

## 6

## Additional tips for facilitating multi-stakeholder processes and workshops

The previous chapter explained in detail the steps in the institutional and policy mapping methodology, and how they could be facilitated in a workshop setting. This chapter provides additional background and tips on facilitating multi-stakeholder processes and participatory workshops<sup>1</sup>.

### 6.1 Background to multi-stakeholder processes

To improve the opportunities for small-scale producers, it is very clear that government, business and civil society organisations must understand each other and work together. In today's world it is generally difficult for government to bring about change and implement policies if there is opposition from the business or civil society sectors. The nature

of the global economy gives corporations much economic power and political influence. Likewise the capacity of civil society for advocacy and for engaging in media campaigns that influence consumer and voter opinions also gives it much power. These different powers can either work with or against each other. If there is constructive engagement there is space for innovation and institutional change. If these powers are working against each other, institutional change can become almost impossible.

It is for these reasons that over the last decade there has been rapidly growing interest in multi-stakeholder processes and many other

similar but differently named approaches. Central to all these approaches is the notion of bringing together different stakeholders (actors) who have an interest in a problem situation and engaging them in processes of dialogue and shared learning and collective action.

A multi-stakeholder process (MSP) has the following characteristics:

- Deals with a defined “problem situation” or development opportunity (the boundary and focus may expand or contract during the process).
- Involves the stakeholders involved in or affected by this “problem situation” /development opportunity.

#### Reasons for undertaking an MSP

- To seek different perspectives for resolving complex problems
- To resolve conflict
- To build trust and understanding
- To promote innovation
- To generate commitment for action
- To cope with rapid change
- To move beyond fixed positions
- To discover common ground

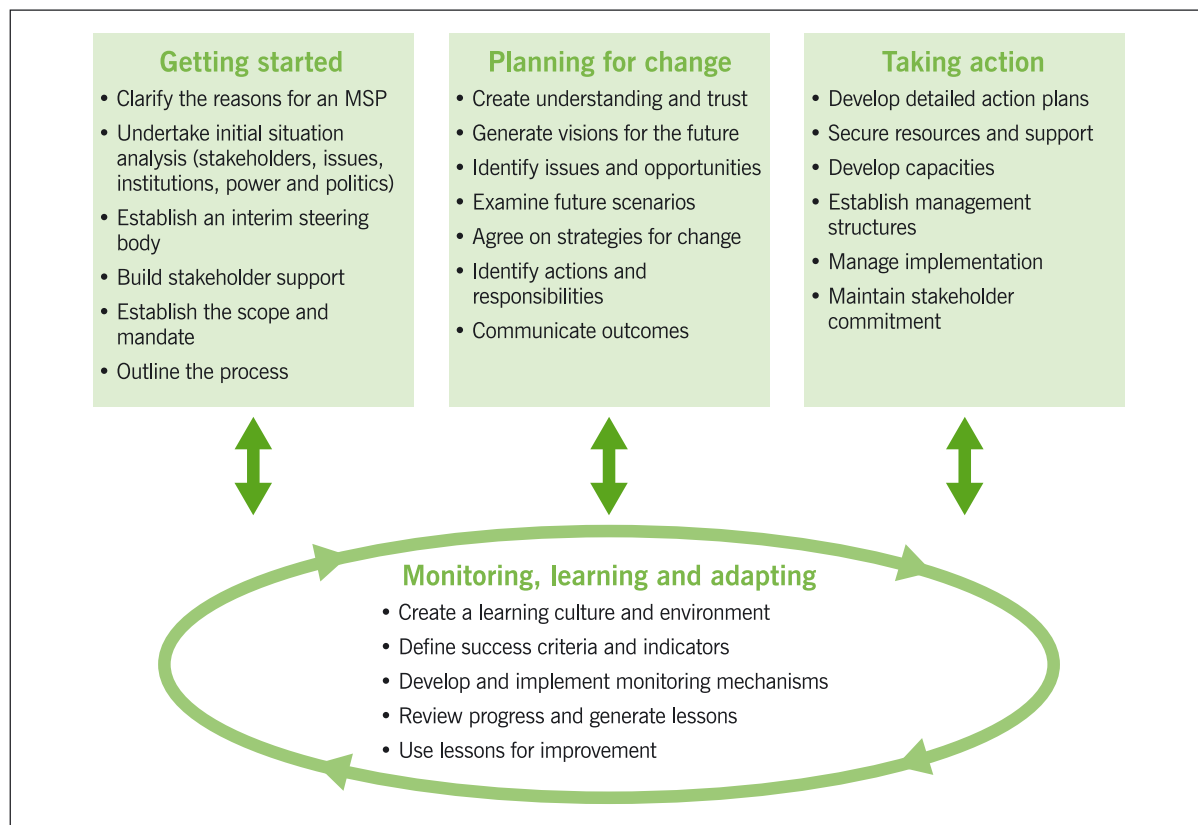
- Works, as necessary, across different sectors and scales.
- Follows an agreed yet dynamic process and timeframe.
- Involves stakeholders in setting “rules” for constructive engagement.
- Works with the power differences and conflicts between different groups and interests.
- Engages stakeholders in learning and questioning their beliefs, assumptions and previous positions.
- Balances bottom up and top down approaches.
- Makes institutional and social change possible.

The term “multi-stakeholder process” implies engaging with all the different stakeholder groups who have an interest in or are affected by the “problem situation”. However this does not mean that all meetings and workshops will always have all the different stakeholder groups present. Very often it will be necessary to work with just one group of stakeholders first before bringing different groups together. It will also often be necessary to have meetings and engage individually with key people.

There is a lot to think about when designing an MSP. How do you get going with a multi-stakeholder process? Who should you involve at the start? Are you dealing with major conflicts or big differences in power between the stakeholders? What sort of information and analysis is needed to move the process forward? Is a short-term or long-term process needed? What sorts of meetings, workshops and events will be needed? Importantly, the design must be flexible and adjusted as the process unfolds.

There is no simple recipe for a good MSP. However, through experience some important lessons have been learned about a few of the key ingredients. Figure 6.1 illustrates the stages of a multi-stakeholder process and some of the key considerations for success at each stage. For example many multi-stakeholder processes go wrong because of false expectations and lack of initial understanding of different stakeholder interests. Having the wrong group of people involved on an initial steering committee can spell disaster for a whole process. When planning it is important to work with stakeholders’ visions of the future and not become bogged down in a mire of problems. Often processes fail because they do not move from the planning phase to implementation and interest and momentum is lost. If all those involved are not aware of how they will judge success and the process is not carefully monitored there is also a risk of failure. Thinking carefully about each of the checklist points will help avoid these and many other difficulties.

**Figure 6.1 A checklist for designing and facilitating multi-stakeholder processes**



A multi-stakeholder process is much more than just a one-off workshop. It involves a whole series of interventions and activities over time to create the conditions, trust and understanding for different stakeholder groups to work together, reach collective decisions and take collective action.

There are many factors related to the institutional (policy, legal, funding, government agency, cultural) context that will dramatically affect any multi-stakeholder process and must be carefully considered. Often forgotten is the issue of political, economic and social power of different groups and how these power dynamics influence conflicts. The facilitator needs to be sensitive to such dynamics and guard against negative effects.

***Further resources on multi-stakeholder processes***

Wageningen International, **Multi-stakeholder Processes: Building your Capacity to Facilitate Multi-stakeholder Processes and Social Learning**, Wageningen, (<http://portals.wdi.wur.nl/msp/>).

Woodhill, J. and Van Vugt S., **Facilitating Multi-stakeholder and Institutional Change Processes: A Societal Learning Perspective**, Wageningen International Occasional Paper, Wageningen International, Wageningen, 2008.

Hemmati, M., **Multi-stakeholder Processes for Governance and Sustainability: Beyond Deadlock and Conflict**, Earthscan Publications Ltd., London, 2002.

Pruitt, B., and Thomas, P., **Democratic Dialogue: A Handbook for Practitioners**, CIDA, IDEA, OAS and UNDP, 2007.

## *Dealing with differences in capacity and power*

Different stakeholders or different groups of stakeholders will often have very different levels of capacity and power. For example, the chief executive officer of a retail firm is in a totally different situation to the leader of a small-scale farmers' co-operative. Some individuals may be much more articulate and better able to communicate their ideas and concerns than others. Some groups may have the resources to easily pay for their time in attending events, while for others participation means significant personal financial cost. Because of their position some individuals or groups may have easy access to government decision-makers, while others have none.

If capacity and power differences are not carefully considered, a multi-stakeholder process may simply further marginalise and disadvantage the weaker groups.

Some ways of dealing with this include:

- Working with less powerful groups to help them clearly establish their concerns and issues and prepare to present them.
- Actively supporting the capacity development of some groups with financial and other resources.
- Building trust and understanding between different groups so that more powerful groups may become more supportive of others.
- Stopping or changing a process where there is a high risk of further undermining the interests of the less powerful.
- Providing groups with professional support in researching, documenting and presenting their case.
- Facilitating processes in a way that ensures all groups have equal space for contributing.

It should be recognised that a multi-stakeholder process will be a political process. Different groups will be trying to figure out where there is a common interest and where they need to protect their own interests. The point of a multi-stakeholder process is to find higher order common goals and then work back to find solutions that have mutual benefits.

## *Managing conflict*

Conflict is inevitable in a multi-stakeholder process. It is not necessary a bad thing; indeed conflict is often the source of motivation for change. The challenge is to manage conflict in a constructive way.

A starting point is to understand the reasons for the conflict. One model of conflict management makes a distinction between conflict caused by: a) disputes over the validity of information; b) personality differences; c) competing interests; d) structural issues related to laws, roles and

responsibility time constraints; e) differing values. It is beyond the scope of this document to go into further detail. However the key point is to try to understand the underlying sources of conflict; different types of conflict will require different strategies for resolving them.

Conflict will often go through a process of first being dormant, then erupting and intensifying before it is either resolved or settles down into a stalemate. Dormant conflict can often be even more disruptive to the process than open conflict.

In facilitating a multi-stakeholder process it will often be necessary to deal with two types of conflict. One is the deep-seated conflict that may exist between different stakeholder groups because of perceived competing interests or differing cultural traditions and values. The other is the conflict that may erupt between people during a stakeholder workshop or meeting. This latter may be related to the first, or it could just be the frustration of one person with another whom they perceive as being too dominating.

It is also important to understand that there is a continuum of conflict with differing strategies for dealing with them. For example, some conflicts end up only being resolved through the legal system while even more severe conflicts result in violence and war. Multi-stakeholder processes, quite understandably, generally work at the other end of the spectrum where there is space for discussion, negotiation, and arbitration. Some major conflicts have been resolved through dialogue and stakeholder processes; however this type of process requires highly specialised skills.

When resolving conflicts and helping people to negotiate, focus on:

- Separating the people from the problem.
- Interests rather than positions.
- Generating a variety of options before settling on an agreement.
- Insisting that agreements be based on objective criteria.

In fact multi-stakeholder processes are essentially based on these principles. A well designed and facilitated multi-stakeholder process will automatically help many conflicts surface and be constructively resolved.

#### ***Further resources on conflict management***

Potter, B., **From Conflict to Cooperation: How to Mediate A Dispute**, Ronin Publishing, 1996.  
*Practical advice for facilitators*

Warner, M., **Complex Problems, Negotiated Solutions: Tools to Reduce Conflict in Community Development**, ITDG Publishing, London, 2001.  
*Tips for multi-stakeholder processes that include farmers, businesses and government*

## 6.2 Running a successful workshop

Any multi-stakeholder process will involve a series of workshops and meetings. The following tips will help to make workshops and meetings more time effective, productive, and rewarding.

### *General structure for workshops*

- Explain the background and context for the workshop, and the intended outcomes.
- Get participants to introduce themselves and, if appropriate, conduct some sort of “ice breaker” that establishes rapport between participants and generates a few laughs.
- Explain the agenda and process of the workshop and the role of the facilitator.
- Invite participants to make a statement about what they would like to see achieved from the workshop. For example, pose the question. “What would make this workshop a success for you?” If necessary and appropriate, revise the agenda based on participants’ needs.
- Move through the activities of the institutional and policy mapping methodology that have been chosen for the particular workshop.
- Clarify the outcomes from the workshop and agree upon future actions.
- Ask participants to provide a written evaluation of the workshop (optional).
- Close the workshop by inviting participants to say what the workshop has meant for them.
- Write up the workshop and provide a report to participants as soon as possible. Listing the participants as authors reinforces the sense of shared ownership of the process.

### *Working with different sized groups*

An ideal number for an interactive workshop is between 20 and 25 people. This enables the workshop to be structured around three or four small groups and it makes for easy plenary discussion. With this number you get a good balance between diversity of ideas and representation, while still having an easily manageable group size.

In many situations it will be necessary to work with much larger groups. It is quite possible to have an effective interactive workshop with 70 or 80 people. However, with larger groups you will have to lower expectations about what can be achieved in a given period of time. Reporting back from small groups and simply marshalling people in and out of coffee and lunch breaks all takes much longer.

To make larger workshops a success consider the following:

- Use co-facilitators to work with the small groups.
- Reduce the reporting back from small groups to just a few key points.
- Use a “market place” for sharing the work of small groups, whereby participants walk around the room to see what other groups have done.
- Keep very strict time management and make it clear at the beginning of the workshop that this will be necessary.
- Use small buzz groups of three or four people within a larger plenary discussion; this will give everyone a chance to get talking.

**Figure 6.2** A small multi-stakeholder group works together on key issues in the potato chain in Bangladesh



### ***Making the best use of participatory tools***

There are numerous different participatory tools that can be used in a workshop. If you refer back to the institutional and policy mapping methodology in Chapter Five you will see that each step in the methodology uses at least one participatory tool. Tools such as brainstorming and card clustering have been used in a number of the steps. To get the best out of participatory tools select the right tool for the right purpose, ensure a logical flow between different tools and have good facilitation.

### The Rule of Seven

Research indicates that at a maximum the human brain can cope with about seven different ideas at once. Probably not by coincidence small groups of seven people work best. When structuring ideas, synthesising information or making lists, keep to about seven key points.

Using a tool well makes all the difference. For example when brainstorming, ask people to think quietly or talk to their neighbour before getting responses from the whole group. Initially go around the whole group asking for a response from everyone. This will ensure a contribution from everyone and prevent a few people's ideas dominating. Using the card clustering technique can be a very powerful way of synthesising many ideas and coming to a group consensus on

important issues. However, if the cards are grouped according to already formed categories the facilitator has in their mind, rather than what the cards are actually saying the power of the process is undermined. It is always important to give very clear instructions and if the tool is being used in small groups the facilitator should go to each group to check that the task has been understood. It is often helpful to provide small groups with printed out instructions of what is expected of them, including timing.

### Additional tips

- Be clear about the objective and intended outcomes of the workshop for:
  - The participants.
  - The funding body, client or wider community.
  - The facilitator and organisers.
- Have a well-prepared but flexible plan, including alternative scenarios—think carefully about the structure and sequence of activities and discuss this with others to improve it.
- Have very clear instructions and focusing questions for each session. It is usually best to have these written up so people can refer back to them.
- Keep it as simple as possible.
- Be very time conscious; don't be too ambitious about what can be achieved.
- Avoid over-facilitation where people feel like they are being manipulated into an outcome that they do not fully agree with.
- Use activities to create an atmosphere that breaks down barriers between people and reduces the feeling of threat.
- As far as possible, record all material on butchers' paper and stick finished sheets to the walls. This reminds people where the workshop is up to and gives them something to refer back to.

- Appoint helpers to write up discussions in detail—the summarised versions on butchers' paper are often not detailed enough when it comes to writing the workshop report. Write up the workshop as soon as possible.
- When working with larger groups, have assistant facilitators who are trained in the techniques being used and are well prepared for their role.
- Alternate between small groups and plenary sessions, but don't overdo it.
- Frustration and conflict are healthy parts of a workshop, learn how to manage them and don't be frightened.
- Take risks with workshops and don't worry too much about getting it perfect. People like to talk together and share their ideas; if they have had this opportunity, the chances are they will have found the workshop worthwhile.

#### ***Further resources on participatory methods***

Pretty, J.N. et al., **Participatory Learning Action – A Trainer's Guide for Participatory Learning and Action**, IIED Participatory Methodology Series, London, 1995.

Chambers, R., **Participatory Workshops – A Source Book of 21 Sets of Ideas & Activities**, Earthscan Publications Ltd., London, 2002.

Spencer, L.J., **Winning Through Participation – Meeting the Challenge of Corporate Change with the Technology of Participation**, Dubuque, Iowa, 1989.

Wageningen International, **Multi-stakeholder Processes Portal**, Wageningen, (<http://portals.wdi.wur.nl/msp/>).

**Enhancing Ownership and Sustainability – A Resource Book on Participation**, IFAD, ANGOC, CIRDAP, SEARSOLIN, MYRADA, IIRR, 2001.

## 6.3 Logistics

Here are some tips about organising workshops other events. We will look at venue, timing and scheduling, and budgeting. The logistical considerations should not be overlooked, as good organisation is one of the keys to success.

### **Venue**

Chose a suitable venue: the right atmosphere, no distractions, space for small group work and plenary sessions and lots of wall space or display boards for attaching butchers' paper or cards.

A local venue offers advantages in terms of gathering information and attracting local people. Consider factors such as comfort, support equip-

ment (photocopier, telephone, fax) and cost. The available options are rarely perfect, so consider the implications of this for the effectiveness of the workshop. It is always advisable to visit the venue before the event so that you can be prepared for any limitations (such as seating arrangements or sources of distraction).

### **Timing and scheduling**

Try to make sure the main activities of the multi-stakeholder process do not coincide with busy periods of the year that might exclude key stakeholders. Hold meetings, workshops and interviews at times suitable to group members. Consider the special needs of different stakeholder groups in terms of timing. For example, women may have responsibilities which stop them from participating at particular times. Organise activities well in advance and give people plenty of notice.

#### **Workshop materials**

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|--|---|
| - clock  | - blu-tack  |
| - butchers' paper                                | - masking tape  |
| - whiteboard                                     | - name tags   |
| - coloured cards, half A4                        | - marking pens (lots)                                       |
| - overhead transparency projector, film and pens | - laptop computer (for recording a workshop as it proceeds) |
| - sticky notes (assorted sizes)                  | - refreshments  |

Be aware of the participants' energy levels and concentration abilities, and be prepared to alter the programme if it becomes apparent that the planned timing is no longer suitable. Don't forget that people need time to unwind.

### **Budgeting**

If you need to develop a budget for a multi-stakeholder process or workshop, consider the following:

- Human resources (organising, professional facilitator, documentation).
- Equipment (telephone, fax, photocopies, paperwork).
- Workshop materials (see box).
- Venue (meeting room, meals, beverages).
- Sitting fees if necessary.
- Transport and travel costs of participants.
- Catering.

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter draws on Woodhill, J. and Van Vugt S., **Facilitating Multi-stakeholder and Institutional Change Processes: A Societal Learning Perspective**, Wageningen International Occasional Paper, Wageningen International, Wageningen, The Netherlands, 2008.