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# Self-Reflection for Staff Development

Mainus Sultan

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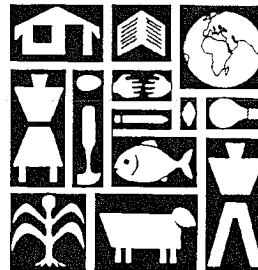
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# *Self-Reflection for Staff Development*

*A Training Module for Development Workers' Professional Growth*

*Mainus Sultan*



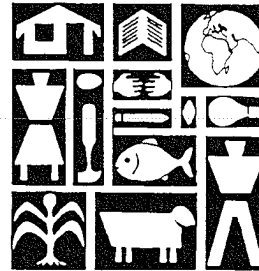
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## *Introduction*

Over the last decade, as development strategies have shifted from a product to a process orientation, capacity building for the professional growth of development workers has received more and more attention. The key actors in the field, as well as the policy makers, funders and managers, all view human resource development (HRD) as a focal point of the development approach. As a result, a flurry of training programs and curriculums has emerged to cater to this perceived need.

Typically, these approaches are built on the assumption that development workers, especially local ones, are somehow lacking in their ability to cope with the emerging needs in the field of development. Prevailing training methods and curriculum often emphasize the expansion of knowledge through the injection of updated information. They often fail to take into consideration the existing knowledge of the person. Field experience suggests that the primary limitation of the HRD strategy is that it ignores the individual development workers' subjective ways of knowing based on their own culturally familiar processes. This staff development module represents one humble initiative to address this limitation.

The underlying philosophy of this training module builds on the assumption that each individual development worker is capable of constructing her/his own knowledge. While the approach presented here does not disregard the necessity of adapting information from outside sources, the key focus is on assisting development workers with strategies to explore their own self in a reflective manner. The objective of this reflection is to promote the individual's capacity to incorporate her/his existing knowledge for purposes of planning and problem solving.

Although this module is designed to be a guide for creating reflective educational activities for staff development purposes, field experience suggests that it requires creative adaptation in order to adjust to different cultural contexts.

## *Background Story*

The idea for this training module first emerged in the mid 1980s when I was working in Bangladesh as a Master Trainer for a local NGO named Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB). I remember a seasoned development worker sighing as I was trying to wrap up the post-TOT logistics. She said, "... all these trainings have so many different activities, we were busy all the time, there was no time to sit quietly and think about what we have done." Her observation stirred my thoughts significantly.



The next evening, I observed several participants of this TOT program telling each other their personal stories. So I designed a few sessions that incorporated development workers' personal story writing. The popularity of these sessions encouraged me to experiment with this form in greater depth.

In 1995 I had another professional opportunity to design a complete curriculum for staff development purposes while working in Laos with an international NGO, Quaker Service Laos, a branch of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). The fifteen learning experiences presented here in the form of separate session plans were all field-tested multiple times. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my debt to the staff of both FIVDB and AFSC for their active cooperation in the field-testing. Please note that while development workers working in NGO settings are the targeted participants of this module, some of the sessions were field-tested with staff from bilateral and UN agencies.

## *Purpose*

The larger purpose of this module is to create a learning climate that fosters the professional growth of development workers. This approach offers a subjective framework that encourages each participant to contribute to the development of the educational environment. The key rationale for creating an environment that is conducive to learning is to allow the participants to step back from their field reality in order to reflect upon their work experience. The tools presented emphasize the exploration of participants' existing knowledge instead of focusing on providing new information. The key objective is to develop a method that assists the participants in undertaking reflection and self-analysis in order to deal with issues of needs assessment, problem solving and program planning.

## *Participants*

Development workers, at both the field and management levels of NGOs, are viewed as the potential participants for this series of learning experiences. However, experience suggests that an adapted version of this module might be used for staff working with bilateral or multilateral agencies pursuing a development agenda.

This module encourages participation by individuals from divergent backgrounds. However if significant differences exist in terms of participants' level of understanding, creation of separate groups with similar experience would be useful.

## *Facilitators*

A relaxed individual with strong interpersonal skills is viewed as an appropriate facilitator for the learning experiences presented in this training module. These skills include the ability to connect with individual staff in a personalized manner and to adapt and modify activities based on the cultural context of the participants. Since the approach places heavy emphasis on the reflective aspect of the participants' lived experiences, an individual who is comfortable providing positive feedback and encouragement for motivational purposes would be an ideal fit.

## *Process of Use*

This module is designed to provide a sequential outline for organizing a series of learning experiences for staff development. However, the implementation of the outline may require creative adaptation and the suggested framework of the sessions can be changed or adjusted based on the participants' expressed interests or felt needs. Since each cultural context in relation to staff development differs significantly from another, experience suggests the importance of modifying the learning experience in order to more appropriately respond to different realities. This approach also acknowledges that each individual participant might not be comfortable with the activities recommended here. For example, a participant may not want to practice story writing or picture drawing. In that case, the facilitator is expected to offer an alternative activity that better fits the participant's interest. In short, individual sessions can be adapted or the sequential order of the training module can be altered in order to cope with different training realities.

## *Preparation*

Building rapport and understanding between the facilitator and the staff members is a critical aspect of this training approach. It would be helpful if the facilitator could meet, interact with and learn about the participants in social situations prior to implementing the training module. In addition, since the learning styles of the participants play a critical role in shaping the educational climate, it is important that the facilitator observe participants engaged in professional work before implementing this module.

## *FACILITATOR NOTES*

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# LEARNING EXPERIENCE 1

## Positive Reflection

⇒ **ISSUE:** Staff development training is often perceived as a remedy for individual staff members' lack of knowledge or skills in the relevant field. Due to this perception, development workers' natural skills and strengths may not get validated. As a result, some field workers may internalize the notion that they are lacking or deficient in terms of their expected work performances.

### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. WARM-UP: Play a tape of relaxing music for about five minutes.
2. Ask each individual participant to think about her/himself. You may use the following questions as a guide:
  - How many years have you been working for the development organization?
  - What kinds of responsibility do you have?
  - Do you remember any interesting field experience?
  - Which job-related tasks do you most enjoy?

Encourage participants to take notes or scribble on a piece of paper (15 minutes).

**Time:** About 3 hours

**Purpose:** To facilitate a learning experience that allows individual development workers to 1) reflect positively on their field experience and 2) identify their own strengths.

**Material:** Construction paper of different colors, scissors, markers, a cassette player, a tape of relaxing music, and a mirror.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 1 . . . continued

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3. Encourage participants to share thoughts and make comments (15 minutes).
4. Explain the word "Reflection". Elaborate that in order to reflect, one is expected to step back and look into one's lived experience. Help participants understand the concept of reflection symbolically, using a mirror as a prop. Now ask them to reflect on a positive work experience using the following questions as a guide (20 minutes):
  - Can you think of an event, task or assignment that gave you job satisfaction? Try to think about the event or assignment in detail.
  - What did you do?
  - What were the positive aspects of the assignment?
  - Was there anyone who benefited from the tasks you performed?
  - Was there a particular skill involved when you did the job?

Sometimes an example can be helpful in explaining the guiding questions. The following story is a prototype. You may wish to come up with your own story to use as an example.

*I remember one time . . . I was working for an NGO in Bangladesh, helping a rural community organize a literacy program and come up with income generation activities. A number of the program participants were poor women. Some of them were raising chickens as part of their income generation activity. Suddenly there was an outbreak of fowl cholera. Some chickens died with the quick spread of this disease. I happened to have an orientation on vaccination. After collecting some vaccine from the nearby veterinarian hospital, I quickly vaccinated the chickens and trained a few women to vaccinate at the same time. As a result, the outbreak was controlled. When I think about my work experience, I always remember the faces of a few women whose chickens were saved. I feel very good about the job I did.*

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 1 . . . continued

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5. Now ask participants to write a personal story based on their positive work experience. Let them know that they do not need to worry about spelling or grammar. Tell them that if they cannot write a whole story, they may jot down a few sentences or notes (1 hour).
6. Once the participants have finished writing their stories, have them share with the whole group. Facilitate the process of "translating" participants' positive experiences into skills. For example, if a participant writes that one time s/he collected information from a certain village and her/his supervisor used the information to get a grant for the community, "Data Collection" would be the specific skill based on this story (30 minutes).
7. Cut the construction paper into big flower petals and distribute petals to each participant. Ask participants to write down their skills or strengths on the petals. Now have them make a big flower collectively using glue or tape. Write down the name of the organization in the center of the flower (20 minutes).
8. WRAP-UP: Have participants comment on the flower they have created. Encourage them to interpret the activity in their own way (15 minutes). As a facilitator, you may wish to conclude with this thought:

*"We staff members are as different as the different shades of the petals. But our collective skills and strengths make up the flower of this organization"*

# LEARNING EXPERIENCE 2

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## Peer Feedback

⇒ **ISSUE:** In the reality of the field, development workers are sometimes critical of each other's behavior and/or work performance. Because of this, staff members often fail to recognize each other's strengths. As a result, the work atmosphere does not encourage growth or cooperation.

### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. **WARM-UP:** Have two or three participants tell funny stories based on their field experiences (20 minutes).
2. Ask each participant to think about a colleague using the following guiding questions (15 minutes).
  - How many years have you been working with this colleague?
  - What kind of tasks or assignments have you done jointly?
  - Can you recall something good/positive you have observed about your colleague?
  - What was the occasion? Give as much detail as you can.
  - How did you feel when you observed your colleague's positive contribution?
3. Let participants know that they will now have the opportunity to write a letter to that colleague. Give each participant a sheet of paper with the letter-writing ground rules, ask everyone to write the colleague's name at the top of the page, then explain the ground rules (20 minutes).

**Time:** About 3 hours

**Purpose:** To facilitate a learning experience that allows staff members to appreciate each other's contributions.

**Material:** Pencils, pens, paper, construction paper, scissors and glue.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 2 . . . continued

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### *Letter to My Colleague Ground Rules*

- Write something good/positive you have observed about your colleague.
- Do not be critical about your colleague in the letter.
- Do not write any negative words in the letter.
- Use at least two or three sentences that translate as compliments.  
For example, it was so nice to see that you tackled the situation so well.

4. Now ask everyone to write a letter to her/his colleague mentioning the positive experience and offering compliments (1 hour). *[NOTE: You may wish to provide a prototype letter so that all the participants are clear about what you are asking them to do. An example is provided on the following page. Alternately, you may come up with your own letter.]*
5. Collect all the letters in a basket and facilitate distribution to the appropriate recipient. Have everyone read the letters (15 minutes).
6. Ask participants to make a construction paper flower for their colleague. Participants may write the name of the colleague and a compliment on the petal of the flower. For example, Mr. Kampao – kind person. Once participants have finished making their flowers, facilitate the composition of a collective bouquet using all the flowers (30 minutes).
7. WRAP-UP: Ask participants to comment on the letter writing experience (20 minutes).



## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 2 . . . continued

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### *Sample Letter to a Colleague*

Dear Kampao,

Do you remember me? We worked together in a village named Umapur about three and half years ago. We spent all day organizing the community and collecting data. One afternoon, we missed the bus, so we had to walk together to the nearest town. Upon arrival I learned that a problematic situation had suddenly arisen in another project village that I was technically responsible for supervising. Our coordinator was on the phone. She wanted me to visit the village right that evening but I was exhausted from the walking. On top of it all, I had a headache. I was horrified at the thought of going to another village to deal with a complex problem. I remember that with a smiling face you volunteered to go to the village alone. It was so nice of you to volunteer for a task that you so easily could have avoided. I've always felt that I'd like to say thank you for this help.

Sincerely yours  
Bimal Saha

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 3

### Strength Assessment

➡ **ISSUE:** Staff members often have difficulty understanding their own strengths. Sometimes they are aware that they possess different skills but cannot see the combination of these skills in a holistic way. Often they encounter an environment that views them as having inadequate professional capacity.

#### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. **WARM-UP:** Ask each participant to think about one skill that s/he is comfortable teaching to others. Examples of skills could include singing, making jokes, conducting training, collecting data, riding a motorbike, etc. Now ask participants to draw a picture/illustration or an imaginary diagram that represents this skill. For example, if the skill is music, the drawing could be someone playing a guitar (20 minutes).
2. Have participants make a map or a collage of all the individual pictures and illustrations and glue them onto poster paper (20 minutes).
3. Draw the outline of a big tree on a large piece of poster paper. Include the roots, branches and flowers. Ask participants to replicate the picture on small pieces of paper (15 minutes).

**Time:** About 3 hours

**Purpose:** To facilitate a learning experience that assists individual staff members in assessing their own skills, strengths and knowledge bases.

**Material:** Color pencils, paper, poster paper, and glue.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 3 . . . continued

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4. Ask participants to write their educational background (and other related information) in the root area. For example, they may write the schools and colleges they attended as young persons, as well as other informal education they were exposed to such as Quranic or temple-centered education (25 minutes).
5. Ask participants to write their different job-related experiences and professional training on the branches. For example, they may write two years work experience with Church World Service, fifteen months with provincial government's department of agriculture (25 minutes).
6. Ask participants to write down their dreams and interests on the flowers hanging from the branches. For example, they may write computer skills, English language, aspiring master trainer (25 minutes).
7. Help participants create a garden by gluing all their trees together on a big piece of paper. Have participants walk around and read each other's skills, strengths and interests (25 minutes).
8. At the end, facilitate a plenary discussion to help participants identify the kinds of skills and strengths they already have and to get a sense of the skills and strengths they are interested in acquiring (25 minutes). Wrap up by emphasizing this message:

*"We already have a lot of skills and strengths. We need to build upon our existing knowledge base. For future exploration, we need to use our dreams and interests as guidelines"*

# LEARNING EXPERIENCE 4

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## Training Needs Assessment

➡ **ISSUE:** Staff development training often occurs without any systematic process of assessing the educational needs of individual staff members. In many cases, staff members get to attend different training activities, not because of their training needs, but because of an educational opportunity and the availability of funding at a particular time. As a result, staff members may have difficulty identifying their own educational needs.

### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. **WARM-UP:** Show participants an unknown script, such as a paragraph in a language that participants are not familiar with. Ask them to read and translate the script. The expected response would be that they do not know how to read this language. As a facilitator you may say, "What do you need to do if you would like to read this script?" The expected response would be "We need to learn about the language." Elaborate upon this comment. Explain that the need to learn something for professional purposes is generally known as a training need (30 minutes).
2. Distribute two or three short case studies or stories that illustrate the training needs of individual staff members. Ask participants to read the case studies/stories and figure out the specific training need of the individuals described. Engage participants in a question and answer discussion (30 minutes). *[NOTE: You may use the stories on the following page or write your own stories based on a particular cultural context.]*

**Time:** About 3 hours

**Purpose:** To facilitate a learning experience that helps staff members to identify their own training needs.

**Materials:** Poster paper, markers, note pad and case studies.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 4 . . . continued

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### Story 1

Jamila has been working as a project officer with CCDB, an NGO, for five years. She is a very good project officer and a very confident worker. Jamila usually goes out into the field twice a month. She has no problem working in the field; in fact, everyone in the field loves her. Both her program coordinator and the director of CCDB hold Jamila in high regard and think that she manages her project very well.

CCDB wants Jamila to write three reports a year. She does not understand how to start writing a report or finish it nicely. Recently, her coordinator asked her what kind of training she would like to participate in. Jamila answered, "I do not really know, maybe project management".

### Story 2

Habib has been working for GUP for the last seven years. As a project officer, he supervises seven villages and always plans different community development activities with the villages. He writes down information when he is in the field. He puts all the information in different files. When he writes a report, he takes out information from the file to organize his writing.

When Habib started working with GUP, he used to write everything by hand. A year ago, GUP bought three computers. Now everybody in the office uses a computer to write, even Habib. However, he has difficulty understanding the computer. One of the expatriate workers in his office helps him, but when the expatriate worker is not there, Habib faces real problems with the computer. One time when he was writing a report, the electricity failed. When it came back on after two hours, Habib returned to his computer to write again. But he could not find the pages he had already written. Tomorrow morning Habib will be going out into the field. He feels very frustrated about having to start the report all over again.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 4 . . . continued

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3. Ask participants to write their own stories. Let them know that they do not need to worry about spelling or grammar as they are writing. Also mention that they are not required to share the personal stories with the whole group (1 hour).

Offer the following guiding questions for the story writing.

- How many years have you been working with the organization?
- What kind of job or tasks do you do?
- What areas are you good at?
- Do you remember any time when you had difficulty accomplishing a task?
- What was the occasion? What actually happened?
- What was the difficulty?
- Can you provide some detail about this event?

4. Ask each participant to read her/his story carefully, identify the specific training need involved, and write that training need on a piece of paper. For example, if someone has difficulty keeping track of money, the person's training need would be accounting and bookkeeping. After everyone has finished writing, ask participants to put their papers in an envelope with their names and turn them in to you (30 minutes).
5. WRAP-UP: Encourage participants to comment on the writing experience (20 minutes).
6. Once the activity is over, take the time to meet individually with participants to go through the stories together and further discuss specific training needs. Prepare a chart indicating each staff member's training needs for planning purposes.

# LEARNING EXPERIENCE 5

## Collective Analysis

➡ **ISSUE:** Staff members are generally not involved in analyzing their educational needs or planning staff development activities. Since they are only the recipients of the training, they do not feel attached to the whole process of staff development. As a result they may not develop a sense of ownership and often fail to share a common vision.

### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. **WARM-UP:** Ask some participants to look at the horizon through the telescope/binoculars. Facilitate a discussion about the difference between looking at something that is near and something that is far away. Mention that if something is near, one may see it well but if it is far away, it is difficult to see the details. Link this to the organizational context, noting that one needs to be able to see beyond what one may see easily. For example, it is difficult to clearly see where the organization is going over the next three to five years. Therefore, a tool such as a telescope or binoculars is needed in order to understand the future, i.e., to see what is far away (45 minutes). You may wish to use the following questions as discussion prompts:
  - How might we develop a tool that would allow us to prepare for the future?
  - How can computer technology help us prepare for the future?
  - As organizations increasingly adopt computerized programs, what can we do? How should we cope with the changing situation?
  - What action do we need to take?

**Time:** About 3 hours

**Purpose:** To facilitate a learning experience that helps to 1) raise staff awareness about a common vision and 2) analyze strengths and needs-related data in preparation for the planning process.

**Material:** Poster paper, markers, a telescope or binoculars (if these are not available, you can make a replica telescope using a cardboard tube).

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 5 . . . continued

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2. Present the information you have gathered so far on participants' a) existing skills and strengths and b) training needs. [NOTE: You may wish to create two large charts illustrating the strengths and skills of individual staff on one and training needs on the other.] Have participants walk around and study the information. Make sure that participants understand that one set of information represents what they already have and the other shows the areas they want to improve. Encourage participants to make comments and facilitate a discussion that helps them understand the difference between strengths and needs (45 minutes).
3. Divide participants into small groups or pairs. Ask them to discuss the following questions and note their responses on poster paper (1 hour):
  - Thinking about the future, are there any other new skills you will need to develop?
  - What strategies could be used to address the training needs?
  - How can your organization make sure that everyone's needs are addressed?
  - What resources do we have for staff development?
  - What constraints exist?
  - How can we develop a system for staff development?
4. Have the small groups or pairs present their responses at a plenary session. Compile information from each group or pair and create two lists, one representing *existing resources* (for example, a staff person in the organization capable of doing an informal training on computer skill development) and the other describing the *constraints* (for example, lack of funding). Wrap up by emphasizing the need to do a planning exercise in the organization for staff development purposes (30 minutes).



# LEARNING EXPERIENCE 6

## Planning for Staff Development

➡ **ISSUE:** In the field, staff development training often occurs without any systematic planning. In some cases, an expert may be assigned to do the planning. In most cases, planning occurs without the participation of individual staff members.

### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. Ask participants to build a house using construction paper, glue, stapler, scissors etc. (20 minutes).
2. Ask participants to comment on their house building experience using the following questions as a guide:
  - What did you do first? Did you start building the house right away or did you think about it first?
  - What was the next step? Did you think about how the house would look eventually? Did you design something before you started building?
  - What was the next step? What tasks did you have to accomplish in order to build the whole house?
  - What did you do at the end? Did you check different details to see whether or not the house would be habitable?

**TIME:** About 3 hours

**PURPOSE:** To facilitate a learning experience that allows individual staff members to come up with their own plan for professional development.





**MATERIALS:** Construction paper, glue, stapler, scissors, two lists representing existing skills and constraints written on large poster paper.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 6 . . . continued

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Now compare the basic steps of planning with the steps of house building. The following comparison may help clarify the process.



- When people think about building a house, their desire to have a house can be translated as a  **GOAL**.
- When people think about a goal, they  **GATHER INFORMATION** (e.g., the kind of materials they should use) and come up with an image in their mind (e.g., how big the house will be).
- Once they assess this information, they come up with specific  **ACTIVITIES** that will help them reach their goal, such as building doors and windows and making the roof.
- They also look carefully at the structure and consider if this is what they had in mind when they came up with the goal of building a house. The process of post-construction assessment can be called  **EVALUATION** (45 minutes).

3. Talk about the 4 steps of planning using a specific example, such as the one cited below (25 minutes).



To learn more about project management.



Find out the schedule, venue, number of days and training fees etc. for a project management course. Also find out if your organization has the budget to send people to this course.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 6 . . . continued

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### Activities

- Information collection
- A discussion with the head of the organization regarding budget
- Application
- Informing colleagues about your potential absence from the office
- Logistical arrangement
- Post-training report writing

### Evaluation

Find a way to assess what you learned from the training

4. Ask participants to do a draft planning related to their staff development activities (1 hour).
5. Have participants present their draft plan in a plenary session. Offer feedback and consultation. Refer to the two lists representing existing resources and constraints. For example, if a staff member is available to do a workshop in the home office, it may not be necessary to look for staff development courses outside the country. If the necessary budget is not available, it is simply impractical for someone to propose going on an expensive course. If staff members come up with many different staff development related activities, you may ask them to prioritize (30 minutes).
6. WRAP-UP: Suggest that participants revisit their draft plan, gather more relevant information and submit a proposal. Set up a timeline. As a concluding activity, you may wish to put together all the data from individualized plans and create a collective chart.

# LEARNING EXPERIENCE 7

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## Briefing

➡ **ISSUE:** The possibility of going off-site for training purposes often creates anxiety among staff members. This anxiety may relate to traveling, language skills, or a perceived inability to participate effectively in the training program.

### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. Arrange a meeting/discussion with the staff member who is expected to go off-site for training purposes.
2. Create a climate conducive to informal conversation. Begin by checking the following issues (10 minutes):
  - What is the focus of the training workshop or seminar?
  - Where are you expected to go?
  - How many days will you be away from your job/home?
3. Ask the person if s/he has any particular concerns. Check the following (10 minutes):
  - Will this training course create problems because of your absence at home or at the office?
  - Have the traveling logistics been settled?
  - Are you worried about your ability to participate in the new course?
4. Inform the individual that you have noted his/her concern. In a friendly manner, discuss possible coping mechanisms for dealing with the expressed concern. If feasible, make a tangible commitment to help the person. For example, you may help the person purchase the tickets or write a letter of support to a funder (10 minutes).

**Time:** About 30 minutes

**Purpose:** To create a learning experience that helps individual staff members to discuss their fears and anticipated challenges freely

# LEARNING EXPERIENCE 8

## Debriefing

➡ **ISSUE:** Staff members often find that training courses and workshops are not relevant to their work. Upon completing a course, they wonder what they should do with the skills and knowledge they have gained.

### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. Arrange an informal meeting/discussion with a staff member who has recently returned from participating in a training course, workshop or seminar. Begin by checking the following issues (10 minutes):
  - What was the training course or workshop about?
  - Did you encounter any major logistical difficulties?
  - What was your general impression of the course/workshop?
2. Now discuss any specific difficulties that the staff member encountered during the training course or workshop. Check the following:
  - What was the specific problem or difficulty that you encountered?
  - Overall, was the course/workshop content relevant?
  - Was there *anything* in the content that might be useful in the field?
  - What else did you learn that might be used in real life?
  - Is it worth sending people to this kind of training?

3. WRAP-UP: In concluding the discussion, make sure that you underscore the following point (10 minutes):

*Sometimes learning that appears to be irrelevant at first  
can become useful in the future*

**Time:** About 30 minutes

**Purpose:** To facilitate a process that helps staff members reflect on a training experience in order to better understand its relevance.

# LEARNING EXPERIENCE 9

## Monitoring Progress

➡ **ISSUE:** Sometimes a good plan does not get implemented as expected, or fails to produce the anticipated results. In many cases this is because the plan lacks a monitoring mechanism that allows for adjustment as the changing situation requires.

### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. Ask participants to read a story/case study that illustrates the need for progress monitoring. The following story is a prototype. You may come up with your own story based on your particular cultural context.

An international aid agency named Healthy Earth (HE) became very interested in funding environmental awareness and community forestry programs in Sultanabad, a rural, and geographically isolated area of Bangladesh. [The people of Sultanabad are quite poor and often cut down trees in order to use the wood for fuel.]

Since HE did not have an office in Bangladesh, they provided funding to a local NGO based in the Sultanabad sub district to conduct environmental education and implement non-forest timber product projects in seven villages of Sultanabad. The HE representative never visits Sultanabad. Once a year they write a letter asking for a report. The local NGO is usually late submitting its report, but they are managing the situation by hiring someone who can write in English.

**Time:** About 3 hours

**Purpose:** To facilitate a learning experience that allows the participants to reflect on the implementation process of a plan and come up with ideas for adjusting the plan.

**Materials:** Flip chart and markers.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 9 . . . continued

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Once participants have finished reading, lead them into a discussion that focuses on the need for monitoring by asking the following questions (45 minutes):

- Do you think the project was implemented well?
  - If not, why not?
  - What should have been done differently?
2. Ask participants if they recall the staff development plan that they did previously. *[NOTE: You may wish to provide a chart that illustrates the planned staff development activities.]* Using the staff development plan as a reference, discuss achievements and challenges. Ask participants if they see any need for progress monitoring. Elicit other comments and questions (25 minutes).
3. Then ask participants to write a story based on the recent staff development experience, using the following questions as a guide. Remind participants that they do not need to worry about spelling or grammar (1 hour).
- What staff development activities have you planned?
  - How many of the activities have you implemented?
  - What problems did you encounter during implementation?
  - What activities were you not able to implement? Why?
  - How can you improve the existing plan?
4. In plenary, participants should be encouraged to present the key issues. For example, they may talk about the reasons that hindered plan implementation. They can also make suggestions for adjusting and improving the plan (30 minutes). *[NOTE: You may wish to create two lists (1) hindering factors/reasons and (2) suggestions based on the discussion.]*
5. WRAP-UP: Elicit and encourage general comments about the learning experience. You may close by saying that the information based on the stories will be used to improve existing plans (20 minutes).

# LEARNING EXPERIENCE 10

## Connecting with the Field Reality

⇒ **ISSUE:** Some staff members implement projects mechanically and often have difficulty coordinating their existing skills with the humanitarian needs of the field. They provide logistical support as needed but become uncomfortable when the situation demands individualized relationship building with targeted community members.

### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. **WARM-UP:** Ask participants to spend a few minutes thinking about individuals in the field that they have helped. Ask them to think further about the nature of the help. Play a tape of relaxing music while people are engaged in thinking (20 minutes).
2. Pair up participants and have them share their experiences with each other. Ask them to talk about how they felt when they provided the help (20 minutes).
3. Now display the collection of pictures and ask participants to spend some time looking at the pictures. *[NOTE: Have a collection of pictures of human faces -- women, children, farmers, ethnic minorities, elderly people, etc. -- intended to evoke human concern. If possible, provide pictures from the field the staff visit on a regular basis.]* Have each participant choose one picture that s/he feels connected with (20 minutes).

**Time:** About 3 hours

**Purpose:** To facilitate a learning experience that allows participants to connect subjectively with the field reality.

**Materials:** A collection of pictures of human images that represent field reality, flip chart and markers, a tape of relaxing music and a cassette player.



## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 10 . . . continued

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4. Ask participants to think about the following questions and write a one or two paragraph story. Remind them that they do not need to worry about spelling or grammar (1 hour).
  - What are your thoughts about the person in the image?
  - Do you think this person has adequate resources and skills?
  - Does this person need help?
  - Do you feel any emotion towards this person?
  - How would you like to help her or him?
  - Do you have the appropriate skills or resources to provide assistance?
  - What do you think you should do?
  - Are there any other feelings you would like to share?
5. Have participants share their experience orally (30 minutes). *[NOTE: You may wish to jot down key issues on a flip chart.]*
6. WRAP-UP: Encourage participants to comment on the learning experience. In closing, emphasize that the purpose of upgrading skills or obtaining resources is to provide support to other human beings who do not have such resources or skills (30 minutes).

# LEARNING EXPERIENCE 11

## Problem-Solving

⇒ **ISSUE:** Due to the multiple responsibilities of working in the field, maintaining paper work and attending training workshops often creates conflict or problems for individual staff members. Some development workers find it difficult to cope with these problematic situations in a reflective manner.

### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. Ask the participants to relax. Have them listen to some relaxing music and look at a picture that depicts a scene of serene natural beauty (10 minutes). *[NOTE: You may wish to distribute some picture cards for this purpose.]*
2. Once participants feel calm, ask them to think about a problem that has arisen recently, using the following steps (45 minutes):
  - Visualize the problem scenario in your mind.
  - Think about the individuals/issues involved with the problem.
  - Think about the inter-relationship between the individuals/issues.
  - In your mind, name the difficulties/areas of conflict.
  - Write down a few key words that translate your thoughts. Or, if this is not enough, write a few sentences or even a story that illustrates the problem.

**Time:** About 3 hours

**Purpose:** To facilitate a learning experience that helps staff members practice a problem-solving technique that combines reflection and analysis.

**Materials:** Poster paper, color pencils, crayons, picture cards of serene natural beauty, a tape of relaxing music and a cassette player.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 11 . . . continued

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3. Ask participants to find a piece of paper or newsprint, take a few markers, color pencils and/or crayons and draw a diagram that illustrates her/his problem. Alternately participants can make a chart (if this is easier) or draw a picture expressing the problem in an abstract way (45 minutes).
4. Have participants brainstorm a few ideas for possible solutions to this problem, using the following guide (20 minutes):
  - Write down whatever ideas come into your mind.
  - Write freely, even if it appears to be strange.
  - Make a list of ideas.
5. Ask participants to read all the ideas that they came up with. Then have them walk through the following steps (20 minutes):
  - Eliminate ideas that seem unrealistic
  - Try combining two or three ideas together.
  - Try combining opposite ideas together.
6. Ask participants to identify a possible solution that is both feasible and is acceptable to them (10 minutes).
7. WRAP-UP: Encourage participants to comment on the learning experience (30 minutes).

# LEARNING EXPERIENCE 12

## Coordination

➡ **ISSUE:** Increasing participation in staff development training workshops and seminars means that staff members will be absent from work. In turn, this can create staffing and coordination problems. If the issues related to coordination are not discussed ahead of time, the situation can quickly deteriorate.

### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. **WARM-UP:** Cut up several pictures of project activities into puzzle size pieces. Distribute the pieces to participants and ask them to put the puzzle together. Ask what would happen if one of the pieces were lost? Have them do the puzzle and talk freely for about 30 minutes.
2. Ask participants to think about the following questions and write a story. Mention that they do not need to worry about spelling or grammar. Also make it clear that they will not be sharing this story with others (45 minutes).
  - Have you encountered a coordination-related problem recently?
  - What was the situation?
  - What were the issues?
  - What kinds of disruptions were caused?
3. Brainstorm the reasons for the coordination-related problems and write down the responses on a flip chart (20 minutes).

**TIME:** About 3 hours

**PURPOSE:** To facilitate a learning experience that allows staff to 1) reflect on coordination-related problems and 2) think through possible solutions.

**MATERIALS:** Pictures that represent project activities in which staff are involved (cut into puzzle size pieces), flip chart and markers.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 12 . . . continued

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4. Ask participants to think about the following questions and write another story (45 minutes).
  - Can you describe an ideal work situation (i.e., one that you would like to see)?
  - What kind of changes do you imagine are needed for this ideal situation?
  - What steps need to be taken in order to bring about these changes?
  - What kind of contribution can you make to bring about these changes?
5. Brainstorm options for dealing with the coordination-related problem. Write down the responses on a flip chart (20 minutes).
6. WRAP-UP: Encourage participants to comment on the learning experience. Wrap up by saying that if everyone agrees to the options recorded, staff can work collectively in order to bring about the suggested change (20 minutes)

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 13

### Dealing with Frustration

➡ **ISSUE:** A systematic staff development plan often raises expectations among staff members. Sometimes activities based on a shared plan do not get implemented as hoped initially due to logistical, administrative or funding constraints. Some staff members may feel downhearted if their expectations are not met.

#### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. **WARM-UP:** Ask participants to draw a funny picture, cartoon or diagram that represents a frustration or difficulty they have experienced. Mention that they do not have to draw a "perfect" picture, nor do they have to share their picture if they do not want to. Once participants have completed their picture/diagram, have one or two volunteers share with the group. Try to inject an element of humor into the discussion in order to create a light atmosphere (30 minutes).
2. Ask two or three participants to do a role-play or mime that illustrates a problematic issue, difficulty or point of frustration. Ask a few participants to make remarks after the play or mime (30 minutes).

**TIME:** About 3 hours

**PURPOSE:** To facilitate a learning experience that allows staff members to discuss, in a sympathetic atmosphere, their issues, difficulties and reasons for frustration.

**MATERIALS:** Flip chart, markers, color pencils and cards.

*[NOTES: You may wish to select volunteers for the role play ahead of time and check the topic of the role play to make sure it depicts issues and not individuals. Avoid highly sensitive issues if this feels counter-productive. Finally, encourage volunteers to inject an element of humor into their role-play or mime.]*

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 13 . . . continued

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3. Ask participants to write a short story based on their frustrating experience. If participants do not feel able to write a complete story, they may just write a few sentences or jot down some notes. Mention that they do not need to worry about spelling or grammar (45 minutes). You may wish to offer the following questions as a guide:
  - What difficulty did you experience/What happened that caused you frustration?
  - Was it totally unexpected?
4. Ask participants to find a partner and work in pairs to share their stories (20 minutes).
5. Ask each participant to summarize her/his partner's issue, difficulty or frustration. Have them write down the summary on a card or a small piece of paper and post the cards/papers on the board or flip chart (20 minutes).
6. Ask each participant to advise her/his colleague about the different ways the issue, difficulty or frustration could have been dealt with. Encourage them to have a pair consultation. At the end of the consultation, have them write their suggestions and recommendations on a card or a piece of paper and post the cards/papers on the board or flip chart (20 minutes).
7. Ask participants to walk around and read the issues and the possible suggestions and recommendations (15 minutes).
8. WRAP-UP: Encourage participants to comment on the learning experience (20 minutes).

# LEARNING EXPERIENCE 14

## Evaluation

⇒ **ISSUE:** At the end of training workshops or seminars, participants often write reports or provide information for evaluation purposes. Generally they do NOT take time to step back and reflect on their learning experience. Therefore, some of them do not become conscious of the learning that occurred as a result of their participation in educational activities.

### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. **WARM-UP:** Ask participants to look at the pictures or souvenirs of the training workshops and seminars that they have attended. You may wish to play a tape of relaxing music at this time. Ask them to think about an interesting memory they have, using the following questions as a guide:

What was the event?  
Who was involved?  
What happened?  
What makes this memory interesting?

Have two or three participants share their memories (30 minutes).

2. Ask participants to write a description of the past training workshop or seminar experience using a story-writing format such as the one provided overleaf. Mention that they do not need to worry about spelling or grammar (1 hour).

**Time:** About 3 hours

**Purpose:** To facilitate a learning experience that allows participants to 1) reflect on the educational activities in which they participated; 2) be able to recognize specific learning; and 3) become aware of their own professional growth.

**Material:** Pictures and souvenirs of the training workshops and seminars participants have attended, flip chart and markers, a tape of relaxing music and a cassette player.



## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 14 . . . continued

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*The following story-writing format is a prototype that may be adapted for use in different settings. Alternately, you may choose to create your own format.*

**My name is..... I have been working for..... for the last .... years.**

**Last year I participated in the following training workshops and seminars:**

**An interesting memory I have about a training program that I attended is the following:**

**I liked the following about this training:**

**I had difficulty understanding the following:**

**Other things I would like to share include:**

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 14 . . . continued

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3. Now have participants pair up and ask them to interview each other. The following is a prototype questionnaire for the interview. Again, you may wish create your own (1 hour).

Please talk with your colleague and find out one thing that s/he learned from the training events that s/he attended. To start the conversation, ask the following specific questions:

What was the name of the training event at which your learning occurred?

Where did the training event take place?

What specifically did you learn from this particular training event?

Have you used this learning to do a job? If so, how?

Have you used the learning to do a personal task? If so, how?

Was it easy or difficult to use this particular learning?

How did you feel as a result of being able to use the learning?

4. WRAP-UP: Ask participants to share the ideas, skills, concepts or information they have learned from different training events. Write down their responses on a flip chart and discuss (30 minutes).

# LEARNING EXPERIENCE 15

## Commitment

➡ **ISSUE:** Some staff members find it difficult to make connections between the skills and knowledge gained at training events and the practical application of these skills and knowledge in the field. Lacking a systematic process of commitment, some development workers often wonder whether and/or how they can apply/use their new skills and knowledge.

### PROCESS/KEY STEPS OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE:

1. **WARM-UP:** Ask participants to think about a person or a group of people that they would like to help in the near future. Play the tape of relaxing music while the participants are thinking. Tell them that they may take notes or scribble on a piece paper as they reflect. You may also provide the following questions as a guide (20 minutes).
  - Who are the people you are thinking about?
  - Where do they live?
  - What problem do they have?
  - What kind of help would be beneficial?
2. Now ask participants to think about the nature of the help or a specific activity that would be useful for the people they are thinking about. Ask them to draw a picture or a diagram of the activity or assistance they are thinking about. For example, if they are thinking about children's education, an illustration of a school may be drawn. Mention that the drawing does not have to be "perfect" (45 minutes).

**TIME:** About 3 hours

**PURPOSE:** To create a learning experience that allows participants to 1) understand the relationship between attending a training event and improving performance in the field; and 2) come up with a specific commitment.

**MATERIALS:** Color pencils, paper, flip chart and markers, envelopes, a tape of relaxing music and a cassette player.

## LEARNING EXPERIENCE 15 . . . continued

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3. Ask participants to write a story about their future plan or dream and commitment using a story-writing format such as the one below. Mention that they do not need to worry about spelling or grammar (1 hour).

*The following story-writing format is a prototype that may be adapted for use in different settings. Alternately, you may choose to create your own format.*

**My name is ..... I have spent about ..... days in  
different training workshops and seminars. The total cost of the educational  
activities that I have participated in is approximately..... The skills,  
concepts and ideas that I have learned are .....**

.....

**I feel deep sympathy for the person/people from.....village  
and would like to help. I would like to use the skills I learned from the  
training. My dream is to.....**

.....

6. Let participants share their dream or commitment with each another (25 minutes).
7. WRAP-UP (30 minutes): Give each participant an envelope. Ask them to put the picture or diagram they drew and the story they wrote into the envelope and seal it. Advise them to open the envelope after a certain period (maybe one year) in order to assess whether or not they have realized their dream or followed through with their commitment. Encourage participants to comment on the process.

## FACILITATOR NOTES

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*Additional Resources*  
*at*  
*The Center for International Education*

- Supervision and Facilitator Support** *By Mainus Sultan* 1996 28 pages \$5.00  
A manual designed for organizations which employ facilitators in different sites and who need to provide them with ongoing supervision and support.
- Networking: A Trainer's Manual** *By Joan M. Brandon and Associates* 1998 242 pages \$15.00  
A manual with activities and information based on a six stage developmental cycle that offers a practical process for turning the theory of networking into reality.
- Modules for Training Extension Workers with Handouts** *By Martin Byram* 1986 175 pages \$15.00  
A practical, field-based publication, which provides training modules for extension workers in the areas of basic education, needs; community mobilization needs; and work management skills. Loose-leaf modules facilitate reproduction.
- NGOs in Indonesia: Issues of Hegemony and Social Change** *By Mansour Fakih* 1991 16 pages \$5.00  
This offers a typology of alternative NGO structures and paradigms, which allow NGOs to transform development, involve people and create a counter-hegemonic movement.
- Module: Community Outreach** *By CIRCLE* 1996 24 pages \$3.00  
(*The Center for Immigration and Refugee Community Leadership and Development*)  
The module includes methods for implementing community development programs, including mapping, outreach techniques and participatory action research
- Partnerships for Community Development** *By S. Habana-Hafner, H. Reed & Assoc.* 1989 124 pages \$15.00  
This book is designed to help organizations and individuals working in associations, task forces, networks, councils, consortia and partnerships.
- Theater for Development: A Guide to Training** *By Martin L. Byram* 1985 65 pages \$8.00  
A guide for village level trainers, which describes the use of popular theater in development.
- Learning Centered Training for Learner Centered Programs** *By Suzanne Kindervatter* 1977 68 pages \$4.00  
This is an account of a learner-centered approach to a workshop design.

*The following technical notes for field workers on the application of NFE techniques or methods are available for \$2.00 each:*

- **Conscientizacao and Simulation Games:** Paolo Freire's educational philosophy and the use of simulation games for consciousness-raising.
- **The Facilitator Model:** the facilitator concept for community development in rural education.
- **Field Training through Case Studies:** provides village case studies as a training method for community development workers in Indonesia.
- **Participatory Communication in Non-formal Education:** simple processing techniques for information sharing, formative evaluation and staff communication.

**To order contact:** Publications Officer, Center for International Development  
285 Hills House South  
University of Massachusetts.  
Amherst, MA 01003 USA  
PH: (413) 545-0465 or FAX: (413) 545-1263  
CIE@educ.umass.edu  
www.umass.edu/cie

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