementary, and should be used after the review of the PESTEL factors, to help identify any SWOT factors that were not captured through PESTEL.

Opportunities

Opportunities are external factors: They are found in the operational context within which the project, initiative or decision will be implemented.

- Events or trends that offer opportunities: Political (government policies, favourable changes in power/influence of relevant actors, political agendas), economic (rising prosperity, new economic opportunities or other favourable economic change), social (behaviour patterns, demographic change), technological (innovations, changes in technology use), environmental (favourable climate/weather), legal (upcoming legislation or treaties/international agreements).
- Relationships or partnerships that can be applied or drawn upon.
- Other actors that will likely play a role in the initiative/project under consideration; if they could support you, they represent potential opportunities.
- New information that has become available.
- Practices adopted by other organizations/actors in addressing similar challenges, which suggest opportunities.
- Potential funding sources.
- Possible efficiency gains from re-allocation of resources.
- Other initiatives, actions, projects or products that relate to the project/initiative under consideration.
- Include under opportunities the advantages, benefits or probable results that are offered by the project/initiative that is being considered in the SWOT.

Threats

Just like opportunities, threats are external factors in the operating context for the project, initiative or decision.

- Events or trends that could threaten the project/initiative or that put progress at risk: Political, economic, social, technological, environmental, legal.
- Risks and disadvantages that would be incurred by a given initiative/action under consideration: risks to staff and/or partners, to populations, reputational risk, financial risk, political risk, costs, additional responsibilities, etc. A complete risk analysis cannot usually be completed in a SWOT, but basic risks can be identified, or risks identified in a separate pre-existing risk analysis can be mentioned. Alternatively a more complete risk analysis could be called for at a later stage.
- Time, including disappearing opportunities, deadlines, unrealistic timelines.
- Other actors (harmful competition, contrary interests).
- Opportunities that would be foregone if a given initiative/action is undertaken.
- Other obstacles.

Strengths

Strengths are internal to the organization. Strengths include any kinds of capabilities or resources that the organization (and potentially any partners involved, and any stakeholders who are active participants in a development effort) can bring to bear, in order to achieve the desired result of the project, initiative, proposal, etc.

- Political: power, influence, connectedness, image and reputation.
- Access (to governments, partners, populations, etc.), reach, awareness.
- Presence on the ground.
- Economic / financial resources.
- Capital assets, infrastructure, equipment.
- Cost/competitiveness advantages.
- Skills, experience, knowledge (including academic or theoretical, and also know-how, i.e. practical or applied knowledge).
- Qualifications, accreditation.
- Data, especially if it is unique or hard-to-replicate.
- Allies, contacts.
- Dedication, leadership and drive.
- Cultural strengths.
- Geographical advantages (presence; other)
- Comparative advantages (with regard to other actors in the same context) in systems, processes, operational efficiency, flexibility, quality standards, other areas.
- Things your team/organization/partnership does well.
- Other noteworthy capabilities (technical, scientific, management, leadership, other) which the organization can apply.

Remember to take your operating context into account when identifying strengths and weaknesses. A strength in one context may be worth much less, or may even be a weakness, in another context; for example, available budget at the beginning of a budget cycle is worth more than the same amount of available budget near the end of a cycle.

Weaknesses

Similar to strengths, weaknesses are internal factors within the organization (or partnership) that would undertake the project/initiative.

- Existing gaps in capabilities or resources in the implementing organization(s). Refer to the list given above under 'Strengths' and note anything both relevant and lacking.
- Weaknesses which will take effect in the future, e.g. departure of key staff, expiry of funds, etc.
- Known vulnerabilities: things which the organization does not do well or struggles with. Every organization has such vulnerabilities; the idea is to be aware of them during the planning process.
- Other competing priorities (which may be core activities), pressures and internally imposed timelines that detract from available capacity.
- Relevant areas where a need for improvement has been identified (by management, by an audit, by an external evaluation, etc.)

TIMELINE

/ Understanding causes and effects in a project/ initiative /

WHAT IS A TIMELINE?

A Timeline is a visual method used to review major past events in a project, organization or community. Its objectives include establishing a common perspective and shared understanding among participants; reflecting on gaps, lessons and emerging trends; and supporting future planning for ongoing projects.

Timelines are created through a group activity that enables participants to map out milestones, achievements, obstacles and other major developments together, and depict them in chronological order. This is followed by a plenary discussion to flesh out details and to validate the Timeline and the facts it includes.

Timeline can be a good complement for other knowledge exchange tools, notably the Retrospect: Doing a Timeline as part of a Retrospect session is a good way to sharpen the group's focus on the significant or critical moments that occurred during the implementation of a project/ initiative. This in turn helps identify the lessons to be learned. (See also the Retrospect elsewhere in this Toolbox.)

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *1 - 2 rolls flipchart paper (for taping up on a wall)*
- *Several pin boards (if taping flipchart paper on walls is not permitted at your venue)*
- *Plenty of post-it notes (size approximately 3" by 5"), in 4-5 different colours*
- *Marker pens*
- *2 - 3 hours (maximum)*
- *Up to 20 participants (more possible, see Variations)*
- *Participants should include persons with firsthand experience of key events in the project/organization/community that is the focus of the Timeline exercise*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

In the context of a long-term project, programme or initiative, one of the biggest challenges can be the lack of understanding of past developments and significant moments that have shaped the outcomes. Changes in staff and among partners often contribute to this gap, as persons with first-hand knowledge move on, and new people with a partial/limited understanding of past events take on their roles. And when a project or initiative faces a turning point – any moment where activities have to be reconfigured to meet new requirements – a sound understanding of how you got to that point is vital for making the right decisions and empowering effective action. With the help of key individuals who have the firsthand project knowledge needed to fill in the blanks, a Timeline helps to ‘lay all the cards on the table’ and provides a complete contextual overview for participants.

But it is not only ongoing initiatives that can benefit from a Timeline. Undertaking new initiatives also requires an understanding of the current situation, and why it has come to be what it is. All situations or problems, in all communities, have a history of significant past events that have shaped the present reality. In these cases, the timeline is used as a planning tool, by establishing a shared understanding of the past and then identifying the significant milestones that the project is expected to achieve in the short and medium term.

The Timeline can be used to:

- ▲ Bring all team members up to speed on a project’s/initiative’s history, ensuring that everyone has the same information and has a chance to understand others’ perspectives. This in turn builds a common understanding of the activity, and strengthens the connections among people working on it.
- ▲ Understand any current situation (not limited to your own projects/initiatives) by analyzing how developments over time contributed to it. Help identify weaknesses or gaps by comparing the project’s original intentions with how it actually unfolded.
- ▲ Help to identify practical solutions for a recurring problem, by examining its causes and the impacts of efforts to mitigate it.
- ▲ Strengthen strategic planning, through the insights that the Timeline process provides, e.g., recognizing trends, and responding or taking advantage of them in future plans.
- ▲ Learn lessons from experience.
- ▲ Understand the present challenges faced by a community by examining the impact of changing socio-economic and other factors over an extended period of time.



HOW TO APPLY

Prepare in advance

These instructions are for event organizers.

1. Decide on the objective of the Timeline exercise. Refer to the list of ways to apply the Timeline given above, under 'When and why to use'.

2. Plan for appropriate facilitation. The facilitator plays a major role in guiding the Timeline process. Ideally, s/he should be appropriately skilled, aware of the subject matter and genuinely interested in digging into the history of a project, situation or community challenge, but should not offer their own substantive views on the subject during the discussion. Persons with strong views that they want to express should be participants, not facilitators.

3. Invite participants. If you are focusing on a particular project or initiative, invite a broad cross-section of the relevant staff and partners involved in it, up to about 20 people. Share the objective with all prospective participants, describe the benefits and the reason you need their participation, and give them an idea of the intended outputs. Invite both persons involved in current and future action, as well as those involved in the past, since the inception of the project, even if they are not currently working on it. Persons with past experience in the

project will provide the institutional memory that is essential for a successful Timeline exercise.

4. Book a large room. You will need sufficient space to post the timeline sheets so that participants can write on them.

Set up the room

These instructions are for event facilitators.

5. Put up the Timeline sheets. Do so before participants arrive. Use several large sheets of flipchart paper placed side by side, and put them up prominently in such a way that participants can write on them.

▲ The total length of the flipchart papers should reflect the time period and events/activities to be added. Make sure the flipchart landscape is wide enough to accommodate enough of the complexities of the project and the level of detail sought. You can even post a double row of papers if you need lots of space.

▲ You can put up the Timeline papers by taping them on a meeting room wall. Look for a long, clear wall with no obstructions; avoid using walls with built-in cabinets or shelves. **Make sure the layer of papers is thick enough to prevent the markers bleeding through to the walls.**

▲ If you cannot use the walls, then pin the flipchart papers to pin boards. You will likely need at least four pin boards placed side by side. Cover them with flipchart papers to create a continuous landscape. Make sure there is enough room for people to walk from one end to the other.

When you are ready to start

These instructions are for event facilitators.

6. Begin by providing context. State the purpose of the Timeline exercise and the time period being explored (past, or past and future). Draw a horizontal line on the Timeline sheets, and mark a few relevant dates: the beginning, the end, and a few in between.

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7. Kick off the discussion with a few guiding questions. The questions will help participants identify, from their own experience, the significant milestones or events (both positive and negative) that have contributed to advance or set back the project. Questions to use include:

- ▲ What were the key past developments that have shaped the present? What were the notable milestones? Were there any turning points, where events took a decidedly positive or negative turn?
 - ▲ Who were the actors or stakeholders whose actions impacted the key developments, or helped bring them about?
 - ▲ What were key external factors or events that affected the project?
 - ▲ What were the major obstacles to success/progress? How were the obstacles overcome? Or are any of them recurring?
-

8. Ask participants to respond to the questions individually. Assign post-it note colours for key categories (events, actors/stakeholders, external factors, obstacles, etc.). Have participants write their answers on appropriately coloured post-its, and have them put the post-its where they think

they belong on the timeline. Everyone can do this at the same time.

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9. When the flow of answers slackens and the timeline is well populated, begin the group discussion. Start at the beginning and go over all of the post-its to the end of the timeline. Ask participants to confirm the dates of the events, to group relevant actors/stakeholders with events, to move post-its around and to add additional key events, actors, obstacles, etc. as they recall them (by writing additional post-its and placing them where appropriate on the timeline).

- ▲ As you work your way through processing the post-its already submitted, keep the discussion open and allow participants to add more post-its at any point. Let the discussion proceed organically.
 - ▲ Participants should confer about the facts of the past, who did what and when it happened – but if there is disagreement, do not force a conclusion, since there may be legitimately different interpretations. In this situation you may need to have multiple post-its to reflect different views of a single event/actor, and to return to these in subsequent discussion.
 - ▲ You can also add a few relevant details (to flesh out an event, actor, etc.) on the timeline, either on post-its or written on the flipchart paper itself.
 - ▲ Keep an eye on participation levels. If there are any very quiet participants, or dominant ones, then consider breaking into smaller groups for quick discussions so that everyone can participate. (See Buzz Groups elsewhere in this Toolbox.)
-

10. Validate the timeline. Once you have reached the end of the timeline, go back to any issues that require further plenary discussion or clarification. Ask participants to confirm that all major events, actors, etc. have been captured, and make any necessary additions. Capture the timeline in photos for future reference (a cellphone camera is fine). A validated timeline serves as a useful basis for future planning and action.

11. Optional: Use the validated timeline to support a process of reflection on past actions. If you are combining the Timeline tool with a Retrospect or other reflective method such as After Action review, then use the validated Timeline to help the group more clearly identify what worked well, what could have worked better and useful recommendations for future action. You can ask participants to focus on the moments that have been confirmed as most critical for the project, and follow up in groups or in plenary with specific analytical questions (see Retrospect in this Toolbox).

12. Optional: To support future planning and decision-making in an ongoing project, extend the timeline into the future. This will help the group answer the question, 'Where do we want to take this project?' Continue the discussion: Ask participants to identify the key upcoming milestones needed for success, the approximate timeframe for them, plus any likely future challenges and opportunities that are expected based on past events and the current situation. You can also prompt participants to consider which stakeholders would need to be involved in the future, what specific deliverables are required for each milestone,

and the external factors and potential obstacles to watch out for at specific times. ¹

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



▲ Ensure that key resource persons with direct knowledge of past events are included in the Timeline activity, even if they are no longer actively working on the project or issue. It is not useful to organize a session with new staff only, who may at best have a vague idea of what happened in the past.

▲ The Timeline tool can be more difficult to facilitate than simpler methods such as Brainstorming. Timeline facilitators should ideally not be directly involved in the project, but should have some knowledge of the issues. (As a good means of preparation, facilitators can conduct 1-2 interviews with subject matter experts before facilitating a Timeline activity.) In addition, they need strong facilitation skills, including managing controversy, avoiding arguments, maintaining the focus and getting broad participation. They should be flexible and able to adapt the tool and approach to specific contexts and needs.

¹ See also 'Scenario timeline' and 'Online timeline' under 'variations' below, for more examples of how to use the Timeline for future planning.

▲ Avoid defining the intervals on a timeline too precisely. Similarly, in many cases you can avoid being too precise about when specific events happened. (Note that the order of events is often critical, even if the precise time it took place is not.) Otherwise there will be a tendency to ‘fill in the gaps’ with unimportant events, or to engage in unproductive discussion about the precise dates of events.

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▲ If controversial past events are discussed, **avoid blame**. Allow different interpretations to be added to timeline, and tactfully allow participants to explain, with the audience listening non-judgmentally. If needed, stop and revisit the particular issue later.

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▲ Use the coloured post-its consistently, and avoiding mixing of categories/colours. This makes the finished timeline product easier to read and helps highlight trends and patterns.

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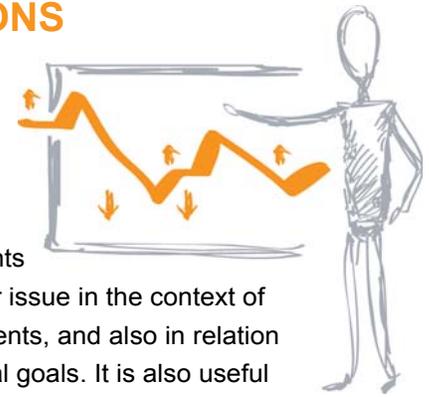
▲ Ensure that plentiful supplies of coloured post-its and pens are available, so that participants can focus completely on mapping the timeline.

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VARIATIONS

▲ Triple timeline:²

This approach helps participants see a project or issue in the context of larger world events, and also in relation to their personal goals. It is also useful for building connections and cohesiveness in large groups of diverse stakeholders, for example during a planning exercise.



Set up three timelines in parallel: global events (during the project period), project events (i.e. the usual timeline) and personal events (which are all posted together onto a single personal timeline). Run the Timeline exercise as usual, and ask participants during the individual response period to contribute to all three timelines. The subsequent discussion allows participants to get to know one another, and to understand others’ perspectives on themselves and on world events. This in turn builds connections and empathy.

.....

▲ **Scenario Timeline:**³ This variation emphasizes the links between the present and future possibilities, and is thus useful for planning or forecasting. It is important for all participants to know the main issues and actors involved.

1. Within the common theme or topic of the workshop/event/project, determine a number of future scenarios – desirable and undesirable.
2. During a plenary discussion with all participants, identify the actors, their goals, and the time boundaries of the exercise (how far into the future). It may also be helpful to have a discussion of likely or possible major

² This method is adapted from the Future Search methodology developed by Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff.

³ This method is adapted from Eric Kemp-Benedict’s “Scenario Timeline”, in *Scenarios for Sustainability* (Copyright © 2008 Eric Kemp-Benedict, licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported License).

events which will impact your future scenarios.

3. Divide participants into groups of 4-5 persons. Assign each group a scenario – either a desired future outcome, or an undesirable one.
4. Working separately, each group creates a timeline for their scenario, identifying plausible actions and including relevant events (whether discussed in plenary or not) that could lead to the achievement of the scenario outcome. Each group also discusses impacts of the outcome on the actors and on the surrounding environment (political, economic, social, and/or natural, as relevant).
5. The timelines are then shared in plenary. A concluding group discussion focuses on similarities, differences and points of connection among the various scenarios.

.....

▲ **Online Timeline:**⁴ This variation transforms the Timeline into a flexible, powerful tool for ongoing planning, management and communication. It has an explicit future focus: The Timeline is initially created in the normal way through an in-person group exercise, and the time horizon is extended into the future. Known or expected future events, and desired future goals, are identified and included on the Timeline. Potential pathways of achieving desired outcomes are traced, and dependencies are mapped out. Online Timeline has a number of key differences in comparison to the standard Timeline.

- The mapping of events, actors and obstacles, past and future, may initially be done on paper during the group exercise, but thereafter it is captured on a software platform. All authorized participants can

then access the Online Timeline, edit it when new information is available, and share it as needed in electronic form with new participants, partners, etc.

- By combining a forward-looking goal-oriented Timeline with the ability to share and update it electronically, the Online Timeline becomes a powerful tool for ongoing strategic planning and coordination. It offers a standard reference point for guiding and harmonizing the work of diverse individuals and teams seeking to achieve common goals.
- The visual aspect of the Online Timeline allows its users to see whether their ideas could really work in the context of other issues, activities and goals.
- It is a particularly useful tool to support policy advocacy. In such work success does not usually come quickly; patient effort over several years is usually needed in order to achieve policy change. A coherent and well-constructed Online Timeline helps you track relevant progress and articulate the big picture succinctly and vividly to donors or partners.
- An up-to-date Online Timeline with relevant future goals can be adapted for use as a funding proposal

⁴ This method was developed as part of an advocacy planning project led by Jens Matthes in UNICEF's Policy and Advocacy Coordination Unit. Available software tools for supporting Online Timeline include software such as Draw.io (<https://www.draw.io/>), which is compatible with OneDrive. See Annex for more on Draw.io.



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CREDITS

Authors: Meena Arivanathan (*Timeline*), Jens Matthes (*Online Timeline*, *Annex on software*).

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert review panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA

knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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Annex: Software for Online Timeline

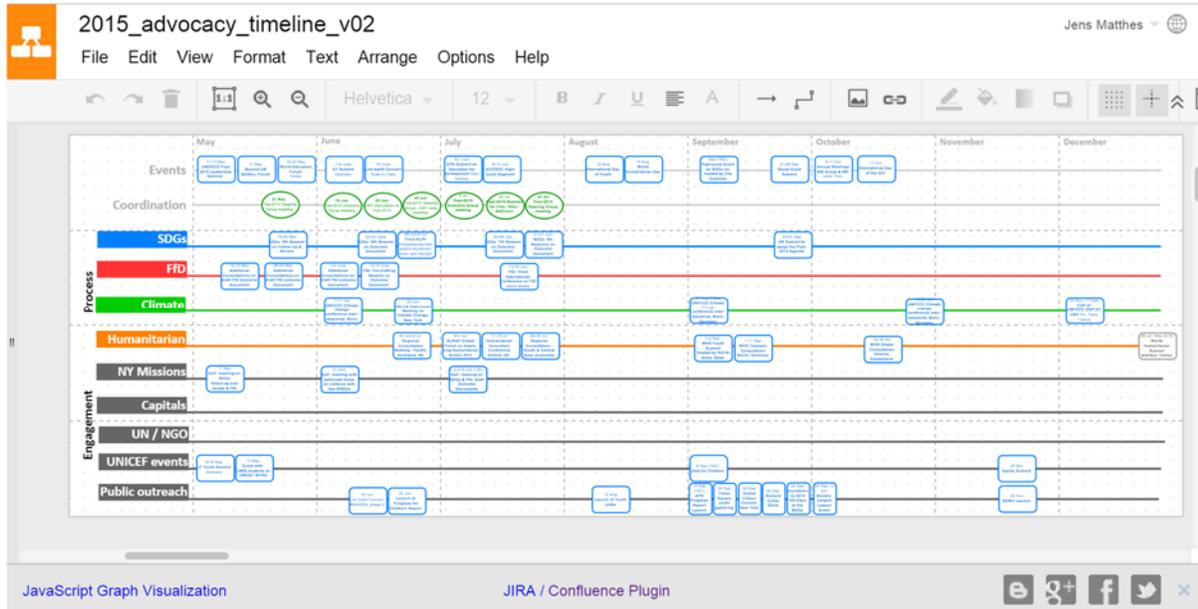
Draw.io is currently available free software (<https://www.draw.io/>), which can support the use of the Online Timeline tool described in this document. The software is compatible with OneDrive and other file sharing services like Dropbox. It supports PDF export. Among other noteworthy features of this software:

- Different parts of a timeline diagram can be grouped as layers, and toggled in or out; this allows combining different sets of information, and selectively displaying only those that are relevant.
- The drawing canvas can be set up as individual tiles each representing one print-out page. This makes it possible to print the entire timeline as a set of pages, and to post the pages on a wall to create a large chart. For example, the timeline shown below is set up so that each printed page represents a month for a given strand of work. Subsequent updates in the electronic draw.io file can then be

generated as separate pdf files, each representing one updated page; the updated pages can be printed out and used to update the large wall chart.

- Multiple contributors can work on one draw.io file simultaneously, so it is possible to combine information from different sources with direct authorship. This is important to sustain the collective aspect of timeline creation and information sharing.

Figure: Example of online timeline in Draw.io (2015 advocacy priorities)



TOPSY TURVY

/ Turning brainstorming upside down/

WHAT IS TOPSY TURVY?

Topsy Turvy (also known as reverse brainstorming) is a method for generating creative, unconventional ideas and solutions, and for mobilizing untapped energies. It can be particularly useful for addressing recurring problems and issues. As the name suggests, the process involves turning a discussion 'upside down' by posing a question that runs counter to your real objectives, and encouraging participants to contribute negative or even anarchic ideas. These ideas are then reversed to formulate positive solutions. Taking an initially negative or 'destructive' approach to the discussion gives participants free rein to explore the flip side of an issue or problem, and thus spurs creativity.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *10 - 20 people*
- *Flipchart board*
- *2 flipcharts with plenty of paper*
- *Rectangular cards, in two colours (10 x 20 cm / 4 x 8 inch) (VIPP cards)*
- *Marker pens*
- *20 - 30 minutes*

WHEN AND WHY TO USE

Topsy Turvy is easy to implement and can be used to:



- ▲ **Generate original and potentially effective approaches to recurring issues or problems.** Instead of asking people familiar questions that generate the usual responses, Topsy Turvy helps establish a fresh perspective and encourages new ideas or thinking outside the box. By getting people to think of how things can go wrong, the method allows them to grasp the causes of a problem openly, without fear of being deemed pessimistic, and to explore negative aspects which are usually ignored – even though they may be important to consider. In turn, this

leads to renewed interest in an issue and encourages participants to steer away from stale, uninspired solutions.

▲ **Break up the monotony of group activities.** Schedule Topsy Turvy between group work sessions, or slot it in just before an afternoon group activity to raise participants' energy levels. But don't overuse it: Topsy Turvy works best as a way of adding variety, not as a steady diet.

▲ **Kick off a workshop.** Use Topsy Turvy as an icebreaker to discuss workshop rules in the first session. Ask participants, "How can we wreck this workshop?"...and then reverse these ideas to help create positive momentum. This is an excellent way to set the tone, build enthusiasm and cultivate a sense of camaraderie among participants as they jointly come up with disruptive ideas and then turn them around for a creative purpose.

When deciding whether to use Topsy Turvy, be sure that there is receptivity for truly innovative solutions and approaches that could result in substantial change. If you are only looking for limited improvements in a process, or small fixes to a problem, Topsy Turvy may not be the best approach; but if you want to tackle something difficult or find a broad-ranging solution, it may be just what you need.



HOW TO APPLY

1. Clearly identify the problem or issue to be discussed and on that basis, formulate a negative question, e.g. "What can we do to ensure that our project objectives are not met?" "How can I aggravate the situation further?"

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2. Write the question on the top of a flipchart board for participants to see.

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3. Reading out the question and ask participants to share their 'destructive' ideas without censoring their thoughts.

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4. Encourage the feeling of chaos by prompting participants for anarchic, disruptive suggestions. Tell them that any ideas, no matter how wacky, are welcome. Remind them that it is only a creative process and the real purpose will be revealed soon, but don't inform them yet of the way their ideas will be turned around later on. (Naturally, the principle of respect for others and their ideas always applies; anarchy does not mean rudeness.).

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5. As people share ideas, write them down on the flipchart. You can also use cards to collect ideas.

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6. When the ideas begin to dwindle, stop the process – normally within 10 - 15 minutes, or slightly longer if participants have just warmed up and need a bit more time. If cards were used, group similar ideas together.

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7. Next, turn all the negatives into positives: Take each negative idea and rewrite it as its positive mirror opposite. Use a new flipchart sheet or cards in a different color to capture the emerging list of creative, constructive ideas. Enlist the help of the group in the rewriting process.

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8. Optional: Depending on the needs of the group, the new, positive ideas may be further fleshed out, or prioritized at a later group session. The facilitator could also ask the group to vote on their favourite 2 or 3 ideas individually with dots.

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TIPS FOR SUCCESS



▲ The method may initially create some sense of confusion. Therefore the facilitator needs to be enthusiastic, confident and

reassuring, in order to be able to encourage participants to step out of their comfort zone. Some people may find it disturbing to consider 'destructive', negative ideas, so it is up to the facilitator to allay their concerns. This may take a few minutes, but as people become comfortable with the process, you can also expect them to become bolder with their ideas.

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▲ Ensure that everyone in the group knows what Topsy Turvy means (i.e., upside-down, disordered). Especially in settings where English is not one of the main languages, this term may need further explanation. Alternatively, if most participants are non-English speakers, feel free to introduce the concept using a term with similar meaning from another language (even if the rest of the session will be in English).

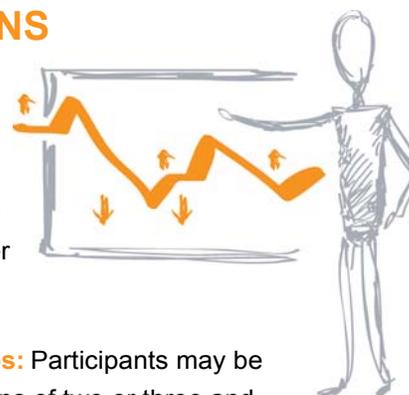
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▲ This can be a fun and novel way to motivate even the most jaded workshop attendees who have experienced most workshop tools and methods. However, the facilitator needs to keep a firm rein to ensure that the usual rules of respect for others and a focus on concrete (albeit initially negative) solutions still apply.

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VARIATIONS

Topsy Turvy is a simple method that can be used to introduce other group activities.



▲ **Mini-groups:** Participants may be divided into groups of two or three and asked to discuss the negative question/ scenario for a few minutes before sharing their ideas in plenary. This can be a good approach in situations

where people are uncomfortable with sharing negative views and thoughts. Caveat: the use of mini-groups may inhibit the spontaneity that gives Topsy Turvy its edge, so use it only when necessary.



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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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VIPP CARD COLLECTION & CLUSTERING

/ A versatile way to get a cross-section of ideas on any important question /

WHAT IS VIPP CARD COLLECTION AND CLUSTERING?

VIPP¹ Card Collection and Clustering is a facilitated process that involves the use of cards to quickly gather and organize ideas from a group of people. It is especially useful in situations where you expect to get a diverse range of answers or inputs, or for addressing potentially sensitive issues in a way that is both safe and equitable.

The process starts with a well-defined open-ended question. Participants write ideas onto cards and then cluster them based on similarities. The clusters can be prioritized as a basis for subsequent action, or they can be used for further discussion and development, as needed.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *Pin board and pins*
- *Flipchart paper*
- *Rectangular cards, in several colours (10 x 20 cm/ 4 x 8 inch)*
- *Marker pens (one colour only)*
- *Up to 20 participants*
- *45 - 60 minutes*

¹ 'VIPP' refers to 'Visualisation in Participatory Programmes', a manual originally published by UNICEF in 1993 and later reissued, which included one of the first descriptions of the card collection and clustering method. The VIPP manual is a primary source for this article, which also includes adaptations and inputs from other sources. See References.



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

VIPP Card Collection and Clustering is best used in group settings to generate ideas quickly, to organize and prioritize ideas based on the input of the group, and to gather opinions. It is a more interesting way to accomplish these tasks than a routine plenary meeting, and usually generates significantly better results. It also levels the playing field and ensures greater diversity of inputs, by preventing the discussion from being dominated by only a few voices. All ideas and inputs are considered through the same open process.

Card Collection and Clustering is useful for:

- ▲ Generating creative ideas at an early stage of a workshop or a planning process, and assigning priorities. Once ideas are collected and clustered by theme, the clusters can be used as inputs into subsequent group work.
- ▲ Combining and harmonizing diverging ideas and opinions, for example if your group includes individuals from different departments, or people with differing professional or cultural backgrounds.
- ▲ Ensuring that more unusual or creative ideas are captured and documented, particularly if those generating such ideas are junior or 'outsiders' who may feel nervous in

front of more experienced colleagues in plenary sessions.

- ▲ Helping to overcome the inhibiting influence of hierarchies, when input is needed from many people on a sensitive topic.
- ▲ Surfacing workplace issues. People can share their views anonymously by writing on cards. Managers can then gauge how people feel, and get a sense for whether opinions are isolated or are shared by several people, from the content of the cards and any repetition of similar views/themes.

Card Collection and Clustering is suitable for groups of 10 - 20 participants. Larger groups should first be divided into smaller ones of no more than 20 participants; each group does the exercise separately with its own facilitator.



HOW TO APPLY

Prepare in advance

- 1. Decide on the question.** Make sure it is well-articulated, open-ended, relevant to participants and likely to provoke interesting responses. Also decide on what kind of inputs you will request from participants (which must be in the form of short ideas written on cards), and on how the inputs will be used after the exercise is complete.

For example, if your question is 'What are the most important messages we should communicate to ensure the success of our project?', then you might request participants to write only the essence of any suggested key messages on their cards. In this example, after clustering, the inputs would go

to the communications team for further review, refinement and eventual inclusion in communication materials, press releases, etc.

2. Invite participants, informing them that the meeting will be interactive. Optional: You can let them know the question in advance.

Set up the room

3. Arrange the chairs in a semi-circle, facing a pin board (on which the cards will be pinned and moved around during the clustering process). Cover the pin board from top to bottom with flipchart paper. Write the question clearly on the top of the flipchart paper.

When you are ready to start

4. Welcome participants. Briefly explain the process, read out the question, check that everyone understands it, and provide some background information on the projects/issues it relates to.

5. Distribute cards to each participant for writing their ideas (one per card), and give brief guidance on how to write cards. Refer to the tips below for card writing guidance. For groups of 10 - 15, give each person 3 - 4 cards. For groups of 16 - 20, give 2 - 3 cards each (see Tips below for the rationale). Leave a stack of cards in the middle of the room, so that someone with a really good idea can go and pick up another card.

6. Give participants time to think and write their ideas and responses to the question, individually and without discussion. This may take from 5 to 15 minutes depending on the complexity of the question.

7. Once all participants have finished writing, ask them to place the cards face down on the floor in the middle of the room or in a box (use a printer paper box or something similar). If the question asked is sensitive in nature, you may then shuffle the cards. This should help preserve some semblance of anonymity.

8. Select a card at random and read it out loud. (Contributions in this process are meant to be anonymous, so if any card is unclear and clarity is required, the group discusses and re-writes the card. Identities of the writers are not revealed unless they voluntarily choose to identify themselves.)

9. Begin the clustering process:

a Pin the card on the pin board.

b Pick the second card and read it out aloud. Pin the card far away from the first.

c Ask participants to decide if the cards are closely related and can be pinned close together to form a cluster, or if they are different ideas that should be kept apart. Move the cards if needed.

d Repeat this process until all cards are pinned up. (Note: Sometimes two people may contribute similar or duplicate ideas. Do not discard such cards: They are a reflection of the importance of

the idea. Instead pin the cards next to each other.)

10. Once all cards have been pinned, ask participants to review and revise the clusters if needed. By this time there should be several idea clusters on the pin board. Ask participants to step up to the pin board and take a closer look. Get them involved in the clustering process by assigning 1 - 2 volunteers to help with moving cards while the others provide direction.

11. Once the clusters have been finalized, draw a cloud circle around each cluster and ask participants to create a title/ label for it. The idea clusters, and the specific ideas within each, can be taken forward as inputs for another session or used as a basis for planning or other work.

12. Optional: Prioritize the clusters through group discussion, or (if this does not give clear priorities) a vote. Or give participants each one coloured sticky dot and asking them to place their dot next to their suggested priority cluster. This method can help keep the energy flowing by participant movement and can also help ensure greater anonymity.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



▲ **A good question is an indispensable starting point.** Good questions are:

- Open - that is, they do not have simple or obvious answers. Open questions are a fundamental means of promoting discussion and identifying the challenges and nuances of a complex situation.
- Relevant to the competencies and core interests of the participants.
- Clear and concise. You may need to write your question 3-4 times in order to make it short and easy to understand, while still keeping it thought-provoking.
- Strategic - pertinent to an ongoing significant project, activity or initiative.

▲ **Rules for card writing:**

- Think before you write.
- Only one idea per card, in no more than 3 lines.
- Use brief but clear statements. Avoid using too many keywords and acronyms, unless they are known to all other participants. Remember, your idea must be interpreted, saved and used after the session.
- Write legibly in large letters (both upper and lower case, as appropriate), using the broader side of the marker pen tip so that writing can be read from a distance.

▲ To maintain anonymity, provide participants with only one colour of marker pens. Instruct them to adhere to the rules of card writing given above; this should ensure some degree of uniformity.

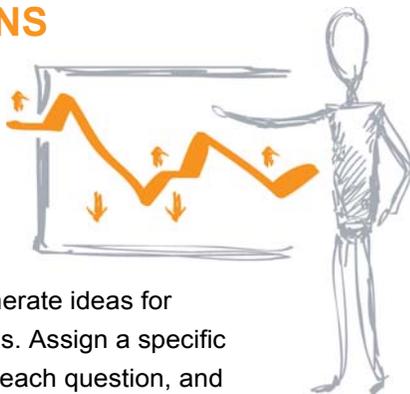
▲ The Card Collection and Clustering process should be used sparingly, since despite its value it can become tedious if overused.

▲ Try to strike the right balance between harvesting a rich set of ideas, and having too many cards to process and cluster. This is the reason for giving 2 - 3 cards each in large groups of 16 - 20 people, and 3 - 4 cards each in small groups of 10 - 15 people.

▲ You may wish to take a digital photo of the final clusters in case cards are moved or lost when the boards are shifted. This also allows for easy sharing with others who were not present at the event.

VARIATIONS

▲ **Multiple questions:** You can use Card Collection and Clustering to generate ideas for multiple questions. Assign a specific colour of card to each question, and run the questions through the process one after another. Use judgement as to how many questions to tackle: the process can become



tedious with repetition, and participant interest will decline.

▲ **Subgroups:** If you have several questions and plenty of participants, you can also divide the main group into subgroups and assign each one a question. Each group will require a facilitator. Follow the same process as above, then allow all the groups to see each set of clusters, one after the other in plenary, and add additional ideas.

▲ **Preassigned categories:** If you know in advance that the responses are likely to cover certain particular topics or categories of response, then you can pin up cards with those categories before the session begins. Proceed with card writing as normal; then ask people to come up individually to pin their cards under the categories (to maintain partial anonymity, you can do this part of the exercise during a coffee break, and then continue the discussion afterwards). You will need to have an 'Other' category for any responses that don't fit into your predefined categories.

▲ **Non-anonymous responses:** If your topic clearly does not require, or benefit from, anonymous responses, then instead of collecting responses in a box and reading them out, you can ask participants in turn each to read out one of their cards and suggest a category for it. The group then discusses the categorization of the cards in a subsequent step. Before using this variation, be sure that the topic you are addressing is not a sensitive one, and that your participants will all feel comfortable sharing unusual, creative ideas openly in the group. If in doubt, use the standard (anonymous) method.



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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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VIRTUAL PEER ASSIST

/ Getting help from experts to overcome challenges /

WHAT IS A VIRTUAL PEER ASSIST?

A Virtual Peer Assist is an online group conversation between a learning group and an advisory group, taking place over a few hours, with all participants online simultaneously. It is analogous to a peer review for a paper or publication, but instead of getting written comments on a document, a Virtual Peer Assist generates verbal comments and guidance (and usually some references to relevant, pre-existing written materials) on the plans for a project/ initiative/ other work-related challenge.

A Virtual Peer Assist provides a safe environment for a learning group to articulate a challenge or problem they face, and for an advisory group to respond by sharing what they know from their own relevant experience – in the form of suggestions, anecdotes, good practices and recommendations – to help address the challenge.

The learning group is composed of 1 - 6 persons working on the same project/ initiative. The advisory group (of similar size) consists of persons who have solid experience in facing comparable challenges or solving similar problems. Advisory group members are not necessarily from the same team; they may be from different teams or even different organizations.

A facilitated activity, the Virtual Peer Assist is conducted online via web conferencing tools (such as Skype for Business, Adobe Connect, etc.). It should be considered especially when other sources of project advice (such as existing documentation, Knowledge Exchange communities, etc.) cannot offer the breadth and depth of perspectives needed.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *Web conferencing platform*
- *For each participant: Computer and headset with microphone*
- *6 – 12 participants (combined total for learning and advisory groups, and including a rapporteur)*
- *60 – 120 minutes*
- *IT support*



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

Virtual Peer Assists are useful:

▲ For planning new projects/ initiatives.

Virtual Peer Assists are best done before implementation begins, while plans are being drafted or can still be changed and while the project team is likely more willing to consider new approaches – i.e., ‘learning before doing’. The learning group may use the Virtual Peer Assist to understand project issues more deeply, anticipate potential obstacles before they arise and make appropriate provisions in their plans, based on the advice of an advisory team with extensive experience.

▲ In particular, for planning projects/ initiatives in very new areas where there is little or no prior knowledge or experience on the team, and/or for planning projects that have high risks and costs to failure. A little judicious advice from experienced persons could save a lot of money, time or difficulty. (Really complex projects may require a face-to-face Peer Assist, taking half a day or longer.)

▲ During implementation, when a complex technical challenge reveals itself, and swift action is needed, but the responsible team is uncertain of how to proceed. A Virtual Peer Assist may offer a fast, cost-effective solution for challenges faced during the implementation of a project, by

engaging others familiar with the challenge, from within or beyond the organization.

Virtual Peer Assists offer several advantages. The first of these comes from the ‘peer’ nature of the process: The advisory group and the learning group usually consist of people with similar roles, backgrounds and common interests, i.e. peers. These commonalities may make the learning group more receptive to good advice and suggestions from the advisory group.

The online format of the Virtual Peer Assist enables organizers to invite participants in any location. This may make it easier to cast a wide net and find people with the right experience, even from other organizations. It is usually easier (and much less expensive) to get a couple of hours of online participation from a busy expert, than it is to book their time for 1-2 days and fly them to a face-to-face meeting.

Virtual Peer Assists are also learning opportunities for the advisory group, who get the chance to see their ideas discussed, adopted and applied in new contexts. (Follow-up between the two groups is important for this to happen; see ‘How to apply’ below.)



HOW TO APPLY

Prepare in advance

These instructions are for the organizer of the event.

1. Consider whether a Virtual Peer Assist is the right tool. Virtual Peer Assists require considerable coordination to set up. In some cases

you may be able to learn what you need to know through other, simpler means, such as through an established community of practice (Knowledge Exchange Community), an e-discussion, an expert interview, or simply through online research, manuals or other documentation. But in other cases, particularly when planning significant projects in new areas, knowledgeable peer support can make all the difference.

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2. Once you have opted for a Virtual Peer Assist, decide when to do it. The peer assist tool is most useful once the problem or challenge has become clear to the responsible team, but before the implementation work has begun.

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3. Articulate the problem or challenge as clearly as possible, together with the learning group.

Define concrete objectives and deliverables, in order to help the advisory group provide the most useful advice. Indicate any existing time and resource limits, and any uncertainties or scope for expansion in these areas.

Stick to problems or challenges that can be clearly defined: A Virtual Peer Assist is not suitable for extremely complex problems that are difficult to define, have too many unknown variables, or lack limits or end points. In such cases the peer assist process will not produce tangible solutions. Think also about what information will be shared with the advisory team; what are the specific goals and objectives of the peer assist itself; and what type of answers you want to get out of the activity.

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4. Create a list of potential advisory group members, and share it with the entire learning group for confirmation. Ask colleagues and tap into their networks; search on the organization's intranet, knowledge sharing platforms and relevant social networking sites; and check with connections in other organizations to see who may have useful comparable experiences. Due to the virtual nature of the peer assist, your choices are not limited by geographic location. Ensure that the learning group has the final say, since they must feel comfortable with potential participants.

Plan for about 6 - 12 participants total, including both learning and advisory groups, keeping the groups roughly equal in number. If you want more diversity in the discussions, then prefer the higher end of the range – about 10 - 12 participants. In most cases, do not exceed 12 participants, since there likely won't be enough time to hear and discuss all the contributions.

Apply some criteria to choose potential advisory group members. They should ideally be:

- ▲ Well-versed with the topic or technical problem.
 - ▲ Experienced in tackling similar challenges / problems (whether successful or not; learning from others' failures can be hugely valuable).
 - ▲ Willing to share what they know, including lessons from failures.
 - ▲ Good communicators.
 - ▲ Persons whose opinions are valued by those being assisted.
 - ▲ Members of relevant communities of practice or professional networks.
 - ▲ As a group, sufficiently diverse to be able to offer a broad range of options and perspectives, perhaps from multiple disciplines or diverse organizational backgrounds. Diversity enhances the chance of relevant advice and even potential breakthrough solutions.
-

5. Select a facilitator to manage the discussions, preferably someone with experience in online facilitation who is not a member of the project team. The facilitator sets the tone for an organized, efficient meeting by managing the needs of the learning team and meeting the objectives within the stipulated time. The facilitator's role is to:

- ▲ Be welcoming, enthusiastic and organized.
- ▲ Encourage the learning group to clearly present and explain the problem for which they want peer input, so it is understood by the advisory group.
- ▲ Encourage participation from the advisory group, get them to share their stories and their views on key steps and success factors.
- ▲ Summarize key lessons and suggestions, and get the peer group's validation on these.
- ▲ Seek confirmation from the learning team on their key action points.
- ▲ Manage the time effectively, move through the agenda and reach the desired conclusion.
- ▲ Provide simple technical support, e.g. advising participants how to unmute their microphones, etc.

6. Choose a web conferencing platform for the event (e.g., Skype for Business, Adobe Connect, etc.). The platform should be easy to use, accessible to all potential participants including any from outside the organization, and should support video connections if the participants' bandwidth will allow. The facilitator should be confident with using it. Ensure that technical support will be available at short notice during the event; you may wish to pre-book a support appointment with your IT department, or just know how to obtain help quickly if something goes wrong.

7. Designate a rapporteur, ideally from the learning team, to listen to the discussion and carefully capture all the important lessons, recommendations and suggested good practices. The rapporteur should be prepared to display the notes online to the participants, either continuously or at intervals during the session, to help them follow along and validate what is being captured. (This can be done by sharing a Word file with their notes through the conferencing platform, or by using a Wiki that is visible to everyone).

8. Discuss and prepare the agenda and supporting documentation. Involve the facilitator and the entire learning team in this. Prepare the following documents.

a Agenda, including:

- ▲ Meeting date and time. For participants based in different time zones, make sure to pick a suitable time slot that everyone can accommodate.
- ▲ A few specific learning objectives, discussed and agreed by the learning team.
- ▲ Sequence of events at the session. Allow for brief introductions, a short initial presentation/briefing on the problem or challenge by the learning team, and thereafter a discussion with comments from the advisory team, questions and answers

b Briefing document that frames the challenge succinctly and clearly, to be shared with the advisory group before the Virtual Peer Assist takes place.

- ▲ Optional: 3-5 slides summarizing the briefing document, to be presented at the start of the session by a member of the learning group.

C Brief instructions for advisory group participants. Their role is to listen and understand the problem within the given context, reflect on their own experiences, and if possible suggest practical recommendations and advice.

d Quick guide for participants on how to use the web conferencing tool. Copy and paste the most essential bits from existing reference materials, and if needed have it looked over by a person with plenty of experience with the tool.

9. Invite potential advisory group participants by email at least 2 - 3 weeks before the meeting. Send them the agenda and all supporting documentation, so they can decide if they are a good fit. Follow up as needed to confirm participation.

- ▲ Send those who agree a reminder a couple of days before the event, and include the full list of all participants.
- ▲ Send another reminder one hour before the event is scheduled to start.

When you are ready to start
These instructions are for the facilitator.

10. Welcome the group and do a quick round of individual introductions. Then provide a short overview on how the Virtual Peer Assist will be conducted, as per the steps below. Mention also the role of the rapporteur.

11. Ask a representative from the learning team to present the problem and explain their needs (using slides, if these were prepared in advance). Ensure that the briefing

is kept short (5 - 10 minutes) in order to keep the focus on hearing from the peer group.

12. Begin the peer discussion. Instruct participants to say their names before they start talking. For a group of 6 -12 the conversation should be easily manageable. If the conversation becomes too animated or challenging, intervene to make sure only one person speaks at a time. Tip: You can call on each person in turn for their questions/inputs, or you can designate a speaking order by assigning a number for each participant. Ensure the rapporteur is capturing all important points from the discussion (as bullet points) and sharing them on-screen with participants as needed for confirmation. Keeping the focus on the learning objectives, divide the discussion into 4 steps:

- 1. The advisory group ask questions for clarification.**
- 2. Individual members of the advisory group reflect out loud, one by one, on the problem shared by the learning group.** They give their impressions of the salient points, point out what they thought was missing, share any relevant stories from their own experience, and indicate what they think the learning team needs to know or do in order to meet the challenge. You may need more than one go-around in this step.
- 3. What lessons are emerging?** This is an open group discussion. Kick off this step by citing a couple of what seem to be emerging lessons, get confirmation from the advisory group, allow questions for clarifications from the learning group, and prompt all participants for suggestions and feedback.
- 4. What specific actions are proposed? Should the learning team be doing anything differently?** Call upon individual members of the advisory group, then

proceed to an open discussion with questions as needed.

13. Conclude the Virtual Peer Assist. The learning team thanks the members of the advisory team and makes a commitment to share their summary of what they learned from the Virtual Peer Assist, as well as their planned course of action on the project, initiative or problem.

Follow up

These instructions are for the organizer.

14. Send a thank you email to all participants immediately after the peer assist has ended. Remind participants of any agreed follow up actions, such as offers by the advisory group to send additional documents or examples. Inform both groups that, if there is sufficient interest, they are welcome to maintain email communications, share project updates or additional advice/recommendations, and otherwise engage in informal professional networking.

15. Together with members of the learning group, prepare a document summarizing the learnings from the Virtual Peer Assist and the resulting actions that the learning group will undertake. Base the document on the rapporteur's notes. Share the document with the advisory group members. Also consider sharing it on relevant knowledge sharing platforms for the benefit of other colleagues who may tackle similar challenges in the future.

16. (Optional but nice) If possible, the

learning group can give the advisory group an informal update, perhaps a few weeks or months after the session, about how they applied the learnings from the Virtual Peer Assist, and what results were achieved.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



Learning group

▲ It is important that the learning group, as hosts for the peer assist, remember that they have requested time from a group of people with skills and experiences that can help solve their planning or technical challenge. The focus should not be on the learning group, but rather on the inputs from the advisory group. The role of the learning group is to:

- Ensure that their briefing document is both clear and concise (3-4 paragraphs), and adequately explains the problem and the assistance requested. The invitees should be enabled to understand the problem **before** coming to the session.
- Avoid taking too much time explaining the context of the problem at the start of the session, by sticking to a succinct presentation of 3 -5 slides with key bullet points only.
- Be active listeners during the session, maintain an open-minded attitude, and give the advisory group sufficient time to articulate their thoughts and recommendations.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of

the discussion content.

- Provide a rapporteur who is a member of their own group, able to understand the issues, quickly grasp and capture all important points put forth during the session.
- After the session, make its own final decisions on how to use the inputs received. The learning group itself is best placed to know if and how the advice can be applied.

Advisory Group

▲ When inviting potential advisory group members, consider not only their technical qualifications but also their willingness to share. In your invitations, let potential participants know why they have been selected (e.g. a recommendation, their publishing record, their previous roles in specific relevant projects, etc.). Advise them that there will be multiple participants at the Virtual Peer Assist, both learners and advisors and share names in advance if possible in case of any conflicts of interest. Brief them on their role. The role of the advisory group is to:

- Freely impart knowledge, share their own relevant experiences and anecdotes, and offer constructive suggestions to address the problem.
- Guide the learning team towards useful information sources.
- Be respectful of others when giving opinions, and sensitive to the challenges faced by the learning group.
- Respect the privacy and confidentiality of the discussion content

Trust

▲ Establishing and maintaining trust among

participants is key to open sharing, and therefore to success of the Virtual Peer Assist. Since this is an online session, it can be harder to set a relaxed and participatory tone at the session than it would be in a face-to-face setting, especially if participants do not know each other. A few key steps will help:

- Ensure that the learning group has had final say on whom they feel comfortable learning from, as potential members of the advisory group
- Don't exceed 12 participants; larger groups will have an impersonal feel that is not conducive to the kind of interaction needed for a Virtual Peer Assist.
- Ensure that the full list of participants is circulated to all before the event.
- When facilitating the session, remember that there is no single right answer to any problem. Members of the advisory group might have different perspectives; they should be encouraged to share their insights and need not agree.

Other tips

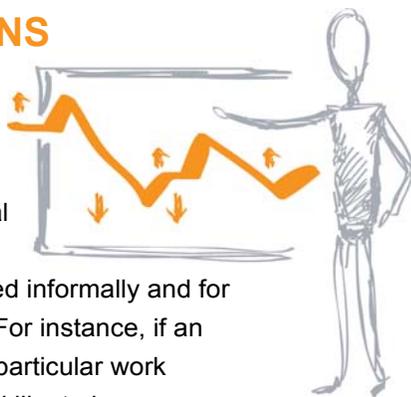
▲ Ensure IT support will be available fairly quickly if needed during the session.

▲ For particularly complex problems, a Virtual Peer Assist may not be the best option. Instead a face-to-face peer assist, requiring a half-day or more, may be a better choice. However, if potential advisors are only available online, then you can break the problem down into manageable chunks and plan for a series of Virtual Peer Assists over several weeks, with everyone meeting once a week.

VARIATIONS

▲ For small groups: A Virtual Peer Assist may

also be conducted informally and for smaller groups. For instance, if an individual has a particular work problem or would like to know more about implementing a new task or activity, s/he could invite 4 - 5 people with relevant experience for a peer assist. There should still be invitations and a briefing document, but these can be quite informal. Participants are at the discretion of the persons seeking advice. With a group this small, the facilitator could be a member of the learning team.



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CREDITS

Author: Meena Arivananthan.

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert Review Panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF 3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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WEBINAR

/ Efficient and effective live learning events /

WHAT IS A WEBINAR?

A webinar is an online learning event aimed at imparting knowledge and skills to a target audience, using voice audio, slides, screen sharing and text chat. It is organized around specific learning objectives which are identified in advance, and which form the basis for relevant webinar content and interaction.

Every webinar has a facilitator and one or more presenters (sometimes these roles are combined). The facilitator promotes the event, sets up the online platform, opens the webinar, provides various types of technical support, and ensures follow-up. The presenter, usually a subject matter expert, creates and presents the learning content of the webinar, and engages the participants through interaction.

Webinars are highly popular because they require limited resources, can be organized relatively quickly, and offer a great way to get people together for an interactive learning event without having to spend money and time on travel. They can be recorded and shared after the event. Experience has shown that it can be challenging to retain the attention of webinar participants throughout a 60 or 90 minute event; specific techniques described below can be helpful in this regard.

REQUIREMENTS:

- **People:** Facilitator (two facilitators for webinars of 30+ participants); presenter(s); 10 - 50 participants
- **Technical:** Webinar platform (e.g., Skype for Business, Adobe Connect, GoToMeeting); broadband internet connection, computer, and headset (or microphone) for all; IT support during event
- **Time:** 2 weeks advance notice (for preparation of materials and promotion); 60 – 90 minutes (webinar duration)



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

A webinar is a seminar or presentation conducted online with specific learning objectives and significant opportunities for interaction. It is different from a webcast (an online video broadcast of an event, often with limited opportunities for interaction) and from an ordinary web meeting/ web conference (a meeting held online to allow persons in different locations to participate, and conducted for planning/management purposes).

The most common reasons for holding a webinar include:

- ▲ Presenting new research findings or organizational updates, promoting their uptake/adoption and getting quick feedback.
- ▲ Sharing country-specific experiences with a large audience.
- ▲ Providing training or online demonstrations of new platforms or tools.



HOW TO APPLY

First, determine the purpose for holding a webinar. Is it to train people on new skills, to share specific experiences, or simply to disseminate new ideas? Who will benefit? Bearing in mind your target audience, their skills and interests, decide on a topic, and formulate a few specific learning objectives. The topic and objectives are the foundation for planning and implementing the webinar.

Once the topic and objectives have been clearly determined, the remainder of the work of running a webinar divides naturally into two roles: the facilitator and the presenter. **Each role has responsibilities before, during and after the webinar. These are described in detail below (first facilitators and then presenters).** Typically these roles are carried out by two different persons. For small webinars (fewer than 15 people) a facilitator with sufficient content expertise may double as presenter. Depending on the content, there can be more than one presenter

FACILITATORS: Prepare in advance

1. Know your platform. Undertake training, study or practice if you are not fully confident.¹ Be prepared to offer quick technical guidance during the webinar to participants on all basic functions of the platform.

¹ UNICEF uses Skype for Business (SfB) for most webinars. Here are a few reference materials: [Quick Start Guide for SfB](#), [Quick Reference Cards for SfB](#), [Skype for Business training](#), and [Best Practices for a SfB meeting](#). You can share these materials with participants, or take screenshots and prepare a few slides of guidance.

2. Together with your presenters, map out a timeline, including when invitations go out and publicity begins, up to the date(s) and time(s) of the webinar. Ensure presenters have enough time to prepare presentations and to complete a script with you. Give enough advance notice so that your audience can reserve the time. Pick a time for the webinar that is suitable for the majority of your global target audience; you may need to repeat a webinar at different times in order to reach people in different time zones (Americas, Europe/Middle East/Africa, Asia.)

3. With the presenters, formulate a draft agenda for the webinar, and give them some clear guidance: How much time they will have, perhaps a suggested number of slides, and how much time is set aside for Q&A. If you have specific ideas on presentation style, share them with presenters so they can accommodate them in their material. Be sure to remind presenters to plan for interaction with participants (Q&A, polls, or whiteboard). Tip: If participants' bandwidth is limited, don't use video; instead use audio and slides only.

4. Publicize the webinar to attract your target audience. For large webinars (100 or more people expected), this should be done a month in advance. For smaller webinars, a week or two is sufficient.

▲ Compose an attention-grabbing message to get people interested. Use the learning objectives and main agenda points as a guide. Highlight who should attend and why. Let them know what's in it for them.

▲ Use direct email/calendar invitations – especially to those who can influence the desired audience to participate –,

Yammer/community of practice announcements, email broadcast to relevant lists, website and online calendar postings, posters in common areas, and word of mouth. For e-mail or global broadcast announcements include a clickable calendar entry (.ics file) to make it easy for people to add it to their calendar.²

▲ If your audience includes external persons, then broaden the publicity via Twitter, Facebook, public websites and relevant externally accessible networks.

▲ Ensure that those who register/sign up receive clear instructions on how to participate, including **date, time and time zone; URL; any technical requirements; and links to quick-start guides on how to use the platform³ or test sites**. Invite users who are new to the platform to read the guidance and try out the software as early as possible.

▲ Encourage participants to join the webinar 10 - 15 minutes early, so that software and presentations have time to connect and load, and facilitators can troubleshoot issues more easily.

▲ If you receive confirmation of attendance from registrants, then you can improve the participation rate by sending them reminders one week before the event, one day before, and one hour before.

▲ If appropriate, you may give prospective participants a preparatory assignment, for example an article to read or some input to prepare.

² An .ics file allows you to share a meeting invitation by attaching the file to an email. To create and share an .ics file in Outlook: 1. In the Calendar, create an event for the webinar at the appropriate date and time. 2. Choose File / Save as, and save it in the iCalendar format (*.ics). 3. Click Save. 4. Attach the .ics file you just created to your email.

³ Refer to the Microsoft links with guidance on Skype for Business, in footnote #1.

5. Once presenters have their material mostly ready, have a preparatory meeting to finalize the agenda, prepare a webinar script and go over the roles. Do this no later than one week before the date of the webinar.

▲ In the script, include scheduled points of interaction for polling the audience,⁴ asking for feedback, Q&A, etc. Allow sufficient time for questions and answers. Also be sure to allow some time for potential delays due to technical difficulties and the need to resolve them.

▲ Review roles of facilitator(s) and all presenters, ensure everyone understands what to do, and eliminate any overlaps.

▲ Decide how you will enable participants to communicate and ask questions during the webinar. At minimum participants should be able to use a text chat box; you may also selectively unmute participant microphones so they can speak, or you may even allow participants to mute and unmute their own microphones.

▲ Decide also what the rules for communication and questions will be: Should participants ask questions during the session (using chat) or only during designated Q&A times (using either chat or audio)? Tip: With more than 20 participants, only presenters and facilitators should use audio. When should the presenter answer the questions?

▲ Prepare a welcome slide to display as participants are logging in. Include the title/topic, date and time of the webinar, photographs and titles/roles of the facilitator and presenters.

⁴ Refer to the Microsoft guidance and screenshots on [Using a Poll in Skype for Business](#).

▲ When possible, harmonize the visual appearance of slides from different presenters in order to give the most professional impression.

6. Conduct practice sessions with the presenter(s), especially if you and/or the presenters are new to webinars, or if the material is being presented for the first time.

▲ Practice pre-loading all the content so that it can be quickly shared with participants when needed. Confirm the expected duration of the presentations; include time for interaction. Try out giving control of the screen to presenters, and getting it back from them. Test all links, and try out all the participant communication methods such as unmuting microphones, etc.

7. Ensure that you know in advance how to get technical support in case of problems during the event. You may need to inform IT staff in advance and request that someone be available. Otherwise you risk participant drop-out if problems crop up during the webinar.

FACILITATORS: When you are ready to start

8. Isolate yourself from distractions (phones, alarms, noisy places) as much as possible. Get all your equipment ready (computer, headphones, microphone, plus any needed printouts).

9. If you are inexperienced, you may need an IT support person available during set-up and the early part of the webinar. Even if you are experienced, know where to turn for help if something technical goes wrong.

10. Log in early (at least 30 minutes) and ask your presenters to do so as well if possible. Connect via a LAN (Ethernet/hardwired internet connection), not via Wi-Fi, to avoid delays and drop-outs. Pre-load the presentation(s), any videos or websites, but keep them hidden from participant view. Ensure the whiteboard and chat area are ready. Display your welcome slide.

- ▲ If you know that your connection can be unstable, then it may be wise to have two computers available – one on which you will begin the session, and a second one which is logged in to the session, and ready to use as a backup in case the first one loses connection or requires restarting. In this case you will end up with two partial recordings of the session.

11. Be ready to greet participants as they begin to join before the official start time.

12. When it is time to begin, turn on recording,⁵ announce the start, and introduce yourself and the presenter(s), providing some background on their expertise. Then share the agenda and briefly describe the learning objectives. If you will be giving participants a follow-up assignment, announce it now to stimulate attention during the webinar.

- ▲ If there are two facilitators (recommended for groups of 30+), have one monitor the chat box for help requests, and play the ‘police’ role to mute/unmute microphones and identify persons whose equipment is causing echo/noise.

⁵ For guidance on recording in Skype for Business, refer to [Record and play back a Skype for Business meeting.](#)

13. There are several ways to deal with introductions of the participants:

- ▲ For groups of 10 or less, call on people by name or location to introduce themselves using audio.
- ▲ For groups of 10-30 ask participants to type a brief introduction in the chat box.
- ▲ With more than 30 participants, skip introductions altogether, as they will be time-consuming.
- ▲ In webinars where the presenter is expected to do most of the talking – such as some training webinars – introductions may be unnecessary.

14. Optional: If you feel it would be helpful, briefly outline the main features of the webinar platform, especially any that you expect participants to use, such as the chat box, muting/unmuting microphones, etc.

15. Mute the microphones of all audience members apart from the presenters.

16. Have your first presenter begin their presentation. Remain alert and involved: help with managing the audio by unmuting/muting appropriately, keep an eye on any questions or problem reports typed in the chat box and respond to them, work behind the scenes on technical issues, run any needed polls, and read aloud selected comments if appropriate.

17. Be sure to allow time for questions and interaction, as planned out in your webinar script.

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18. Close the webinar. When all presentations are over, provide a quick review by repeating the key messages from each. Let participants know what information will be shared after the webinar, e.g. presentations, webinar recording or other materials. Describe any next steps or follow-up actions by yourself, presenters or participants. If appropriate, you may give participants a follow-up assignment. **Turn off recording at the end of the webinar, but leave your computer connected and the software running until the recording has been processed and is ready to save/ share.**⁶

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FACILITATORS: Follow-up after the event

19. Thank participants via email as soon as possible after the webinar, and include links to presentations, reference materials and/or recordings.⁷

▲ If you ran out of time to answer all questions asked during the webinar, you can share answers by follow-up email

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⁶ For more information on recording, saving and sharing webinars in Skype for Business (SfB), see [Record and play back a SfB meeting](#), [SfB Recording Manager](#), and [Recording Manager save and publish](#). UNICEF internal webinar recordings should be hosted internally, not on external platforms like YouTube.

⁷ UNICEF internal webinar recordings should be hosted internally, not on external platforms like YouTube.

20. Do an evaluation. You may combine this with your thank-you email. Webinars require time for content preparation, logistics and promotion, so it is worth evaluating their impact. An easy way to evaluate impact is to run a short survey using a tool like SurveyMonkey. Here is a sample set of survey questions you can use, adapt or expand on for your needs. If you have multiple presenters, repeat questions 1 and 2 for each presenter; questions 3-5 apply to the entire webinar. Share the results with all presenters, and if planning to repeat the webinar, ensure appropriate response/uptake of any lessons learned.

Thank you for participating in the webinar on _____. In order to help us evaluate its impact, please rate your satisfaction with each of the following aspects of the webinar (from 'Very Satisfied' to 'Very Dissatisfied')

1. Content: relevance, material shared, presentation style
2. Level of interaction: use of participatory tools
3. Facilitation and support: helpfulness, skill & ability to deal with
4. Technology: ease-of-use, microphone/ speaker clarity, internet variability
5. Overall satisfaction with the webinar

▲ Continue the discussion, if appropriate, on a relevant Community of Practice or other online discussion venue.

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PRESENTERS: Prepare in advance

1. Understand the learning objectives of the webinar. What are the key facts and messages you want to impart? What capacities do you want participants to come away with? What actions will they be expected to take after the webinar.

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2. Understand your participants: Who are they, what is their background and what do they want to learn?

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3. Be mindful of the challenges of engaging your participants online. See 'online engagement' under 'Tips for success' below.

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4. Be aware of the roles of the facilitator and the presenter. As presenter, your role is to offer relevant content and opportunities for interaction, within the allotted time. You can depend on the facilitator to arrange the advance publicity, set up the webinar on the chosen platform; provide support during the webinar by opening and closing the session, running polls, compiling questions, and dealing with help requests; and arrange the post-webinar evaluation.

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5. With the facilitator and any other presenters, map out a timeline for webinar preparation and promotion (giving yourself enough time to prepare your content) and draw up a draft agenda.

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6. Choose the appropriate presentation style and prepare your content, keeping in mind the learning objectives, participants and challenges of online engagement. See 'presentation styles' under 'Tips for success' below.

.....

7. When ready, prepare a final agenda and webinar script with the facilitator and any other presenters. Then do a joint practice session using real content, and try out all webinar functions you expect to use (whiteboard, chat, handing over screen control, polling, etc.).

.....

PRESENTERS: When you are ready to start

8. Have the webinar script handy so that you can refer to it frequently while you are presenting. Many presenters prefer to print it out.

.....

9. Log in early, ideally about 30 minutes before the scheduled start time. Connect via a LAN (Ethernet/ hardwired internet connection), not via Wi-Fi, to avoid delays and drop-outs. Pre-load your presentation and any other materials, keeping them hidden from view until it is time to share them.

.....

10. The facilitator will begin the webinar, introduce you, deal with participant introductions (if any) and will then hand over to the first presenter. The facilitator will remain available to deal with participant issues, run polls and provide technical support (including calling IT if needed) during all presentations.

.....

11. Begin your presentation. While you are presenting, use the webinar script to guide your presentation (Slideshow, Whiteboard, Talking Head or Demo; see below under 'Tips for Success' for details). Take advantage of all your planned moments of interaction (asking for input, Q&A, exercises, etc.). As you speak, pay special attention to your voice: Speak clearly and more slowly than you would in person, and make sure participants can hear you well.

12. Once your presentation is complete, hand over to the facilitator, but remain online for Q&A, either planned or spontaneous.

PRESENTERS: Follow-up after the event

13. Take account of participant feedback from the evaluation shared with you by the facilitator. If you will be repeating your presentation later, adjust your content or delivery as needed.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



General

▲ If participants have limited bandwidth, stick to audio-only presentations (no video or screen sharing).

▲ Be cautious about using Wi-Fi. Wi-Fi connections can suffer from poor bandwidth, hampering your ability to speak or present; hardwired (Ethernet) connections are preferred.

▲ Similarly, be cautious about changing your computer setup (e.g. by moving to a different room, or using a new computer); this can lead to last-minute technical problems.

For facilitators:

▲ During the session keep an eye out for technical difficulties and 'help' messages from participants. If someone has to spend more than a few minutes struggling with technical issues, there is a good chance they will simply drop out of the session.

For presenters:

▲ **Choose a presentation style that suits you, the audience and the learning objectives. Four commonly used styles are the Slideshow, Online Demonstration, Whiteboard and Talking Head.** The styles can also be combined (but don't use Talking Head if your participants have low internet bandwidth). Whatever style you use, ensure a strong opening and closing.

▲ **Presentation style 1: Slideshow:** In this style of presentation, a series of slides provides text and visual content while the presenter speaks. Among the four presentation styles described here, the Slideshow (properly executed) requires the lowest bandwidth.

- Keep slideshow presentations simple. Use minimal text with impactful visuals and high visual contrast. Text should focus only on key messages; convey details through your spoken

presentation, or recommend reference materials for independent reading to supplement your presentation. Text-heavy slides risk losing your audience: Webinar participants join from their own computers, where distractions are ever-present to tempt them away the moment a webinar becomes dull or difficult to follow.

- The best slideshow images combine visual interest (striking design, arresting photography, bold colours, etc.) with relevance to the topic. Imagery that appears dull but in fact conveys a powerful message – such as a graph of relevant data – is fine, but make sure the message is clear.
- Try to optimize the file size of images you use in your presentation: Very high quality images take a long time for participants to download, while low quality images are not as appealing. Try for the right balance.
- As a general rule, avoid animations. These may lag your presentation on some internet connections, or possibly not be displayed at all.
- To get an idea of how your slides will appear under low bandwidth conditions, adjust the zoom level in PowerPoint to about 60%. Anything that does not show clearly on your screen may be hard to see for some users.
- Provide a good mix of factual information, examples and stories. A story can convey your message far better than a busy page of data/ statistics. Give examples of experiences, success stories, or stories of failures and lessons.
- Repeat the key messages you want remembered at the beginning and end of the presentation.
- Ensure adequate interaction opportunities. This is especially important with the slideshow presentation style. Similarly, keep your slides to the minimum needed to convey the key messages. The more slides you have, the more involved you are in

presenting them, and the less likely to interact with participants.

▲ **Presentation style 2: Online**

Demonstration: In this style of presentation, the presenter provides a real-time demonstration of a website or an IT tool, or walks participants through a key document, using the screen share function of the webinar platform. This can be a great way to conduct trainings.

- Ensure the relevance of the site, tool or document to your audience and learning objectives. Your time is limited, so keep the focus on the essential features which will help your participants accomplish specific tasks and solve problems.
- Practice your entire demo at least once before the webinar, ensuring that you know how to use the screen share features.
- Remember to pause periodically for interaction.
- For software demos to participants with limited bandwidth, consider doing a Slideshow instead: This will work much better because the presentation will be loaded onto participants' computers, and will then be easily visible without a lot of delays due to bandwidth limitations.

▲ **Presentation style 3: Whiteboard:** This style makes use of the whiteboard feature in most webinar platforms. The whiteboard can be used much like a flipchart in a workshop room, for brainstorming, sketching and annotating contributions. You can combine whiteboarding with other presentation styles.

- Learn how to use the whiteboard tools, including drawing, annotating, and saving the whiteboard or transferring it to another application.
- Meeting notes can also be taken on the whiteboard space and saved for later use.

▲ **Presentation style 4: Talking Head:** In this style of presentation, the presenter speaks live online and is streamed via a video feed to participants' computers. **Participants should have good internet bandwidth, so avoid this method if you have doubts in that regard.**

This requires slightly more technical expertise to set up properly. Talking head presentations are most effective if the presenter is inherently interesting, either due to their role, their accomplishments or simply because they are an interesting and engaging speaker.

- It is recommended to have some experience in live web video streaming, or to get technical support. A badly lit video, a poorly performing camera or technical difficulties on the presenter's computer will leave an unfavourable impression among your participants.
- Avoid plain white or highly contrasting backgrounds. You can display a poster with the organization logo or visuals related to the topic being discussed.

▲ **Whatever style of presentation you use, provide frequent opportunities for interaction.** This is key to engaging participants and retaining their attention. It can also enable participants to learn from others in the webinar and thus improve the overall impact. Interact with participants at least once every 10 minutes.

Ways to provide interaction include checking in with participants to see if they understand the material, asking them for input, answering questions (through dedicated Q&A pauses or simply responding to questions typed in the chat box), running polls (with help of the facilitator), or doing exercises.

Open-ended questions (i.e., questions that cannot be answered with a 'yes', 'no' or very brief answer) allow for the most interaction.

In large groups (30+ participants), it may be difficult to call on each person individually, so use polls or have the facilitator review responses typed in the chat box and select a few of them to read out.

▲ **Use your voice effectively.** In an in-person presentation, participants receive visual cues from the expression, gestures and actions of the presenter. This is not the case in webinars (unless you use video). Your voice becomes your primary tool for supporting effective interaction with participants.

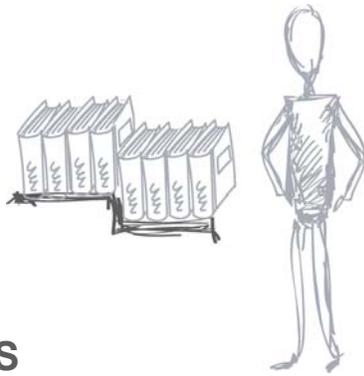
Speak slowly and clearly, and enunciate well. However do not pause too long, especially between sentences.

Keep your participants before your mind's eye. This will help you speak conversationally to them and avoid reading, and this in turn will help sustain participants' interest.

Ensure your voice is transmitted clearly over the internet connection, without fuzziness, static or echoes. Get confirmation from participants. If people can't hear you, ask them to type a chat message in the webinar platform and request the facilitator to help resolve the issue. Echoes often result from an unmuted participant microphone; have the facilitator mute all participants if needed.

▲ **If you are using video, remember you are on display.** If you are using video, remember you are on display. Keep your posture up. Avoid jarring movements and shifty eyes. Focus on the camera and imagine you are speaking to only one person in front of you.

▲ **Remember that you will be able to present about 25% less information online compared to face-to-face presentations of the same duration.** Keep your focus on the most essential content.



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CREDITS

Author: Meena Arivananthan.

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert reviewers: Caroline Bacquet, Abel Henry.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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WORLD CAFÉ¹

/ Dynamic iteration on key discussion questions /

WHAT IS A WORLD CAFÉ?

The World Café¹ is a simple yet sophisticated method for holding meaningful conversations around important questions in large group meetings. An excellent tool to encourage participant interaction, the World Café can foster deeper engagement with complex or challenging issues

During advance planning, for each World Café session, an overall topic is set; within that topic, 3 - 5 key questions are formulated for discussion; and each question is assigned to a specific table host (an expert or someone with strong interest in the question).

At the event, 3 - 5 tables (one per question) are set up in 'café' style to create a relaxed, informal ambience). Participants divide and choose (or are assigned to) a table to start the process. The host provides a brief introduction, and then participants discuss the question.

When time is up, the participants rotate to the next table, while the host stays behind to introduce the question once more and summarize the preceding discussion for a new set of participants. The new participants then add their insights to the question, refining or modifying the contributions of the previous group. This step is repeated until participants have had the opportunity to discuss up to three different questions/issues. A concluding plenary wraps up the discussion.

By dividing a large group into smaller subgroups, conversations can be made more focused, relaxed and participatory, with greater opportunity for all participants to speak and contribute equally – thereby encouraging authentic sharing of experiences and knowledge. Rotation of groups from one table to the next adds value to the discussion, by allowing a group to build on the previous group's thoughts and ideas about a particular issue.

REQUIREMENTS:

- *Facilitator*
- *A host and a rapporteur per table*
- *12 - 30 participants*
- *3 - 5 tables (ideally round) and sufficient chairs for all participants*
- *One flipchart per table, plus marker pens*
- *Optional: Flipchart paper to cover the tables (in addition to the standing flipchart); Post-it notes or VIPP cards; marker pens (multiple colours) for participants*
- *Bell or alarm clock for time-keeping*
- *75 - 90 minutes (including concluding plenary)*

¹ This method has been adapted from "Café to go", © 2008 The World Café, <http://www.theworldcafe.com/pdfs/cafetogo.pdf>



WHEN AND WHY TO USE

The World Café is a creative participatory method best used for:

▲ **Knowledge exchange:** The World Café creates a safe environment for sharing. The informal nature of the café enables meaningful exchange between individuals. In a small group of 4 - 5 persons, the opportunity to contribute to a conversation is greater than in larger groups.

▲ **Capturing collective knowledge quickly:** The World Café can be used to tap into the collective knowledge of up to 30 participants on a topic of interest within 90 minutes. The method creates space for one group to explore a question or issue (within an overall topic), then invites a second and subsequently a third group to come in and provide additional insights, offer critiques and build further on the knowledge captured. The quality of experiences shared and knowledge gathered is rich and obtained in a relatively short space of time.

▲ **Tackling multiple related issues:** Ideally the questions addressed by a World Café are related, or represent different levels or aspects of an issue. The process of addressing them through multiple small groups can encourage greater participation and promote iterative thinking on key problems and

challenges, more efficiently than can be done in a plenary session.

▲ **Exploring diverse opinions on issues that matter:** In situations where a diversity of ideas and opinions is sought, consider inviting participants with diverse backgrounds and/or expertise. The World Café creates a conducive environment for diverse viewpoints to be shared.



HOW TO APPLY

Prepare in advance

1. Identify the topic of interest, and craft 3 - 5 specific questions or burning issues for discussion. This is the most important part of the World Café process – see ‘Tips for success’ below for more. Ideally there should be 3 - 5 questions, one per table – enough for a minimum of 3 rotations among tables. Questions/issues should not be highly complex, as this is a rapid exercise. Ideally, they should be able to be explained in 2 - 3 minutes.

2. Identify one host per question/table (in advance), and brief them on the responsibilities which they will have at the event. The hosts can be experts in the particular question, or people with a particularly strong interest in it. Their responsibilities will include:

▲ To provide a 2 - 3 minute introduction to

each group of participants, on what the question is about, why is it important/relevant, etc

▲ To manage the conversation, sustain the energy levels of the group, spur it on when there is a lull, and encourage balanced participation among the group members.

▲ To remain at the table when the others move on, and brief the arriving groups about the highlights from the earlier conversations.

▲ To provide a quick overview of key contributions from the table, during the plenary wrap-up.

3. Identify also who should participate in order to have a fruitful discussion, and invite them to the session.

Set up the room

4. Set up 3 - 5 tables, one per question (or set up a similar number of discrete working areas with simple circles of chairs). Work within a single room rather than using breakout rooms: This is a technique which involves multiple small teams working in parallel, but there needs to be a “buzz” from the group in its entirety to keep the overall energy in the room high.

5. Cover the tables with white flipchart paper (or paper tablecloths, if available) and provide marker pens in multiple colours. The paper is for participants to write, draw, or doodle in the midst of the conversation. Alternatively, advise the table host to

encourage the group to write down their ideas on VIPP card/post-its and collect them before rotation.

When you are ready to start

6. Group the participants among the tables, randomly or strategically if required (see tips below), with equal numbers of about 4 - 6 participants per table.

7. Brief the participants on how the event will unfold:

▲ **Each table will choose a rapporteur**, who will stay behind with the host when others move on, and who will take notes. Ensure that each group uses the same method of recording their discussions, such as a flipchart or computer-based note-taking. Otherwise it can be more difficult to aggregate the outputs of the groups into a coherent product at the end.

▲ **After a 2 - 3 minute introduction by the table host (e.g., what the question is about, why is it important/relevant, etc.), participants will begin the discussion** by sharing their insights and suggestions on the question/issue laid before them, listening to each other and asking questions for clarification. Table hosts will play their facilitative roles (as per the responsibilities outlined in #2 above).

▲ **While they discuss, participants are encouraged to write ideas on the flipchart paper (or paper tablecloth) that covers the tables**, so that the next group that visits the table will be able to gather impressions from it. The rule has to be that they can't write something down until they have shared it out loud first, so that the host and rapporteur can also take note. This helps the conversation to

be faster-paced and the record more accurate as people write in their own words.

8. Begin the discussion. Each round of the World Café should take approximately 20 minutes; keep track of time and emphasize that there is no time to waste.

9. When time is up, use an alarm clock or a bell to signal to participants to wrap up their conversations and move to the next table.

Instruct them on the order of movement, i.e., to the left or right, clockwise etc. Everyone at a table is to move to the next table, except for the host and rapporteur, who remain behind to welcome the new group and to share a quick summary (3 - 5 minutes) of the earlier session. Discussion then proceeds for about 15 minutes. Once again, signal participants when time is up.

10. After 3 rounds of café conversations are completed, invite all groups to join in a plenary session for reflections on the topic and questions. Invite the hosts of every table to provide a 5-minute summary of key points and insights from the conversations that have taken place. Capture key findings on a separate flipchart, if the host has not already done so. This is a good time for any person who has not been able to join a specific table discussion to add their thoughts or comments on the topic.

11. Conduct a quick debrief of the World Café method by asking participants for feedback on how it has worked for them, what they liked and what can be improved for the next time.

Follow-up after the event

12. Write a summary of the main insights from the discussions and share with participants afterwards as appropriate, as part of the minutes of the workshop or as a stand-alone document. This summary provides a useful output from the World Café in those sessions where it is important to capture in detail the feedback and contributions from participants.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS



▲ The key success factor of the World Café is the questions. Formulate the questions or issues to be thought-provoking. For each one, ask yourself whether it piques the interest of participants enough to encourage lively discussion and even to inspire some to step forth as champions or detractors. Keep questions simple, clear and most of all open-ended so they will easily inspire inquiry and lively exchange. Ideally, all the questions should be interrelated, so that they will encourage a flow and logical progression of thoughts. It is a good idea to test the questions with your colleagues before using them at the Café. Here are a few examples of questions used at a World Café:

- 'How can we retain our most important knowledge despite staff turnover?'
- 'What is the best way for our office to cope with and succeed in the 'new aid environment'?'
- 'What kind of competencies, skills and talents do we most need in order to succeed in the current initiative?'

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▲ The closer the World Café resembles a real café, i.e., with pleasant scenery, quiet clusters of tables and ambient lighting, the better the conversations will be. Encourage participants to bring their coffee or other refreshments to the table to make it more like a café conversation.

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▲ Resist the temptation to scale up the World Café too much. An ideal set-up for a World Café with one facilitator is 5 table discussions, with 3 progressive rounds and a plenary wrap-up session. Additional co-facilitators can probably handle another 5 tables each, each of which will need its own host. Be aware also of the noise factor, and the challenge of doing meaningful plenary sessions for World Cafés of more than 5 tables.

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▲ Similarly, refrain from extending the number of rotations to more than 3 – even if some participants feel as though they are missing out on some of the discussions. This is because an overly lengthy World Café risks becoming tedious rather than engaging.

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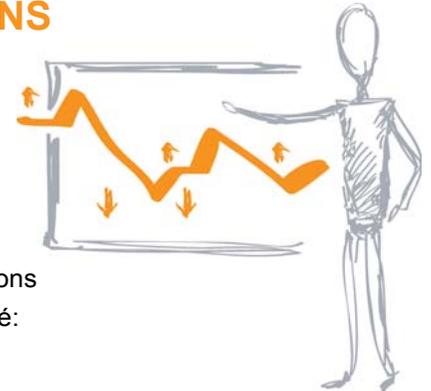
▲ When starting the World Café, you can assign participants at random to specific tables, or allow them free choice in the first round (bearing in mind the need for approximate numerical balance among tables). However, if the purpose of the session is to leverage participants' diversity of experiences and knowledge, then a pre-determined group list may work better.

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▲ In some situations, placing an employee and supervisor together at the same table may inhibit open and frank discussion. In this case, it is better to separate them.

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VARIATIONS



There are many variations to the World Café:

▲ **Different physical arrangements:** The setting can be elaborate, with round tables, snacks and drinks, or as simple as a circle of 4 chairs. At locations without any tables, one can use chairs to set up a group conversation, and participants can make notes or scribble on A4 instead of flipchart paper.

▲ **Open groups:** In this variation, the first round of the World Café is organized and conducted as usual. But then in the second round, the rotation is thrown open: participants can move to any other table of their choosing, regardless of the numbers in the group. The same open rotation applies in the third round. Hosts and rapporteurs still play their usual roles.

▲ **Parallel sessions:** One way to apply the World Café effectively in larger groups (50 - 60 people) is to hold two parallel World Cafés with 4 - 5 tables in each. Each session should use the same questions across its tables. How different groups address the same questions should make for interesting comparisons. However, holding parallel sessions will require a larger space, extra

time at the concluding plenary and more facilitators.

If you use parallel World Café sessions, then **ensure that each group uses the same methods for recording the discussions** (e.g. a flipchart, computer-based note-taking, group members writing on cards, etc.) This will greatly facilitate aggregating and/or comparing the outputs of the various groups.

▲ **Pre-determined groups:** By pre-selecting table groups according to expertise, interest or language, the café conversations take on a more focused nature. While there may not be much diversity of ideas in the first round, the subsequent rounds should more than make up for this.



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CREDITS

Author: Meena Arivananthan.

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck.

Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe.

Expert Review Panel: Kerry Albright, Paula Bulancea, Neha Kapil, Lina Salazar, Edgar Tan.

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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PROCESSES

ONLINE COMMUNITIES

/ Connecting online to improve a shared practice and to spark innovation /

WHAT ARE ONLINE COMMUNITIES?

A community brings together people who “share an interest or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (Etienne Wenger). In a community, people empower each other in their work by “communicating about what they do, so they can do it better” (adapted from Matt Moore). Facilitators help catalyse and maintain a productive and inclusive experience for the community members.

In organizations, communities are typically cross-cultural and cross-functional, with staff, partners and experts dispersed around the world. When they function well – meaning that people trust each other and engage and work effectively with one another – communities enable people to quickly share and search for knowledge, inspire and empower one another, and maximize their potential contribution to programme results.

Successful organizations and companies typically have a strong culture of community. Ed Catmull, the president of Pixar, attributed the studio’s success to its “vibrant community where talented people are loyal to one another and their collective work, everyone feels that they are part of something extraordinary, and their passion and accomplishments make the community a magnet for talented people coming out of schools or working at other places” (Henry Mintzberg).

ONLINE COMMUNITIES ARE:

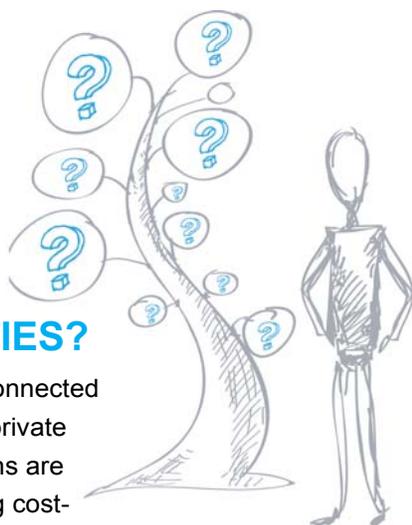
- Peer-to-peer collaborative networks.
- Engaged in asking and answering questions, exchanging knowledge, developing expertise, and solving problems.
- Driven by willing participation of members.
- Focused on learning and creating ‘actionable knowledge’ for achievement of development objectives.
- Cooperative across geographical locations.
- Collaborative in their use of tools and technologies.
- Both formal and informal, and members can interact online or in person

WHY ONLINE COMMUNITIES?

In today's hyper-connected world, public and private sector organizations are continually seeking cost-effective ways to leverage know-how for problem solving and competitive advantage. One of the most powerful ways they can add value is to provide an online space for staff and partners to interact and engage with each other, ask and answer questions, share relevant content, and solve problems in real time. These online communities can be one of an organization's most powerful assets. If intentionally designed, they have the potential to positively impact a range of strategic objectives, to foster collaboration and to spark innovation.

In organizations, people are often doing similar work yet remain unaware of one another's skills, expertise, successes and failures. People who can benefit from each other's experiences are often isolated, as the formal structure that ensures accountability for the execution of the work often inhibits ad-hoc and informal/unstructured exchanges of knowledge and ideas with colleagues and partners grappling with similar issues.

Most organizations have dozens of informal networks, in which people's shared focus or work area leads them to naturally exchange ideas and collaborate. But what types of knowledge and ideas are flowing through these informal channels? What if we could invest in and foster the ongoing exchange of ideas, curate the quality of this knowledge and make



it available and searchable for re-use in the future? One of the ways to do this is by transforming these informal networks into productive communities.

Well-purposed and skilfully led online communities can become venues for instantly sharing ideas and know-how. The immediacy of communication fosters the creation of an evolving pool of 'living knowledge'. The members of the community transform this living knowledge into 'living action', and in turn into 'living solutions'. Research also suggests that effective use of online communities reduces the time required both in searching for information and collaborating on tasks.

In recent years, the technology for building and engaging in these communities has become easier and more intuitive to use. Thanks to the widespread use of social media, most staff and partners are already equipped to participate in online communities (McKinsey & Company)

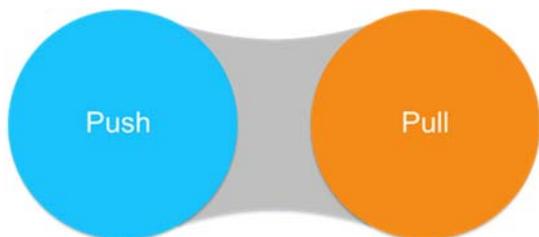
Key benefits of online communities:

- ▲ Sustainable, cost-effective mobilization of staff and partners around the world.
- ▲ Collaboration across different offices, technical sectors and jobs.
- ▲ Quick access to evidence and experiences to help inform current and future work.
- ▲ Quick access to practical and innovative solutions.
- ▲ Safe forums for constructive critiques and testing of 'new and emerging' practices.
- ▲ Environment for nourishing of individual and collective learning.
- ▲ Prevention of "reinventing the wheel" through the sharing of knowledge and experiences.

Communities break down communication barriers among individuals who work in different levels, functions and geographical regions within the same organization. Shared stories and first-hand experiences make us aware of successful approaches to try, or pitfalls to avoid. As members put new ideas into practice, they too share results, and eventually new collective knowledge is

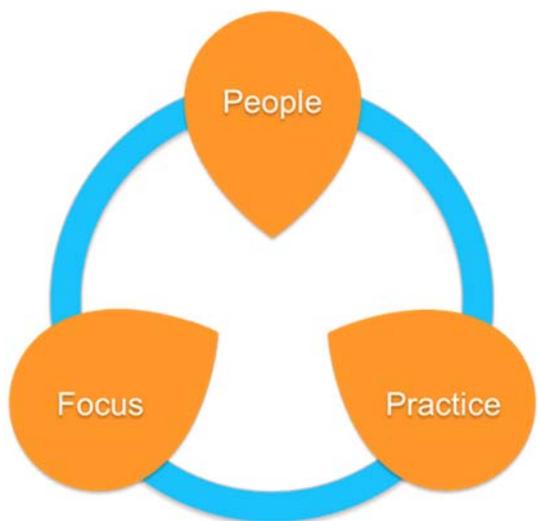
formed. This process has the potential to transform organizations and ourselves as individuals, as we learn to deliver better, smarter results.

Push and pull



Online communities are designed to access tacit knowledge (“PULL”) as opposed to explicit, documented knowledge (“PUSH”). PUSH refers to presenting knowledge in research, meeting reports, manuals, guidance and expert presentations, whereas PULL often begins with the asking of a crucial question and thrives on the demand for knowledge to achieve better results. With PULL, it is the needs and specific challenges faced in the moment that determine what knowledge gets shared, and thus it is the most practical knowledge available.

People, focus and practice



Communities provide a safe space for brainstorming that links idea generation and problem solving to out-of-the-box thinking, fuelling new and innovative approaches. They

rely on three key elements: **people, (shared) focus and practice**

▲ **PEOPLE:** Community members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other.

▲ **FOCUS:** Members are brought together by the commitment to shared development goals, and by a shared functional area or theme.

▲ **PRACTICE:** Members of a community are practitioners and work together to jointly develop the practice. They produce a shared repertoire of resources—experiences, insights, stories, and solutions. Through collaboration they improve on the way work is done in their area of expertise.

More than simple knowledge sharing

As Clay Shirky (Social Media Professor at New York University) says, community is about “collaborative production”. “Unlike sharing, where the group is an aggregate of participants, cooperating creates group identity.” Shirky points out that collaborative production, where people have to coordinate with one another, “is considerably harder than simple sharing, but the results are more profound.” A culture of knowledge sharing needs to emerge in which community members take responsibility for helping their colleagues and exchanging ideas with partners wherever they are, whether face to face or across the globe. Alexandra Samuel notes that online collaboration “is not a second-best substitute for face-to-face work: it’s a complement with its own perks and benefits.”

There is more than a verbal tie between the words community and communication, change and exchange. If we communicate our experience fully and accurately, then we find our own attitude toward the experience changing. “There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about” (Margaret J. Wheatley).

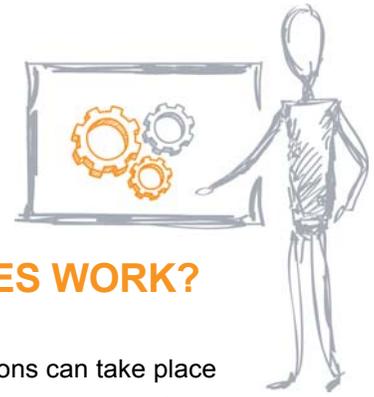
A clear purpose

The “let a thousand flowers bloom” approach does not work well for communities. In order to succeed, communities need to be focused on solving specific business-related challenges. Ensuring that they have the greatest chance to succeed is a process that begins when a community is formed.

High quality content is what drives real engagement in communities. The best content largely stems from insights and ideas shared by the people in the community – both online and face-to-face. It should be well curated and reflective of community members’ experiences. It should be unique to the community. Also, the strength of the relationships – the trust that is built online and offline – creates strategic value. “Speed (and results) happen when people truly trust each other”. (Edward Marshall)

A productive community is created with a clear purpose that specifies its potential value and is agreed on by leaders, facilitators, and members. Setting a high bar at the outset – at the moment a community is created – means that every new community must have a strong business purpose, which signals to potential leaders, managers, sponsors and members that it can add business value and achieve real results. Proposals for new communities must specify the kinds of deliverables (insights and new ideas) that will be produced and the kinds of activities/products (discussions, webinars, etc.) it will support.

HOW DO ONLINE COMMUNITIES WORK?



Community interactions can take place online or in person. Members use tools like Yammer, webinars, discussion forums, blogs, and other online social media spaces to engage with each other. Regardless of position or experience, each member can offer valuable contributions and learn from others. Sharing generates knowledge. While they should be well managed, communities are not meant to be hierarchical and rigid, but rather should be a forum for free-flowing interchange and creativity.

The flexibility of communities allows conversations and knowledge sharing to happen in a natural and safe way. Questions and exchanges should include both successes and failures, as both create opportunities for powerful learning and discussion. Communities also require consistent engagement. In regularly affirming their reasons to learn together, community members are driven to help each other, follow up on ideas, develop shared resources and maintain a social space. While not everyone needs to have the same level of commitment, there needs to be sufficient quality exchange to keep the community energized and alive. Community leaders and facilitators take the lead in forging, directing, and maintaining communities

How do online communities create knowledge?

Traditionally, knowledge has been viewed as something that experts hand down to practitioners. But organizations in all sectors are discovering that when practitioners become direct learning partners by forming a community, they bring insights from their engagement with practical challenges. The knowledge they share and create together builds on these insights and challenges, and they can

apply this knowledge to their work because it reflects their experiences. Admittedly, the experience of practitioners cannot be the source of everything they need to know. Specialized experts and researchers have vital roles to play, but their contributions can become even more meaningful and useful when they are integrated into an ongoing learning process that is driven by practitioners.

Learning has a fundamentally social nature. Over time, members develop trust “based on their ability to learn together – to care about the shared focus, to respect each other as practitioners, to expose their questions and challenges, and to provide responses that reflect practical experience” (Etienne Wenger). Community conversations evolve as trust grows and members recognize each other as learning partners. A joint history of learning becomes a resource in the form of a shared repertoire of ideas, cases, insights, stories, concepts and perspectives.

Keys to success

Communities are complex social structures. Their voluntary and self-governing nature makes them quite sensitive to subtle power dynamics. A host of factors can contribute to their success or failure:

- ▲ Leadership must be visible and active—people respond positively when their leaders demonstrate that they place value on this type of knowledge exchange and when supervisors are supportive of staff participation.
- ▲ Communities thrive on social energy, which both derives from and creates identification with the community. It is essential that members are committed and passionate about the area of focus.
- ▲ The dedication and skill of the people who facilitate and nurture the community drive its success. Many communities fail not because members have lost interest, but simply because nobody takes care of the regular management and facilitation of the community,

taking care of logistics and support and maintaining an open space for inquiry.

- ▲ Time is a challenge for most communities, since members juggle competing priorities. Communities need to ensure ‘high value for time’ for all those who invest themselves.
- ▲ Other factors influencing communities include: the quality of self-governance, members’ sense of ownership, the level of trust, recognition for contributions, expectations for value creation, the degree of organizational voice, connection to a broader field, and the strength of interactions with other communities.

WHO MAKES UP A COMMUNITY?

Ideally, in every community, all the roles described below should be filled. However, to get a community up and running it is most essential to have a leader, a facilitator and a group of ‘like-minded’ members.



Leader

A community leader sets the direction for the community, provides positive experiences for members and keeps the community on track in offering strategic value to the organization. The role of a community leader is to engage, motivate and encourage other community members. A leader practices active listening and participatory decision-making. The leader must be knowledgeable and passionate about the theme of the community, and able to share these qualities with other community members. He or she should be imaginative in creating face-to-face and online spaces that bring members together. The leader also acts as a learner. The best leaders inspire leadership in others. Communities require

leadership and governance from the start. Community leaders “reach out rather than down”. They enable results, recognizing that much of these must be driven by members.

The roles of a community leader include:

- ▲ Articulating the community’s vision and agenda, which evolves over time.
- ▲ Making insightful and relevant content easily accessible
- ▲ Creating space for meaningful interaction, both online and in person.
- ▲ Working with the community to develop rules for participation.
- ▲ Rewarding contributors.
- ▲ Promoting the community, internally and externally.
- ▲ Harnessing techniques to monitor and assess the health of the community.
- ▲ Helping keep community activity aligned with key areas of work.

The qualities of effective community leaders include:

- ▲ Being forward-thinking and able to think outside of the box, look to the future, and have set goals in mind.
- ▲ Strong people skills combined with knowledge and passion for the subject.
- ▲ The ability to empathize and imagine different viewpoints, to understand and validate what members feel and what motivates them.
- ▲ Collaborative skills and the ability to work well with different types of members and create a productive experience.
- ▲ The ability to act as a political leader, inspirational leader, technical leader and activity leader (this might include having a presence in other communities).
- ▲ Enthusiasm and energy that keeps others engaged, and a commitment to both planting seeds and cultivating them.

Facilitator

A human-centered approach

Community facilitators are responsible for day-to-day management of the community and making sure that it meets its strategic purpose. Building a community means understanding its membership, how people become members and what drives real engagement. Facilitators are knowledgeable and passionate about the community’s mission and goals. They help maintain focus and deepen discussions within the community, similar to party hosts who set the tone and help newcomers ‘feel welcome’. They help members generate new ideas by setting up and running ideas generation process and methods, and internal and external crowdsourcing for the benefit of the organization. They integrate ideas by selecting the most crucial contributions from the group and channelling them into productive interactions. They encourage members to participate by posing questions that prompt them to share their knowledge. They foster an environment of safety and trust, and act as role models for the community by listening, being respectful, and sharing relevant experiences and stories on key topics. A community should not be launched without a skilled facilitator in place.

The roles of facilitators include:

- ▲ Defining membership, and communicating the value that members will find in the community.
- ▲ Developing a 90-day plan, clarifying the community’s purpose, and identifying what resources are required to make it a success. The plan should be relatively brief, but should specify strategic objectives, processes and activities, platforms and metrics.
- ▲ Recruiting and engaging a core group of about 20 members who will be active.
- ▲ Giving the online community a “health check” every 6-9 months to ensure it is making progress on the chosen goals.
- ▲ Building trust with members and helping them forge deeper connections with the community and with each other.
- ▲ Stimulating online and face-to-face participation and contributions between members by seeding activity, posting messages, asking

questions, and sharing insights and relevant content.

- ▲ Working 'behind the scenes' to engage members. This may include facilitating 'peer assistance' to connect a community member with a specific question to another member who may have the answer; encouraging 'silent members' to become active.

- ▲ Providing members with a simple and intuitive user experience, and providing support to participants in making best use of the available technology platforms. The technology platform must present as few points of friction for users as possible, in order to facilitate adoption.

- ▲ Promoting the community internally and externally and keep recruiting new members..

- ▲ Collecting and analysing quantitative metrics and qualitative feedback from members, including stories of change, improvement and transformation.

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Tips for facilitating the creation of high quality content:

- ▲ Respond to people's real needs. Facilitators are flexible and do not need to promote any **prescribed process** or approach.
- ▲ Always keep members firmly at the center of the community plan.
- ▲ Lead members to better express their insights and ideas by asking the right questions and helping members to sketch out and clarify their ideas.
- ▲ Engage early members face to face, if possible, and via email, Skype and telephone.
- ▲ Keep content up-to-date.
- ▲ Encourage the use of visual content, including infographics relevant to the focus and content of the community.
- ▲ Encourage members to use community tools (conversations, posts, videos, etc.) to spark new ideas and insights.
- ▲ Communicate real information and ideas. If it is clear, insightful, thought-provoking and compelling—or any combination of these—

members will engage and feel prompted to contribute.

The best way to get people to join a community is by offering high quality content that inspires people to join, commit time and contribute. The content must be unique to the community—something members can't find anywhere else.

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The qualities of effective facilitators include the ability to:

- ▲ Network, communicate and interact well with.
- ▲ Empathize with members. To engage a community in a discussion a community facilitator must know the type of people who make up the audience, and must be able to effectively converse with the audience.
- ▲ Effectively write for the web.
- ▲ Propose topics from members' perspectives.
- ▲ Define the scope of a discussion precisely.
- ▲ Support the development of sub-groups for new conversations.
- ▲ Be constantly engaged and proactive to initiate change.
- ▲ Be open and attuned to learning what the community truly likes and doesn't like.
- ▲ Train and provide support to users to participate in the community and community.

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Key questions for facilitators:

- ▲ What kind of relationship are you trying to create with community members?
 - ▲ What kinds of interactions might help move the members towards this new relationship? What will it take to create those types of interactions?
 - ▲ How strongly do the community's outcomes support the needs of members? Do community activities reflect the kinds of conversations you want to spark among the audience? Are they interactive enough?
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Members

Members of a community are people who want to improve the results of their work and share insights, experiences, successes and failures with others on topics they truly care about. Levels of participation often vary, from a core group of very active members to more passive observers. Disparities in participation are usually not a problem as long as they reflect personal interest and not hindrances such as language fluency or the dominance of some individuals or offices over others.

The size of a community is much less important than the degree of mutual engagement among members. If a community is very small, however, members will likely have heard everyone's stories and opinions after a while, and without new insights or added members, interactions can potentially become stale unless the topic is extremely dynamic and continues to present new and exciting challenges. On the other hand, if a community becomes very large, it is more difficult to have meaningful interactions. The community may spawn smaller subgroups based on specialized interests or geographical proximity. In general, though, as long as an active core group sustains enough engagement, there is no limit to the number of people who might benefit from the learning that takes place. The power and strength of successful communities is found in the **human-to-human connection** and the ability to **bring valuable content and conversation** to members.

The roles of engaged members are to:

- ▲ Share positive experiences.
- ▲ Answer other members' questions.
- ▲ Cross-post on other communities.
- ▲ Lead discussions, volunteer, and act as references.
- ▲ Foresee and propose future activities.
- ▲ Keep advancing the community.

Sponsor

A sponsor's role is to make the community and its collective knowledge more visible, thus further energizing it and expanding its value. In this way, a sponsor plays an important part in sustaining the community and helping it to thrive.

The roles of a sponsor include:

- ▲ Mobilizing resources.
- ▲ Appearing in public and online events to speak about community results.
- ▲ Encouraging outreach through networking.
- ▲ Helping align community efforts to broader goals, both inside and outside the organization.

Champion

A champion helps to establish a thorough understanding of what a community is, its purpose and its intended use. He or she actively promotes the value communities bring, promotes the organization's approach, including the software platform, and encourages people to actively make use of communities. Champions serve as role models in using the platform effectively and promoting good practices. They raise the profile of communities and their collective knowledge, thus further energizing them and expanding their value. They also help people overcome any barriers to promoting their efforts and ideas.

The qualities of effective champions include:

- ▲ Courage and the ability to take risks.
- ▲ Strong leadership skills; ability to earn trust by influencing and motivating people.
- ▲ Engaging interpersonal and communication skills.
- ▲ Being well-connected, enthusiastic, engaging professionals who deeply understand an organization's structure and culture.
- ▲ Ability to see the context and larger picture for their community, determining the best ways to engage and interact
- ▲ Savvy with technology and social media.
- ▲ Multi-disciplinary and capable of motivating/influencing various stakeholder groups, including executives.

THE 90 DAY PLAN

Successful online communities start by developing a 90-day plan, which they adapt and modify as needed. A 90-day plan helps to map out community activities to ensure that they align with short and long term strategic objectives. A plan might include member outreach tasks, core group participation expectations, methods for creating content, and topics for discussion, as well as the resources and actions required to build a vibrant community. Plans should be specific, yet flexible and lightweight, and should include contributions from community members where applicable.

Establish a lightweight leadership team. A community will need the support of a leader, a facilitator and members. The presence of a sponsor and/or a champion will give additional support. Ideally, sponsors, leaders and facilitators should all be engaged in the development and review of 90 day-plans to ensure that they support specific goals, themes and strategies. This kind of light governance has a positive impact on communities, as it provides an opportunity for inter-community sharing and management recognition of community contributors. The facilitator will spend the most time managing the community.

Know the membership. It's critical to understand who the community members are. Current colleagues and partners are a great place to start. Facilitators can conduct interviews to find out more about the members, what they care about, and how they would get the most value from the community. The 90-day plan should reflect insights from this process. It may also be helpful to develop personas for the main types of people who will be part of the community, and think about how they are most likely to use it. (See "[How to Understand People](#)" from the [IDEO Design Kit](#).) You might also consider developing a

survey of potential members to find out their needs, level of interest and preferred ways of working (see guidance on Surveys in this Toolbox).

A 90-day plan should specify:

- The processes and activities members will engage in.
- Methods for building the community, identifying, recruiting, and incorporating new members.
- Methods for engaging members in the community (welcome messages, meeting in person, personalized emails, etc.).
- Key products of the community and how they will be created.
- Community resources, including financial resources.

Key steps to build a community

▲ Identify and recruit a core group of about 20 members who will be active participants in the community. Some of them are likely to be colleagues and partners who care about the theme of the community.

▲ Seed activity in the community, drive participation and engagement with posts, questions, organized discussions, webinars and other forms of content every day.

▲ Engage early members. When possible, talk with them in person. Otherwise, use personalized emails, Skype, and phone calls to let people know of key discussions taking place in the community and invite them to join.

▲ Encourage members to share feedback. Qualitative feedback from some members can be very helpful, especially when focused on specific areas of community work, like areas for innovation and improving shared practices.

▲ Review results after 90 days. Key questions will include:

- Has community membership grown?
- Is there real participation and engagement?

- Is there enough and quality content being generated?

If the answer to these questions is yes, it's time to expand the membership and recruit more people. At this stage it's important to promote the community to a wider audience.

Key steps to engage the community

- ▲ Create a calendar of activities for the community to know where content is coming from and when it is going online.
- ▲ Organize specific community events to help stimulate interest and foster participation. Examples might include Webinars, Online Jams or formal E-Discussions (see guidance on all of these in this Toolbox). However adequate space should also be left in the plan for ad-hoc events and participant generated questions and content.
- ▲ If feasible, consider organizing a face-to-face event for community members within the 90-day plan, possibly combined with another existing face to face meeting. Online collaboration is often strengthened when member have had at least one prior opportunity to meet and collaborate in person.
- ▲ Always seed new and recent content (e.g. relevant posts, articles and curated content from outside the community).
- ▲ Encourage participants to submit relevant content and questions. Work with them to help frame questions so that they are clearly defined but also thought provoking, to seed discussion and stimulate members to think.
- ▲ Keep a sharp focus on relevant content and promote organic generation of content.
- ▲ Feature highly active discussions prominently on the main page.
- ▲ Integrate visual content: Research shows that the brain processes images far more quickly than text. Info-graphics, photographs, illustrations and cartoons are effective ways to simplify content and increase uptake.
- ▲ Introduce gamification to encourage

fresh and relevant content. Award points for new posts and new comments, or create a facilitator or member of the month award. Orchestrate community competitions with awards to drive and increase engagement, especially during contest time.

- ▲ Add positive comments to members' status updates or posts, and acknowledge that their contributions are valued.
- ▲ Draw attention to interesting and noteworthy content. Promote the same content more than once – there is always a need to remind members that this content exists.
- ▲ Simplify a process or help members solve a particular challenge.
- ▲ Provide useful resources and tools that will help members make use of the community.
- ▲ In the community's early stages, listen to and communicate with members as much as possible.
- ▲ Communicate any changes to the community, such as a new community facilitator, a new event, the launch of a discussion, or a new feature added to the platform.
- ▲ Create a short newsletter to highlight content in the community.

There is no one right way to keep a community engaged. Ongoing engagement requires constant monitoring, understanding what the community likes and dislikes, and adjusting to its ever-changing needs.

Additional Elements of Successful Online Communities

Leadership support and member focus:

Communities need **both of these equally**. Community leaders “reach out rather than down”. They enable results, recognizing that much of these must be driven by members. A community should not be launched without a skilled facilitator in place. At the same time, the purpose of a community has to evolve from the members

themselves. The emphasis should always be on their needs. It is important to determine what critical challenge(s) a community needs to address, and which method and technology is going to work best. The method of collaboration must fit the culture and specific needs of each community.

Commitment: Successful communities require an organization-wide intentional commitment and willingness to work across functions, sectors and geographies. It takes determination to examine and re-examine what kinds of changes are needed, from culture to organizational design.

Strategic objectives: Strategic objectives indicate a clear mission for the community. These goals help the community develop, improve and innovate with regard to practice, solve problems to save time, and avoid “reinventing the wheel”. The objectives support the community’s purpose with a focus on creating outcomes that are bigger than each individual member, yet also have strategic relevance for members. Communities with clear strategic objectives find members to be more engaged and active.

Empathy: Make fewer assumptions, ask more questions. Speak less often, and listen actively, and with greater intention. “Community facilitators are grappling with the implications of being welcoming and inclusive to a diverse global group of members. There are so many factors in play culturally that it’s difficult – but extremely rewarding – to ensure that everyone’s needs are well met” (Leslie Hawthorne).

External expertise: Experts from within or outside the organization can have a very positive impact on community development and knowledge sharing. They are specialists in their field and are able to give focused technical content, rich in knowledge. They also maintain excitement and variety within the

community. Organizing regular and ad-hoc content posts, webinars, or meetings with external experts around new and exciting topics stimulates creativity and can bring the entire community together around a new idea.

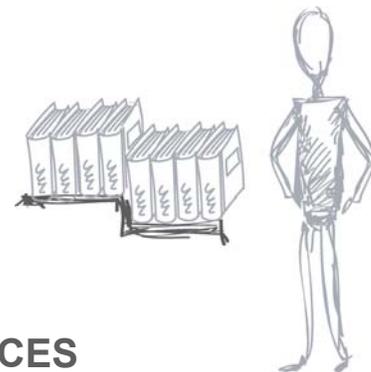
High quality content: Few online communities survive on member discussion alone, which is why well curated content, reflective of the community’s collective experience, is so vital. Content that is relevant to the group is useful, useable, and engaging for all. In compiling and promoting this level of high quality content, facilitators and community leaders will empower members to contribute similarly strong material.

Design: To design a community in a way that will facilitate engagement and collaboration, its leaders and facilitators need to act as a cohesive team, with a clear purpose and awareness of their membership. They must be able to point to specific and compelling outputs. Should the design follow a hub and spoke model, with a group coordinating activities from the middle, or should it be a dispersed set of nodes where different groups take on different roles? These two designs have different management implications. It’s important to assess how best to empower community members to contribute, and crucially, which design will support the work of members to achieve common goals and objectives.

Simplicity: Simple, intuitive interfaces are essential for community building because they facilitate adoption. An online platform must be simple and compelling in its design, so that it presents as few points of friction for users as possible. Technology alone does not foster collaboration, and can create nearly as many barriers to collaboration as it enables. The platform should be simple yet powerful, to enable high levels of engagement via social interactions, deliver relevant information and real-time functionality, leverage multi-media, and be accessible anywhere and on any device. It is also important to continuously update the platform with bug fixes and new features.

Horizontal support: Bringing together leaders, facilitators, and active members from established communities can be immensely helpful in building new communities. Their diverse experiences and insights provide energy and good ideas with regard to planning and direction, as they are usually good communicators and role models. The input and support of these colleagues and partners are important for success in the long run.

Awareness of culture: A vibrant community culture is cultivated in the transparent, dynamic, inclusive process of sharing ideas, knowledge and experiences, helping and learning from one another. “This amplifies well-established psychological mechanisms, such as peer pressure and social recognition. With clear rules of engagement and a level playing field, people tend to stimulate and encourage others, perform well, and seek recognition” (Arne Gast and Raul Lansink). Communities are not a quick fix for short term tasks, but an investment in organizations’ long term capabilities, forging vital links both internally and externally. This reflects the determination by management to foster horizontal collaboration and demonstrate how digital activities complement offline interaction.



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CREDITS

Author: **Paola Storchi**

Editor: Eric Mullerbeck

Executive Editor: Ian Thorpe

Expert reviewers: Nima Fallah, Anna Boelens, Michael Robbins, Timothee Tosti, Lina Salazar.

Illustrations: Paola Storchi

Design: Olga Oleszczuk.

Production: Edwin Ramirez.

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Contact: Division of Data, Policy and Research, UNICEF
3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA
knowledgeexchange@unicef.org

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