



## Roles of a Facilitator

Ideally, a good facilitator who wants to promote citizen participation should be able to guide people to analyze their problems and find practical pathways to resolve them by themselves, with or without outside support. Experience shows that playing the role of a facilitator requires patience, discipline and special skills acquired through reasonable training and practice. In order to make the present programme a success, the facilitators need to be skilful to handle the following tasks.

- Conducting participatory community consultative sessions to assess situations and pulling out community ideas relating to problems/issues.
- Presenting systematically, the problems/issues identified.
- Analyzing problems/issues together with community members so that community solutions to problems can be identified.
- Using participatory methodologies/tools effectively to generate community participation in planning and implementation of interventions.
- Moderating participatory planning sessions and placing all suggested interventions together in the form of a plan.
- Writing project proposals on the basis of the data/information generated at the participatory community consultations.
- Incorporating village plans into the LA's annual planning, implementation and management.
- Implementing proposed interventions/solutions to resolve problems/issues of citizens.

This requires drilling deep down into problems and reaching needy people for extending assistance and benefits, without depending on the superficial data/statistics. The facilitator also has to minimize his personal identity to prevent bulldozing his own personal ideas and agendas.

The participatory methodologies and the related tools for the facilitators have been introduced at ToP workshops for this purpose. However, the following points have to be kept in mind by the facilitators in using these tools.

- **Create conditions to enable people to speak out:** At the beginning of a consultative process, the facilitators may allow participants to air their grievances and encourage them to make statements and express ideas on their pressing issues. Skilful facilitation of such a session will give a lot of emotional relief to participants. For this purpose keep the agenda flexible.
- **Develop trust with partnership attitude:** The benefits of various projects do not always reach the needy citizens due to the lack of close and constant dialogue with them from the planning of interventions through to the implementation stage. This situation has created a lot of suspicions in the minds of the supporting agencies and accumulated tensions in the minds of the people. If the objective is to ensure effective service delivery, the facilitators have to develop a trust and partnership attitude to be close to the people.



- **Strengthen the learning process:** In many projects, attempts are made to develop institutional capacity through a structured learning process. It is therefore, very useful to capture and share such lessons learned at different layers of the LA
- **Understand limitations:** Facilitators require extra-ordinary commitment and a huge voluntary component in their work. This is essential for success. However, voluntarism has its own limitations and one should be mindful to what extent work on a voluntary basis is sustainable in the long run.
- **Improve professionalism:** While voluntarism is encouraged with high commitment, it is important for facilitators to develop professionalism in their work. The institutionalization of participation and participatory approaches within the LAs forms a part of this professionalism. The facilitators should understand that work relating to development projects cannot be carried out in the normal institutional culture where routine duties are performed restricted to the standard eight-hour day.
- **Keep interventions free from bias:** Projects may be kept free from political bias but it is important to obtain the blessings and support of all political parties. The facilitators should, therefore, emphasize the involvement of both government and opposition party leaders in the participatory community consultations.
- **Emphasize the LA/community partnership:** Many development projects do not belong to the category of relief and rehabilitation programmes. They are often partnerships between the LA and the citizens. Therefore it is important to identify the tasks that cannot be accomplished without joint effort and partnership between the LA and citizens.
- **Understand the process of change:** It is important to understand the process of change, particularly planned interventions for positive change. The learning and education should be included as essential dynamic elements of the process of change. Effecting changes in LAs is not always that easy.
- **Good coordination is essential:** The mediation role of the LA is crucial. Equally important is to convert the LA into an effective coordination unit.
- **Incorporate village plans with people:** Participatory community consultations can be treated as an opportunity to initiate a process for incorporating village plans and inviting resources from different sources. In this exercise it also important to create an environment that is conducive by following a step-by-step process to utilize existing capacities.
- **Final outcomes:** It is necessary to visualize final outcomes of your efforts in the community consultations. One of the points to be kept in mind may include effective and sustainable delivery of services.