Guiding Principles

Facilitating learning, understanding and change through relationships

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Guiding Principles

Facilitating learning, understanding and change through relationships

By Claire Campbell, Matt Campbell and Simone Blair

State Government
Victoria

Contents

Summary

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to provide insight into the beliefs, principles and processes necessary to develop and facilitate learning, understanding and change through stronger and more resilient relationship networks. This document reflects the view that facilitation is fundamental to the growth and sustainability of such networks.

The document talks about facilitation as a *way of being with people* – that is, the beliefs, values and attitudes a facilitator holds about the people they are working with. The way of being with people influences the *way of working* – the way in which the facilitator works with others and interprets and applies tools, processes and approaches.

Facilitation can become part of all daily interactions with people. This way of being requires a facilitator to believe in people's capacity to understand, learn and adapt; this belief allows them to build relationships with people in all contexts, to learn alongside and share with them, and adapt personally as a result of experience.

It is crucial to avoid viewing the facilitation approach as issue-specific. As such, the way of being with people and subsequent way of working proposed in this document is transferable to any context of human endeavour and it is infinitely adaptable.

To date, the principles have been applied by practitioners working in the fields of community development, public health and emergency management (see, for example, Blair et al. 2010a, b; Campbell et al. a, b; Nelson Mandela Foundation 2009, The Constellation for AIDS Competence 2011, The Salvation Army 1998, 2002).

Many of the principles outlined here will validate the relational ways of connecting to others that are instinctive to most people, especially in or after a crisis – that is, empathy, listening, curiosity, care and hope. This document highlights, and articulates, these very human skills so that they may be used more deliberately, reflected on and refined.

We hope that this document will inspire other would-be 'facilitators' to 'have a go' at trying new ways of thinking about people, working alongside others, and connecting to others in their workplace and home lives. Facilitators can use the ideas within this document to develop ways of working that suit the particular cultural, organisational or community context that they are working in.

This is NOT a manual and should not be treated as a script to replicate a particular process.

This document has six sections:

1. Why facilitation?
2. The role of the facilitator
3. Facilitating a strategic conversation process
4. The facilitation team
5. Stories from Africa, India and Australia
6. Documentation and measurement

Acknowledgements

There are many people who need to be thanked for their support and assistance in the preparation of this report. First we would like to express our appreciation to all the community members from across the globe who have contributed to facilitated learning networks. It has been an exciting journey of mutual learning together.

Australian Government

Attorney-General's Department
Emergency Management Australia

Claire Campbell

Claire is a clinical psychologist who has worked in the community development field over the past ten years. She has systematically worked and developed processes, tools, approaches and mechanisms designed to empower individuals and communities to respond to the issues they are facing including HIV/AIDS (Africa, Asia Pacific), and the issues of loss and grief encountered after the natural disaster of the tsunami in 2004 and the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005.

Claire spent a number of years working across cultures as the lead researcher in a participatory action research project evaluating the impact of HIV/AIDS prevention approaches implemented by the international Salvation Army. This research occurred in eight countries (Kenya, Zambia, Malawi, Uganda, PNG, Indonesia, India and Sri Lanka) and involved sharing what was learned with other organizations.

Claire believes that all people have the capacity to respond to the issues facing them in their own context. By systematically applying core concepts related to building relationships through ongoing conversations, dynamic change is possible, irrespective of culture or issue.

Simone Blair

Simone is an anthropologist and before joining DSE Land and Fire management she taught, and undertook research, in this discipline at the University of Melbourne. She has worked with Victorian commercial fishing communities to describe how they learn about, understand, use and pass on knowledge about the marine environment and how their values and social relationships affect these processes of learning and inter-generational knowledge transfer.

The common thread that runs through her work with commercial fishing communities and her work in land and fire management is her interest in how groups of people come to know, value, care about and use the natural environment. She believes that different life ways, cultures and ways of knowing can offer all people insights as to how we can better live in, and adapt to, our world.

Matt Campbell

Matt Campbell is a public health professional and has worked on HIV-related community development initiatives in the Asia/Pacific region and southern Africa. His focus has been building community connectedness through strengths-based approaches, which recognise the inherent capacity of all individuals to respond to the concerns in their lives. Matt is passionate about discovering how social and environmental contexts affect communities – initially, across cultures and now through DSE Land and Fire Management.

Matt believes ongoing learning from local knowledge and experience is the greatest catalyst for generating sustained behaviour change. In his experience, genuine relationships enable all people to participate in this process.

Foreword

Over the last few years, people in Victoria, Australia and around the world have confronted and survived fire, flood, earthquakes, tsunami and storm. People have faced these challenges with courage, strength and determination to adapt and recover.

In my work with Victorian communities affected by fire and flood, it has become clear that there is a strong desire for greater understanding of how to live with the threat of natural events, live through them and re-build life after. That is, there is a strong desire to be more resilient.

The idea of building resilience is not new. However, there is ongoing debate and uncertainty as to how best to support people be more resilient.

The principles contained within this document advocate a strengths based approach to working with people. These principles address the core of what it is to live with uncertainty, and suggest ways of thinking and working that help people identify and build on their own strengths. The main approach is simply that of getting people together to talk in intentional and strategic ways. Through such conversations, people build strengths of relationship, knowledge and understanding that increase their resilience to prepare for, and deal with any issue, be that fire, flood or the storms of life generally.

I am pleased to add my support to the following guiding principles for facilitating ongoing conversations that support people to discover their individual and community strengths, build understanding and as a result, support greater resilience of all Victorians to address events or issues that threaten the very fabric of community life.

Neil Comrie AO, APM
Bushfires Royal Commission Implementation Monitor

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Why?

- We facilitate to ensure that people can converse with one another about what they care about and to decide for themselves what to do about it.

- We facilitate instead of 'telling' people what to do or giving them answers that create dependency, lack of ownership and solutions that do not have local relevance or meaning.

- We facilitate to stimulate trans-formation or bring about change.

What do we mean by 'facilitation'?

- Facilitation is a process that supports conversation and the development of relationships between people.

- Facilitation ensures that conversations can develop and explore issues in a neutral environment.

- Facilitation supports the deliberate and strategic connection of one person to another.

- Facilitation is about bringing people together and supporting them in their ownership of success in problem solving through reflection, learning and relationship building.

Facilitation: A way of being with people

The attitudes and beliefs that people bring to facilitation have a huge impact on what emerges from a facilitated process. In order to facilitate constructively, facilitation should be understood as a particular and deliberate *way of being with people*, which is supported by a vision that is hopeful and caring.

One way to remember and characterise this way of being with people is summarised below, using the acronym SALT (Campbell 1999). It is not a kit, a tool or a script. Facilitators work with people – they do not 'do' SALT to them.

S *Strengths-focussed*

A *Accompanying*

L *Learning -* asking the right questions in the right way at the right time

T *Transformation*

Strengths-focussed

Strengths-focussed refers to the facilitator's belief that people, themselves, have the human strength or capacity to respond by identifying their concerns, making decisions, acting, finding their own resources and measuring the effectiveness of their action. The facilitator's role is to help people discover, express and draw on this capacity as a resource. As facilitators support people or groups, they should not focus just on all the problems and weaknesses, but rather should look for, appreciate and affirm what is working and what can work.

A strengths-based approach does not mean ignoring issues or challenges, but involves examining how people's strengths can be used to address a challenge or problem.

Accompanying

To accompany someone is to share a journey, process or transition with them – you begin somewhere with them and take part in something over time; you may eventually leave, but you have 'walked alongside them' for a while. Accompaniment is a kind of ongoing relationship that is characterised by care, support, reciprocity, purpose, mutual learning, appreciation of strengths, and time. It is based on mutual trust and a desire to learn, rather than on hierarchy or level of expertise.

In this sense, facilitation enhances, supports and strengthens *what is already occurring* – it does not replace or hinder relationships, projects and processes that already exist.

Learning

This refers to the practice of learning from those you are accompanying, and seeking to find out about their unique insights, human strengths and abilities. Facilitation aims to stimulate hopeful change and involves all people changing together as they learn about each other. As you facilitate learning in others, you also learn about yourself. It would be arrogant to see one's role as simply to change others. Facilitators should be able to reflect upon their own change and development as a result of their encounters with others.

Transformation

Transformation or change of some description – whether in attitude, understanding, behaviour or all of the above – is an inevitable result of being involved with others. The participants own this change. The experience of change can be shared with others, and the transfer of knowledge can itself produce more change. The result can be a growing movement for response by and between people that is indicative of transformation, or shared change. As experience and knowledge is shared, it is adapted to the context and integrated into a way or working. The transformative process is multi-directional as facilitators allow themselves to be changed, thus a degree of vulnerability is shown as they work.

What is facilitated?

Any interaction with another person can be a situation that reflects the principles of facilitation in action.

Facilitation: A way of working

Appreciating strengths, being alongside people, learning with them and changing as a result can happen anywhere, at any time. Intentionally creating situations where this can occur supports intentional learning, understanding and change. One forum for doing this is via intentional, ongoing conversations. Conversations of this nature exist in many contexts and have been called various names, such as community conversations (Nelson Mandela Foundation 2009a, 2009b), community counselling (The Salvation Army 1998, AFFIRM Associates 2011), or strategic conversations (DSE 2010). For the purpose of this document, we will use the term 'strategic conversation'.

What is strategic conversation?

'Strategic' implies that there is a purpose for the conversation, which is supported by a facilitation process.

Strategic conversation creates a supportive environment that allows people to share experience and knowledge. This can lead to real change in how issues and approaches are perceived, and later acted upon.

Strategic conversations are based on the principle or belief that people have the knowledge, strength and ability to access the human capacity, skills and resources around them.

All strategic conversations apply facilitation principles to ensure success. This approach emphasises the participants' strengths and knowledge. It also enhances their ability to engage with the issues, explore ideas, make decisions, act, learn, adapt and transfer.

In a strategic conversation, the facilitator intentionally opens up issues for discussion and asks questions to support deeper thinking and understanding. This expanded understanding allows development and application of new knowledge.

Strategic conversations may be formal (i.e. involve a designated note taker and primary facilitator) or be informal (i.e. involve one person who deliberately behaves as a facilitator without officially being designated as such).

Strategic conversations are 'open to all' and 'respectful of all'.

A strategic conversation may be between two people or within a group of up to about 20 people.[1] The number of people present at a conversation is not a measure of its worth; rather, the success of a strategic conversation is measured by the quality of the relationships, listening, ideas and changes that arise from it.

A strategic conversation is similar to an 'ordinary' conversation, like the one we may have with a friend over coffee. The main difference is that one or several participants take on the role of a facilitator or facilitation team (Chapter 4). In doing so, they take responsibility to ensure that the conversation remains focussed, deliberate, constructive and exploratory, and that it recurs over time.

Strategic conversations can happen anywhere; for example, at the community hall, under a tree, at the office, outside the post office.

Strategic conversations intentionally integrate all deliberate and tacit moments of mutual learning.

To achieve greater understanding, a series of conversations is normally required – a series that develops over time, supports greater exploration, and accumulates learning and adaptation.

A facilitator of a strategic conversation will not necessarily be working to elicit a specific outcome or action from the conversation, but rather to guide the conversation in a positive direction, using strategic questioning and other techniques. As well as the ability to employ certain facilitation techniques, this also requires a degree of intuition and relational skills. A facilitator is, in this sense, responding with a relational counselling approach.

Always people- and strengths-focussed

Although people may affiliate with a certain group, interest or occupation, in a strategic conversation they come together first as people. They meet as persons, human-to-human, and, while their jobs, hobbies, experience or group membership may enable them to have some specific knowledge or skills, they are not invited to represent those affiliations in this space.

The conversations are facilitated and people-focussed, and highlight the human strengths of those involved. This is critical to stimulate the main goal, which is sustained and expanded action, learning and change, indicating social and interventional impact well beyond individual conversations, events or unconnected outcomes. People in different conversations can be linked for sharing and learning and, as a result, form a network.

Facilitation vs. training

Facilitation and training are often confused and the definitions can sometimes be blurred. A trainer may have some of the characteristics of a facilitator, but the purpose, role and relationship to the participants, is quite different for each. Training seeks to impart a set of skills and information to those participating, while facilitation seeks to open-up a discussion to explore ideas and application, which may be enhanced by particular skills. This is illustrated in Figure 2 and Figure 3 (Campbell 2000).

Notes

1   There is no limit to the number of participants in a strategic conversation. However, experience has shown us that it is difficult to create and maintain an intimate environment of trust, participation and reflection with a group that is larger than about 20 people.

Figure 1. Facilitation

FACILITATION

Figure 2. Training

TRAINING

Facilitators and trainers also have different roles and approaches. This is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: 'Role of facilitator and trainer

Facilitator	Trainer
Probes for information using strategic questions	Tells/communicates information
Learns and adapts way of working	Conveys set information
Participates with the people	Emphasises the distinctions between participant and trainer
Invests in equitable relationships with participants	Maintains a 'trainer–learner' relationship
Success measured by all	Success measured by trainer
Works to draw-out and synthesise participants' knowledge	Fills a knowledge deficit
Shares decision-making	Makes the decisions
Is empathetic	Brings people around to a certain way of thinking
Creates a relaxed and informal environment where conversation flows freely	Creates a formal environment with established roles for participation
Forms professional interpersonal relationships	Maintains trainer–learner boundaries
Considers all people to be learners	Considers the knowledge deficits
Acknowledges that they do not have all the answers	Believes they can answer all the questions
Ensures full participation by all	Ensures all the information is conveyed
Shares and allows for sharing	Delivers a process with full content and structure
Forms a shared framework (common ground) of human capacity development for response – a strengths-based approach	Develops set agenda to work through
Believes good and some unexpected outcomes will emerge from the facilitated process	Strives for set outcomes and dissemination of content
Creates a sense of community and belonging among participants	Views participants as autonomous
Builds connections between people – in conversations and within the wider learning network	Views training events and learners as separate

As stated in the previous section:

- Facilitation is a process that supports conversation and the development of relationships between people.
- Facilitation ensures that conversations can develop and explore issues in a neutral environment.
- Facilitation also supports the deliberate and strategic connection of one person to another.

A facilitator seeks to create an environment where all participants feel able to express their views and have these views heard in a respectful manner. Facilitators do not impose their own perspective or agenda. Rather, they help to explore the issues by asking questions and challenging the participants to think more carefully about their own views and the views of others. A facilitation approach emphasises the strengths, knowledge and ability of all people to engage with issues, to explore ideas, make decisions, learn and adapt.

Role of a facilitator

A facilitator supports and guides a conversation as it develops, and explores issues and ideas that are important to the group. They have specific attributes and skills. Although some of these are identified in Table 2 and Table 3, each facilitator will find their own style and understanding of facilitation.

I LIKE YOUR ATTITUDE!

No one facilitator possesses all the possible personal attributes, and each develops their own style. This requires them to learn, discuss, apply, discuss again, learn and adapt. The most important aspect of this is having a learning attitude. It is also important to have strong motivation to apply the new learning and to try new things.

Attributes

A facilitator has the following personal attributes.

Table 2: Attributes of a facilitator

Attribute	Description
Flexible	Does not consider the initial focus of a conversation to be the top priority. Other issues may need to be explored first.
Adaptive	Can adapt if necessary so that the issue is thoroughly explored.
Intuitive	Understands the personality and situational influences in a conversation and responds intuitively to the nuances present. Is able to intuitively guide the conversation even though it may go in unanticipated directions.
Responsive to beliefs and values about people	Believes that all people are able to discuss and find their own solution to an issue. Stimulates people to work and talk from strengths.
Respectfulness of all	Works to create an environment of mutual respect, by displaying respect to all present. Mediates conflict diplomatically and patiently.
Neutral	Remains neutral and validates all perspectives.
Trustworthy	Creates an environment of trust where all participants feel they can air their views.
Empathetic	Displays an emotional understanding of what people are expressing. Participants feel the facilitator shows a genuine interest.
Appropriately assertive	Ensures no agenda dominates and re-focusses the conversation onto the topic at hand when necessary.
Resourcefulness	Uses surrounding people, items and resources to enhance the facilitation process. Is creative in keeping participants stimulated.
Sound knowledge of the issues	Asks relevant and effective questions to support the development of the most beneficial conversation.
Conscious of others as team members	Works with other facilitators in a team-orientated way to ensure the best-possible result for the conversation. Considers how the conversation is impacting the group.
Relationship-focussed	Works to strengthen all relationships and believes that many heads together are better than one.
Attitude of learning	Enters into every interaction with the intention of learning something new that can add to their own capacity.

Skills

A facilitator requires certain skills for facilitating both individuals and groups. Some of these skills are listed in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Facilitator's skills

Individual skills	Description
Keeps key issue/purpose in mind	Keeps the conversation flowing, and able to guide it back to topic when appropriate/necessary.
Formulates and asks strategic questions	Uses questions that open-up the conversation around the issue, through focussing on concerns, hopes and ways of thinking and working.
Able to deal with unexpected situations	Responds to both the expected and unexpected ways in which people may act or behave.
Effective interpersonal communication	Communicates effectively in a wide variety of contexts and with a wide variety of people. Adjusts language and communication style to suit the context and audience.
Equitable	Recognises that the participants hold multiple agendas. Creates space for all views without allowing one to dominate.
Resolves conflicts	Creates a supportive listening environment to discuss conflicts and allow greater understanding. Strives for understanding when agreement may not be possible.
Supports local ownership of strategic conversations	Encourages group ownership of the conversation, and seeks to develop local 'champions' to carry the conversation forward.
Actively learns. Analyses and adapts based on learning	Identifies what worked and what did not, and learns from every interaction and every situation in order to improve.
Time-conscious	Facilitates conversation within the time allocated, and wraps up by identifying areas for future conversations. Is able to structure the conversation for the given time while maintaining quality and participation.
Applies a team approach	Briefs before a facilitated conversation; identifies what roles will be taken by team members; relies on other team members in the conversation to ensure flow; debriefs after the conversation to identify what worked well and what could be improved next time.
Shares approach with others	Shares the concepts and ideas involved in facilitation with others in order to inspire interest and response.
Includes everyone	Is able to include the participation of everyone in the conversation.
Connects people	Works to build relationships between people in the conversation and beyond.

CONTROL ISSUES

A facilitator can struggle with control. That is to say, experience has shown that the facilitator should feel like control of the situation or conversation is just about to bubble over. Far from being alarmed about an encounter that seems slightly out of control, the facilitator realises this is a helpful reality – and that facilitation of mutual respect ensures that the participants always own the conversation and hold a strong connection to its content.

What a facilitator does not do

A facilitator does not provide solutions to the issue being discussed. Nor do they impose their own agenda or perspective on the conversation. The facilitator is neutral about the content of the conversation and towards the people in that conversation. Having said this, a good facilitator should not lack genuine personality or emotion. The balance of being neutral and personable, or authentic, or honest, is a constant challenge for a good facilitator.

A facilitator does not become a 'different person' in different settings, but rather embodies various facilitator attitudes and behaviours appropriate for each unique setting and interaction.

Facilitation is not just the event, it is the whole process of relationship building and maintenance that takes place before, during and after any formally-facilitated event – see the 'conversation cycle' illustrated on page 16.

Facilitators do not overwhelm human-to-human connections with technological interfaces like PowerPoint, social media, etc. These tools have their place, but they should not dominate real relationships or conversations.[2]

Facilitators are deliberately resource-poor – relative to the context they are working in. They recognise that money and material goods given by 'outsiders' are usually divisive and can exacerbate underlying social, relational and philosophical issues that exist in all social groups.

Notes

2   The use of facilitation aids or props ('artefacts') can substantially aid facilitation in a workshop setting. The context of this document is the facilitation of learning, understanding and change through relationships. In normal day-to-day conversation and relationships it is rare to use props and, as such, this should be kept to a minimum. Facilitation aids could be used in this context when invited by participants or when they do not detract from discussion.

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Photo credits: C. Campbell

A: A Way of Working: SALTy Behaviours

As discussed in Part 2, beliefs and values (way of being and thinking), the SALT principles directly impact how a facilitator works with others and how they interact with, and apply tools.

In reality all behaviours are influenced by values – be they the ones represented by SALT principles or otherwise. However, some key examples of "SALTy" behaviours are highlighted below.

"SALTy" behaviours displayed by a facilitator as they enact the principles of facilitation (SALT) in a conversation

Behaviour	Involves…
Strength-focussed	Involves focussing on what people are capable of and what is possible, rather than on problems and difficulties.
Supporting	Involves listening to and encouraging people, it does not mean providing material things.
Accompanying	Involves being alongside people as they deepen their relationships, deepen their understanding and finally make choices. Accompanying a group or individual takes a commitment of time and genuine care. We cannot interchange people and assume that the participant or other team members will still feel they are being accompanied.
Appreciating	Involves a human-strengths-focussed approach. Everyone has the ability to care for others, change, have hope and be part of a community.
Listening carefully	Involves the team listening carefully and actively to concerns, hopes, and ways of thinking and working in order to analyse what is heard, and ask questions to encourage participants to analyse. Facilitators are conscious and responsive to nuances that exist in the conversation.
Working as a Team	Facilitators ideally do not work alone; rather, they operate as a team where support is available, and space for reflection and learning can occur. Part 4 of this document discusses the concept and processes of team in detail.
Taking Time	Developing relationships and true understanding takes time. There is often no 'end point'; rather change and understanding occur cumulatively.
Stimulating	A facilitator uses strategic questions to stimulate thought and action for change.

Behaviour	Involves…
Analysing	Analysis as a way of working does not mean constant in-depth analysis. Instead, to appreciate and learn from others, team members need to have an analytical curiosity that seeks to explore and understand people and contexts. The team continually analyses and stimulates analysis as the participants gradually open-up discussion on significant issues. Together, they acknowledge the underlying themes of the issues. It will become natural to reflect on what the participants themselves can do. The team stimulates reflection, enabling participants to look at the connections between their concerns and the major issues affecting them. For example, applying a process of action, reflection and review to each conversation maximises the learning opportunities and continuous improvement (Box 4).
Transforming	Working in a way that focuses on the strengths of people has a transformative effect, both on the facilitator and the participants. We see the world differently, as common humanity, and there is no turning back. Personal and shared change that is transferred is the basis of a movement for expanding and sustaining change. We find hope for societal transformation.
Transfering	Transfer involves the facilitators taking something back (e.g. vision, knowledge, skills, attitudes, ways of working etc) to their own contexts and applying the approach there. Transfer also happens when participants link to others outside the conversation, and influence change in other places. The team can encourage transfer from one context to another by utilising the network of relationships that currently exist. The team can facilitate network growth by identifying and connecting people and groups which can gain confidence and strength to open strategic conversations in their context.

B: A Way of Working: Facilitating an ongoing conversation process

Conversations are a key way in which humans build understanding and knowledge as well as assign meaning/significance to issues and events (see Campbell, Blair, Wilson, 2010 for a detailed rationale of the role conversation).

When facilitated in an intentional way, a conversation can become strategic. Conversations of this type involve the exchange of formal and experiential information and knowledge.

A strategic conversation supports the process of change. This change can be internal; for example, change in knowledge and change in understanding. Change can also be external; for example, change in relationship between the conversation participants, or decisions to change behaviour or to take particular action. The role of the conversation is not necessarily to lead to direct action, but to support and stimulate thinking around an issue. Action can then occur outside the facilitated space and becomes more informed, locally owned, sustained and transferable.

The Cycle

Figure 3: The conversation cycle
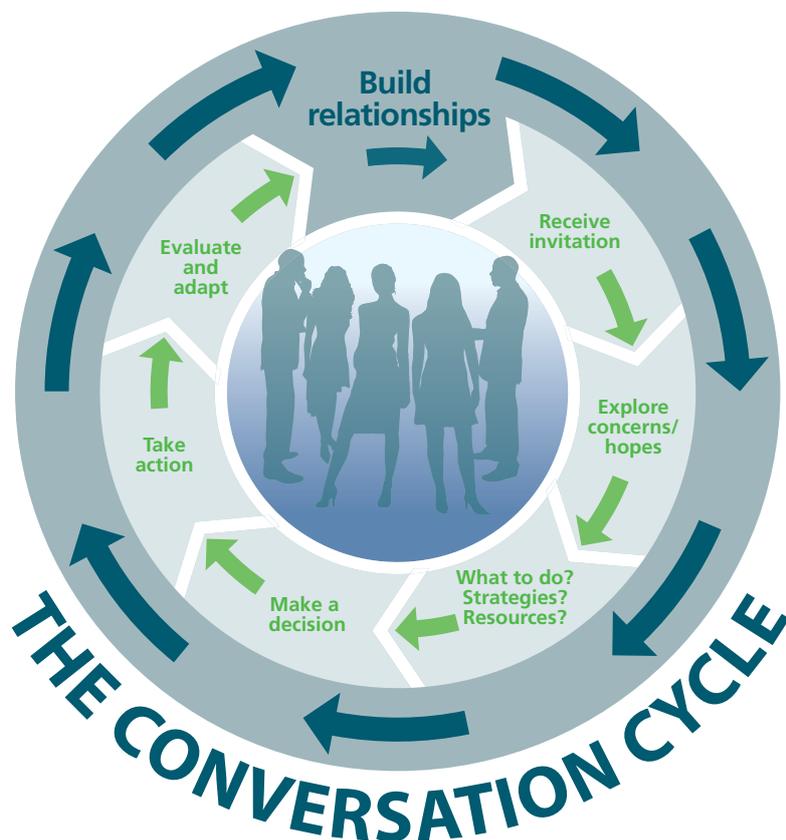
How the conversation happens is critical. An outline for how a conversation can develop over time, keep focus and direction, and support transfer is illustrated above (Campbell 2000). By using this outline for how conversations cycle, a facilitation team can guide the conversation. The elements of the conversation cycle are usually reflected in the following:

Table 5: Components of the conversation cycle

Elements of the conversation cycle	Reflected by
Relationship building	Key element The beginning-point of any conversation and is essential to ensuring the conversation begins and continues to develop. Relationship building is never complete.
Receive Invitation	Key element A facilitation team operates under the principle of invitation. Invitation refers to the process of being asked/welcomed to be part of a conversation for change. Invitation often emerges as a result of relationship and people perceiving value in having a process of learning and change facilitated in a strategic manner. Invitation does not have to be formal. In most instances it is informal.
Explore Concerns and Hopes	When there is an authentic relationship and invitation for conversation, it is possible to begin exploring participants' concerns and hopes around issues that concern them. This process may take several conversations. It requires people take each issue in turn and explore the roots of the issue. In doing this they try and understand each other's different view points on the issue.
What to do? Possible strategies	Once an issue is firmly understood it is possible to explore what can be done about it. Understanding the issue thoroughly increases the likelihood that a sustainable strategy for change will be achieved. This involves not only identifying ways forward, but more importantly discussing the HOW of the way forward.
Make a decision	The participants enact the HOW of their decision. The process is constantly reviewed for learning and adaptation.
Take action	Once options for moving forward have been thoroughly explored, the conversation participants choose their preferred way forward.
Evaluate and adapt	During and after action, the conversation continues exploring what works, what does not. What needs to be done differently? Where are the gaps in understanding? What needs to be understood further?

The cycle provides a guide that is not prescriptive. Rather, it is adaptive and can be applied to suit the local context. Some of the benefits of thinking about the conversation process as a cycle are listed below.

- Aids facilitation by showing how a conversation can develop and progress. It supports a dynamic conversation that focuses on more than one phase of the cycle.

- Can be used by facilitators to keep track of where the conversation is at within the cycle, and to ask strategic questions that keep it moving.

- Reminder that completing the cycle needs more than one conversation. It may take several months or much longer to work around, and may not be over just because you have encountered each phase of the cycle.

- Reminder of the dynamic nature of conversation. Several cycles may occur simultaneously, and at different phases of the conversation cycle.

- Supports in-depth discussion. Back-tracking to an earlier phase to explore it in greater depth is often required.

- A facilitator does not facilitate one conversation and then leave; they maintain some level of relationship with the participants in the conversation over a period of time, which can be described as accompaniment.

C: Way of working with the cycle: Applying SALT principles and behaviours

A facilitator comes alongside others, when invited, to accompany them in the process of learning and sharing, and application. The way of working refers to the behaviours a facilitator displays in order to enact the principles (vision/way of thinking) of SALT in every interaction (see p. 5).

The following diagram builds on the basic conversation cycle diagram to include how a way of thinking (SALT principles) and working (SALTy behaviours) combine within the framework of the conversation cycle.

Outcomes of applying the conversation cycle:

When a facilitation team works by invitation and learns from local action and experience, it can expect a number of outcomes. These occur according to varying timeframes, which reflect the local capacity and context. Several of these are listed below.

- Increased and strengthened human capacities in communities and organisations to change, care for others, hope, transfer and demonstrate increased competency

- Increased trust within relationships

- Improved quality of relationships between people who otherwise may not interact

- Increased motivation to address local concerns

Figure 4: The conversation cycle
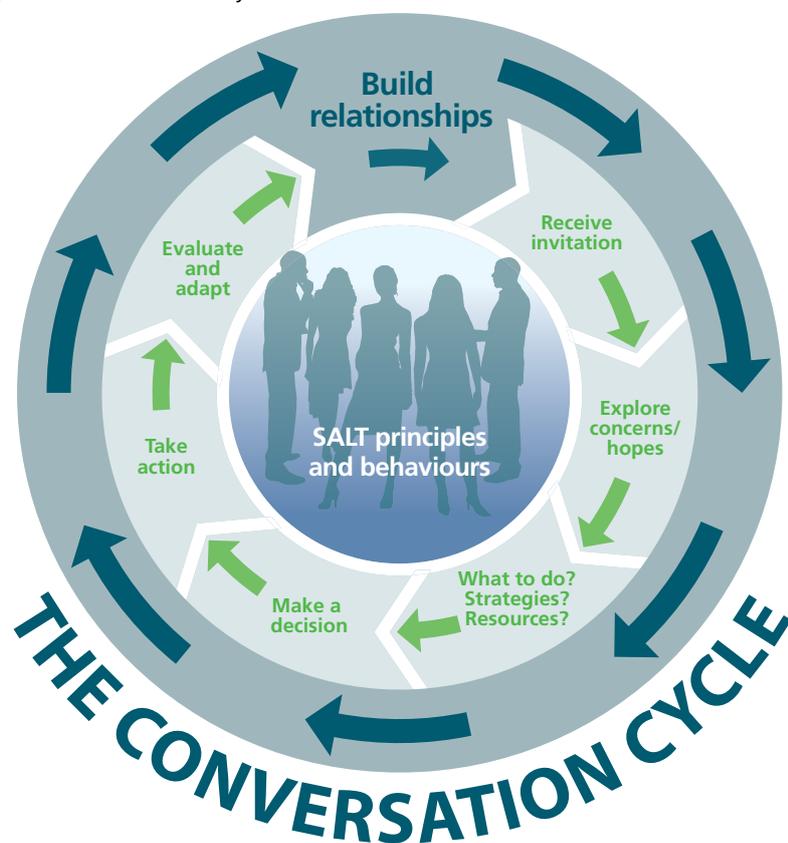
- A greater capacity for individuals and groups to reflect, analyse and build self-awareness
- More informed decision-making. The conversations help identify lessons learned and the application of the learning to future action
- An expanded pool of experienced facilitators and facilitation teams within communities, regions and the state, which ensures consistency in the facilitation process and high quality of leadership in facilitation teams
- Ongoing self-measurement of change over time.

Change occurs at each stage:

Change through relationship building

In building relationships, the connections between people are altered. How they relate, why they relate and why they may want to keep relating are all relevant issues that occur in any interaction, often simultaneously.

Change through invitation

Invitation in this context refers to the willingness to remain connected to the facilitation team and the conversation process. An invitation does not necessarily have to be written or formal. The facilitation process can strategically stimulate invitations, making explicit the desire for continuing relationship.

Change through exploring perspectives on concerns/issues

Exploring concerns involves identifying the various dimensions, influences and contextual factors that impact on an issue and how it is perceived. Differences in perspective about an issue can be highlighted and reasons for differences discussed within a space for sharing and listening to experiences and lessons learned. In this way, people learn about each other and why they feel as they do.

Change through exploring options

Once the issues are explored, the group participants may decide not just to talk, but also to be involved in taking action. As a group they may decide to work together. Directed by the group, the conversation can move to exploring hopes for the future, possible actions, the resources available for enacting action and strategies for actually doing something. The participants' motivations, interests and sense of group cohesiveness will have all been changed.

Change through the formation of a decision

Facilitators may facilitate with potential action of the local community in mind. However, personal views are not imposed. Actions and decisions should be, and often are, a natural result of having a conversation. Thus, once all the possible options have been explored, the group may wish to make a decision about which attitude to hold, or which action to take. The conversation supports differences of opinions being aired, and exploring which option the group feels would work.

Change through taking action

The group participants works together and with the resources in their community to ensure that the steps required for successful action are carried out. The group members motivate and support each other in the process.

Change through evaluating the conversation and action

For a truly transformative conversation cycle to occur, the conversations and actions should be evaluated in terms of what worked, what did not, what lessons have been learned, and how learning has been and can be applied individually, as a group, as a community or as an organisation. Critical to this process is exploring how to change future decision-making and action based on the learning and how to share the knowledge with others.

Photo credit: C. Campbell

As noted previously, no one facilitator will have all the attributes or skills required for facilitation. Working as a facilitation team enables different but complementary facilitation styles to be present. This means a greater array of skills and techniques can be drawn on in order to get the best out of the group, and strengthen each other as a team.

A shared vision and way of working

The members of an effective facilitation team share a common vision and way of working. A vision reflects the belief, or shared beliefs, that people hold about how things should be. It describes a hoped-for future that speaks of an ideal situation. For a facilitation team, vision provides something to work towards that is holistic and not bogged-down in detail. Facilitators are vision-orientated, and a facilitation team operates in a way that reflects core beliefs about people – in particular, their human capacity for response to difficult situations – and how facilitation should occur. A shared vision is not a set of expectations to be met. Rather, vision pertains to an evolving sense of the future that is collectively hoped-for. For example, one vision a team would share is to support individuals/communities identify and develop their own vision.

A facilitation-team approach is modelled when the facilitators accompany participants in conversations, by asking strategic questions, eliciting and appreciating different views and providing support as needed. The facilitators complement each other to achieve these ends before, during and after arranged strategic conversations.

While we have begun by talking of facilitators as individuals, operating in a team environment supports the development of the individual facilitator's attributes and skills. A facilitation team comprises two or more facilitators working together. A team is bound together by a shared way of thinking (vision) and working (principles that guide approach). They complement each other's strengths and weaknesses.

LEAVE YOUR BAGGAGE AT HOME

Every person or group you interact with as a facilitator deserves the best of you. Circumstances that affect you in your personal and work life are not the concern of those people you facilitate and so shouldn't be visible. Use your facilitation team to pull you up, support you and keep your energy positive.

Working as a team provides an environment for support, sharing and learning. A facilitation team, compared with a lone facilitator, can share and reflect upon experience, and can analyse what worked well and what could be improved in any facilitated situation. Support from other facilitators also increases the facilitator's quality and skill. That is, the team process allows for formal and informal mentoring of those in the team to develop their skills as facilitators. Additionally, working in a facilitation environment is a large emotional investment, and having a team to debrief with and reflect on the experience is integral to personal health, wellbeing and learning. Working as a team is therefore an empowering context in which to develop.

Building a team

A facilitation team is built by bringing together people with a shared interest in supporting conversations and by developing the strengths of those involved in the conversations. A shared vision and belief in the ways of being with people and ways of working, as well as trust and rapport, are pillars of facilitation-team life.

Team members

Each team member brings with them different strengths; thus, a team is composed of people from a variety of backgrounds and with varied experiences. Often, members have different levels of facilitation skill, which continue to be developed through being part of the team. A facilitation team member does not need to have a fully developed set of facilitation skills and attributes to be a valued part of the team. It is enough initially that they demonstrate potential for, and a willingness to learn, various skills and attributes. Facilitators learn by doing and from other facilitators with whom they work.

Membership may be both formal and informal. That is, a person may act as a facilitator without being 'formally' designated as such by their 'role description' or by being employed by an organisation. A facilitation team is non-hierarchical because decisions and practice are shared rather than mandated or directed. Team members are valued for their own unique strengths and abilities. Further, to stimulate a 'relational' rather than a 'hierarchical' way of working with others, team members should model this behaviour. A facilitation team is not a 'club' and teams should be inclusive. Though they may share much time together, they should never become exclusive and should be mindful not to present an outward appearance of being separate or elitist.

WHERE IS MY TEAM?
A facilitator will always find a team (Chapter 3) before a conversation begins, or at least during a conversation; that is, some people with the will and ability to bring out the best in others are noticed and, by definition, are team members, at least tacitly.

How to identify a facilitator

Within a facilitation team, all members should strive to embody the attributes of a facilitator. These attributes should be taken into consideration when selecting members of a facilitation team, as well as when developing new facilitation-team members.

During the course of a support visit, people with potential as facilitators can be identified and invited to be part of the facilitation team in the next support visit. Over time, a pool of facilitators develops.

Roles and responsibilities of all team members

As part of a team, each member has certain roles and responsibilities. Some of these are listed below.

- Show team consciousness and care for others in the team.
- Stimulate and enable growth, change and awareness within individuals and groups.
- Create an enabling environment, including:
  - communicating with team members so that all actions are clear
  - working to resolve conflicts through open and transparent conversation
  - creating a supportive decision-making environment
  - having fun
  - celebrating growth.
- Stimulate the acquisition of new knowledge and skills as well as build on what participants already know.
- Work with participants towards creating an enriched interpersonal environment.
- Maintain a commitment to following-up and supporting participants after formal facilitation has ended.
- Ensure participants have the capacity to apply what has been learnt and/or built-upon, through ongoing conversations.
- Support the participants to identify the resources available to them in order to increase their own capacity.

How to identify a team leader

The team may decide that different people take on the role of team leader, depending on the situation. For each support visit, the facilitation team selects a team leader. This is not necessarily the individual with the highest 'rank', but may often be the individual with the most experience. However, the rotation of responsibility of 'team leader' allows each team member to learn from the experience of leading the team in a supportive environment.

Role of the team leader

The team leader has a special role within the team. As well as meeting the requirements of a team member, the team leader should exhibit further qualities, and have roles that extend beyond those expected of all team members. Some of these are listed below.

- Influences the team for healthy relationship and by positive affirmation
- Models values, beliefs and ways of working – systematic 'gathering' of core beliefs/practices
- Facilitates learning and sharing experience
- Coordinates the visit before, during and after it takes place
- Is accountable professionally and to the team
- Leads the team and delegates duties
- Takes and shares responsibility for the team
- Allows time for reflection/ debriefing, sharing of feelings among team members.

The team leader may or may not be the primary facilitator for the conversation.

DRESS TO IMPRESS

How you carry yourself and what you wear can communicate the type of relationship you expect to have with the people you are facilitating. It is a visual cue as to the identity you are carrying into the space, and can either enable or hinder your ability to build the desired rapport. For instance facilitating a group conversation in a rural village where people dress quite conservatively, while you attend in the latest high street fashions from the city will immediately affect the way you are perceived, trusted, respected and welcomed. So think about what relationship you want to establish and how you can invite that not only through your actions and words, but also through what you wear and how you carry yourself.

Key areas of team activity are listed below.

Table 5. Some types of activities conducted by a Facilitation Team

Facilitation Team Activities	Purpose of use	People (including designated Team Leader)	Appropriate Documentation
Relationship building visit (applying the principles of SALT)	Building relationships with new contacts. Conversations that take place in the process of scoping new locations or network contacts. Informal meetings to introduce the approach. Meetings/conversations that introduce/expose new people.	Facilitation Team: 2-3 people.	Facilitation journal (post-conversation).
Strategic Conversation	Facilitated conversation led by a facilitation team. A group conversation part of an ongoing process. Guided by the conversation cycle. Greater level of documentation during and after event. Can invite people with specific knowledge.	Facilitation Team: 2 people (one lead facilitator and one support facilitator).	Main points, quotes, etc on flipchart/whiteboard (during conversation - transcription of flipchart notes sent back to participants). Facilitation journal (post-conversation). Mapping (at the invitation from participants). Self-assessment and see Part 6 (at the invitation from participants).
Support Visit	Follow up contact with individuals or subsets of the strategic conversation participants. Guided by SALT. Part of a mentoring process. Can occur by invitation or by request. To sustain momentum and understand group dynamics. Can encourage and build champions.	At least one competent facilitator.	Facilitation journal (post-conversation). Development and forward planning tool (post-conversation).

Table 6. Some types of activities conducted by a Facilitation Team Continued

Facilitation Team Activities	Purpose of use	People (including designated Team Leader)	Appropriate Documentation
Learning Event	Workshop style facilitation. Greater use of facilitation aids and participatory methods. Connecting people and groups across conversation locations for learning and planning around a specific theme.	Facilitation Team: 2-5 people (at least one Core Team member).	Main points, quotes, etc on flipchart/whiteboard (during conversation - transcription of flipchart notes sent back to participants). Mapping. Self-assessment and (see part 6). Facilitation journal (post-event).
Community-to-community visit	Facilitate community-to-community connections. Creating opportunities for exposure to other community contexts. Focused around learning from others' local action and experience. May involve some field or experiential learning (eg a walk and talk through a local area of interest). Mentor emerging champions by delegating facilitation tasks.	1-2 facilitators.	Main points, quotes, etc on flipchart/whiteboard (during conversation - transcription of flipchart notes sent back to participants). Facilitation journal (post-visit).

In addition to the activities listed in Table 6, a facilitation team also:

- Builds relationship with participants and between participants
- Offers support and encouragement for constructive activity occurring outside conversations
- Supports the evaluation of conversations using participatory approaches, where the knowledge gained is reviewed and the implications for action are explored
- Documents what occurs within each conversation: the issues discussed, the decisions made, etc.
- Shares knowledge between organisations for increased capacity development and influence on policy development/formation and scaling-up of the conversations

- Supports the participants' reflection and application of lessons learned to other areas of work
- Provides process analysis to increase articulation of the critical processes that lead to change. Documenting these processes can allow lessons learned to be shared with others
- Responds to invitation
- Builds facilitation capacity in others
- Links people/groups for learning and sharing.

Mentoring facilitators

What is mentoring?

Mentoring has many different definitions and interpretations. One common view is that mentoring is a process of providing on-the-job support that shows 'how to' while at the same time challenges individuals to be self-motivated and self-directed in their learning. The process maximises development of independent, creative, adaptive and confident people/groups as facilitators.

Who mentors?

Mentoring supports the development of facilitators. Experienced facilitators normally take on a mentoring role. Mentoring supports the development of people to think and act adaptively in response to what is happening around them. In this way, supportive accompaniment by a mentoring teammate is an important part of developing a facilitation team. Mentoring by a facilitator is one expression of accompaniment.

How does it happen?

The process of mentoring usually involves a relationship whereby a mentor, who has a large amount of experience about a subject and/or way of working, shares this experience in an intentional way. The mentor accompanies the person being mentored in the field, asks questions, challenges the individual and helps them to grow as they practice, reflect and learn. The growth may be professional and/or personal, and it should be shared.

The mentoring relationship

The relationship between the mentor and the mentored is critical. A relationship of mutual trust and respect is required in order for sharing and learning to be effective. The mentoring relationship can be formal or informal.

Formal

A formal relationship usually involves the intentional pairing of someone with experience in an area with an individual hoping to develop their skills in that area. The relationship may reflect an organisational hierarchy, where the mentor sits at a higher level to the mentored person. The forms of mentoring vary and may include scheduled mentoring sessions and following the mentored into the workplace.

Informal

Informal mentoring reflects a voluntary relationship between an individual with experience and someone who is developing their skills. The mentor and mentored reflect an attitude of mutual learning, whereby even though the mentor has more facilitation experience, all of the interactions are opportunities for further learning for both of those in the relationship. This form of mentoring reflects a stronger process of respect and equality, where

no one member is an 'expert'. For facilitators who are members of a facilitation team, this 'on-the-job' mentoring occurs within the shared team environment.

The facilitation team and mentoring

The facilitation team offers a unique environment for mentoring. As a natural part of being in a team, the mentored person is exposed to the process, the vision and the way of working, and facilitation skills are actively and intentionally discussed, applied, reviewed and adapted. Working with experienced facilitators helps create a safe environment for the mentored person to try applying their skills and new ways of doing things. Each facilitator brings unique things to share and learn from. During the process, the experienced facilitators can also learn, and add to their knowledge and experience. This helps increase the confidence of all the facilitators, as well as setting a tone where all members are actively engaged in learning.

Accountability and responsibility

The team mentoring process provides an environment for supporting ethical and moral behaviour. Facilitators each have their own personal views and so facilitators are always at risk of interspersing these perspectives, assumptions and biases into the conversation. It is always a challenge to remain neutral. However, by working as team, the likelihood of maintaining balanced and neutral perspectives is increased as each facilitator acts to ensure the process remains on track. Trust between teammates is critical to ensure that if the behaviour or actions of a facilitator need to be questioned, this can occur in a supportive and constructive manner.

A team with mentoring consciousness is also a protective environment for each facilitator in the face of abuse, manipulation or unwarranted accusation.

A shared vision, coupled with a consistent attitude of learning, helps sustain a healthy environment of team accountability and responsibility.

Benefits of mentoring

Every facilitator benefits from mentoring according to their own skills and needs. Some of the key attributes and skills of facilitators that can be developed from mentoring are listed below.

- Flexibility
- Trusting their intuition about how to respond in a situation
- Sharing approaches with other organisations in networking situations, to inspire interest and response (rather than just to share)
- Coming alongside local conversations, e.g. to support, design, evaluate
- Managing, resolving and preventing conflicts
- Ability to reflect on what went well and what can be improved
- Ability to retain some emotional distance from the process while still remaining involved.
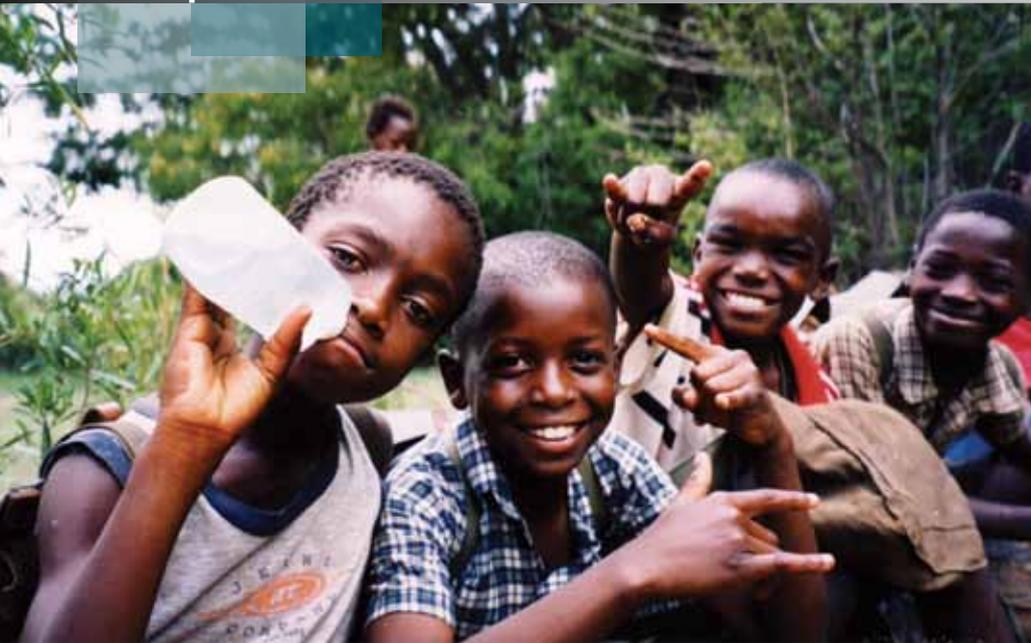
Photo credit: M. Campbell

Applying the principles and concepts of facilitation

It has been argued throughout this document that the inherent principles and concepts of facilitation are transferable across context and issues. This argument is based on the experiential learning of the authors. This chapter highlights examples and stories of how the principles and concepts of community conversation, SALT, the idea of team, personal facilitation skills and mentoring have each been applied to very different issues and in very different contexts. In each instance, however, the experience in one context has informed the evolution of the approach in the next.

Three examples

We describe three processes/projects that use the principles and approaches outlined in this document. The language, focus, setting, etc. is very different for all three. Yet, underlying all these, are principles of SALT and ways of being with people, and the ways of working that flow from this concept. We believe it is a strength that, although there are huge differences in these stories, they demonstrate how we can take this approach into any setting, community or organisation and strengthen what already exists – by adapting to local context/language/organisational preferences, etc.

Example 1: Zimbabwe

Facilitating community conversations

The Salvation Army, a Christian Church and community service organisation, has been working in the area of HIV/AIDS since the mid-1980s (The Salvation Army 1998). Their response to the issue was initiated in Zambia, at Chikankata Hospital as a result of increasing numbers of individuals presenting with signs and symptoms synonymous with the virus (Campbell, Foster, Chaava & Rader 2000a, b).

Involvement of the wider community in the response to HIV/AIDS was recognised as an important factor if the disease was to be understood by people, and its spread slowed down (Campbell et al. 2000a, b). In 1987, community involvement was facilitated by a local Headman whose son had been infected with the virus and had subsequently committed suicide. The Headman called a community meeting to discuss the issue and requested that members of the hospital be present to assist in the discussion. The ensuing community discussion involved strategic questioning, active listening, reflecting back, clarification of issues and agreement on next steps (Campbell et al. 2000a, b) – in essence, processes that commonly occur during individual counselling (Campbell et al. 2000a, b). Numerous meetings followed this initial discussion.

The community's strength and capacity to respond to these techniques in identifying and initiating changes for themselves was recognised. Subsequently, the approach was termed 'community counselling' and has since been implemented in over 20 countries around the world.

Zimbabwe: HIV/AIDS

Masiye Training Camp, Zimbabwe

Masiye Training Camp is a 'summer camp'-style facility located adjacent to the Matopos National Park in Zimbabwe. Masiye and its staff exist to serve and support the psychosocial needs of the growing number of orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) in Zimbabwe affected by HIV and AIDS. Masiye was established in recognition of the escalating number of OVCs and the potential leadership crisis the country would face if specific attention was not given to building children's and young people's capacity to cope, thrive and lead in their communities and country.

Masiye employs a combination of play therapy, experiential learning and community counselling, facilitated by young Camp Counsellors applied during 8- to 10-day-long camps. The participants are referred and coordinated through partner organisations and programs across the country. Community-based follow-up of participants is routine and integral to the objectives.

Some of the outcomes of the process are listed below. All of the outcomes are dependent on trustful relationships and quality facilitation.

Photo credit: M. Campbell

- Restoring and strengthening of self-esteem
- Allowing and supporting grief processes to overcome trauma
- Development of goal-setting, decision-making and negotiation skills
- Empowerment and a healthy sense of responsibility for one's life
- (Re-) instilling values and hope for a future.

In order to facilitate a meaningful experience, the facilitators at Masiye Camp have to be aware of a wide range of factors. Some of these factors and how they are considered are described below, and reflect the SALT principles applied in a cycle of ongoing conversation.

Awareness of context

Awareness of the context that children come to Masiye from is essential in providing meaningful facilitation and dialogue around the issue of HIV/AIDS. The children are not taken at face value – each has home and community circumstances that affect the way they participate in conversation. Their home and community context also affect how they will formulate actions to apply in their lives. This awareness requires facilitators to be particularly conscious of SALT principles and behaviours during the Relationship Building phase of the conversation cycle

The facilitators have to be aware of the linguistic and tribal differences, the home and community environment the children come from, educational deficits, and potential health problems such as HIV, malnutrition and tuberculosis. These factors and more have the potential to serve as barriers to meaningful dialogue and limitations to building meaningful relationships. However, unifying factors that are important in the Zimbabwean cultural context can be used to bring people together in shared positive experiences and help bring about an appreciation of the diversity that still exists. Facilitators Appreciate and Learn from shared cultural values such as spirituality, song, dance and story telling to explore care, change, community and hope.

In planning the activities for the camp that will be used to explore key issues around identity, HIV and loss, the facilitators draw on the knowledge of the children's context that has been confirmed, the subsequent emphasis then being determined by the knowledge gained in conversation. As such, the direction and style of dialogue is determined by Supporting and Learning from the evolving understanding of the context of individual and the group – some of this is already known, but space is given for it to be discovered. Consistent themes can be explored, but the method is tailored or affected by the context and values of the participants.

This awareness of context contributes to creating a safe and trusting environment where relationships are fostered and issues can be addressed. It is now more feasible to explore people's likes, abilities and interests, taking note of who participates in the conversation and how, and subsequently what that might tell us about the child and their needs.

Awareness of self

Many of the facilitators at Masisye live in the same or similar home and community contexts to those children they are facilitating. In some instances, the facilitators were once camp participants. Given this, and the pervasive impact of HIV in Zimbabwe, the central issue they are facilitating around is a personal one. It is almost impossible to escape a personal connection to the issue. And, as such, the facilitators are also learners/participants in the process. This is a strength, but also a challenge. Every facilitator should come also as a learner, but the emotional investment in the process has to be measured – the personal experience of the facilitator can't become detrimental to the process.

This awareness of self is carefully managed at Masiye through the strong support that is offered for the facilitators. Facilitator debriefs, mentoring and counselling is integral and routine. Additionally, rather than discouraging the possibility of being emotionally affected or invested in the process, facilitators are encouraged to understand how they might be affected and to put sufficient support mechanisms in place. Being self aware reflects the SALT principles and behaviours of Learn, Transform, and Team.

Facilitating a conversation around an activity – adapt, listen, transfer – relationship building, problem exploration, decision-making, reflection

Activities large or small are briefed, conversed around as they are conducted, and debriefed. Even doing a seemingly simple group activity like swimming can be a facilitated learning experience. Given that Zimbabwe is a landlocked country, and there is a culturally ingrained aversion to open water, the swimming ability of children is generally poor, and it can be a fearful exercise. Most children have never been near deep open water and, coupled with existing issues of trust, a swimming activity can become a powerful metaphor for complex personal issues such as facing the unknown, relying on people around you, believing in yourself and learning to face fears. In this way it can become a transferable lesson for how to face the future with HIV and AIDS, and in the absence of parents.

These lessons are not taught, but rather they are 'discovered' through facilitated dialogue before, during and after the activity. The facilitators open up conversation about what it is that is feared, why it seems scary, and how that can be managed if retreat is not an option. During the activity, the facilitators ask questions about how the children are feeling and thinking, what made them decide to have a go, and how the positive and negative emotions are affecting them. The debrief focusses around how people felt and what they experienced – initially being very specific to the swimming activity, but then asking questions such as 'When else in your life have you felt like that?', 'What did it mean to you to have other people around?' and 'What does this make you think about for the future?'. And so the conversation opens up.

Role of accumulative dialogue – adapt, appreciate, listen, link – problem exploration – multiple cycles

You can't launch straight into a discussion with anyone, let alone a child, about their experience of caring for and losing parents, of HIV, and of having no money for food or education. If you did, you'd probably hit a wall of silence or be led to believe it's not as big a deal as you've assumed. It is important that the dialogue is considered like a conversation that takes place over time and is consistently revisited as trust builds. The conversation starts with general hopes and concerns, and slowly narrows-in using strategic questioning. Tension is important and keeping a 'positive discomfort' with the subject matter ensures the participants still feel safe and are at the same time challenged.

At Masiye, the first half of the camp is largely about relationship building and fun. Slowly, more targeted questioning is introduced, as well as activities more obviously related to the themes. Ultimately, a conversation may be facilitated that candidly discusses issues of loss and grief relating to losing parents to AIDS, but this is dependent on the group. However deeply the facilitators are able to take their group of children, a strategic effort is to finish the conversation in a place that focusses on strengths and hope. This helps enable the children to discover their coping capacity, and the commitment to community-based follow-up ensures that the ongoing application of these life-skills is supported.

Facilitator debriefing – support, appreciate, learn, transfer – reflection, evaluation

Facilitators go through their own learning processes as they facilitate. Facilitating around issues that are deeply important to people takes its toll emotionally and physically. Additionally, facilitators need to go through their own sense-making process to understand and comprehend the stories they've heard and the knowledge they've gained. Masiye values facilitation-team debriefs and every day they are a compulsory part of the program. They are conducted almost like a facilitated conversation of their own – around the concerns or hopes they have, how they feel about the experiences they've had and exploring strategies to work with them. A cumulative knowledge bank around process is created, and lessons learned are shared and held collectively in the memory of the staff, even as they come and go. In this way, team is central to facilitator health and vitality.

Example 2: Psychosocial support following the 2004 South-east Asia tsunami (India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia)

On 26 December 2004, an earthquake and tsunami swept across Southeast Asia, bringing large-scale devastation and loss of life. The Salvation Army (TSA), which had a long-term presence in three of the countries affected – India, Indonesia and Sri Lanka - soon recognised that responding only to the physical needs would be insufficient. The loss experienced was wide-scale and multidimensional. Losses included the physical, relationships, relatives, friends, safety, and sense of security, livelihood and identity. A response that addressed the holistic needs of those affected was required.

TSA already had 20 years' experience of responding to the issue of HIV/AIDS through building on community strengths to stimulate community response. It had learned many lessons concerning loss, grief and trauma. This experience had demonstrated that communities have the capacity to identify their own concerns, discuss and make decisions for change, and take action to change their circumstances. The trauma counselling response to the tsunami was based in the belief that such lessons could be transferred and applied to the psychosocial issues confronting communities following the tsunami.

From initial assessment visits, a debriefing and trauma counselling approach was developed. This reflected a community counselling process where relationships and conversations were central to psychological and emotional recovery and re-building of community.

In more than 181 communities, counselling conversation responses that supported, developed and documented their own responses to their psychosocial issues were initiated. Example 2.a illustrates how the conversation cycle was applied in one community to support recovery and team development.

Example 2.a: Applying the conversation cycle to build relationship, develop understanding and change

In the Andaman Islands, India The Salvation Army facilitation team, had a relationship with a member of the Wandoor community. The team was invited to work in the community.

To understand the local context and build more relationships, the community was visited Wandoor over three consecutive days. Home visits were made to over 30 homes in the temporary shelters housing displaced people. This gave people an opportunity to tell their story and share their grief. The team was also able to build a relationship with the youth group in the community.

On the final day, community members were invited to a community discussion where the issues identified during the home visits were discussed. This meeting was attended by approximately 50 people, including men, women and children. Community members were encouraged to explore their own solutions to the issues.

The meeting concluded with the agreement by the community that they needed to come together and discuss issues to find solutions by themselves. They identified their main concern as selfishness among the community members, which was preventing them from coming together and working for the wellbeing of all. They wanted this to change.

A community member commented, "When we talk together it makes things clear. If you were able to come and talk with us it could make things different. Maybe if you had come earlier my wife wouldn't have decided to leave. Not everyone is expecting material help – talking is the best. It will help people live a peaceful life".

The team continued to visit once a month. The conversation with the community continued to develop through home visits and community discussions.

Outcomes of the conversation process:

1. As relationships and trust developed, local volunteers began visiting homes in-between the outside teams visits.

2. The community identified that they now cared each other as households – they had an escape plan if such an event were to happen again.

3. Community discussions led to the articulation of hopes by the community to work towards achieving:

   • Want to get back to normal life

   • Want to rely less on charity

   • We can work together better when we talk

Example 2.b illustrates how facilitation teams can be developed to reflect several components. Each component acts to support and strengthen the others and build relationship networks for learning, support and change.

Example 2.b: An example of facilitation-team development

Three countries where The Salvation Army was working were affected by the tsunami: India, Sri Lanka and Indonesia. Each of the countries welcomed exploratory visits to ascertain whether community counselling was a necessary process of recovery.

In each country the facilitation team that developed contained four components.

1. Core team of facilitators – share the vision, train and support

   In each country the core team comprised the regional coordinator for the counselling response who connected with national facilitators who had worked with The Salvation Army facilitating community responses around the issue of HIV/AIDS.

2. Territorial (regional) facilitators

   The organisational leaders in each country were approached by the core team and debriefed regarding the need to have the counselling response coordinated. In response, each country appointed a coordinator for trauma counselling.

3. Local volunteers

   In communities where the Salvation Army conducted physical relief efforts, the core and territorial facilitators visited. At each visit, the community members were asked whether they would welcome further visits to talk through their concerns and explore solutions. It was made clear that this would not involve any physical material relief, and that the approach was completely separate to this relief side of the Salvation Army's tsunami response. In all communities, the visits were welcomed and invited. It was clear that teams were required to support the growing demand.

   At the conclusion of each of the exploration visits, the following questions were asked:

   • Does this community want a counselling process?

   • What actions are we going to take?

   • Who is the team?

   • Who is the leader?

   • What is the budget?

   The initial teams comprising volunteers from outside affected communities, and community members from within affected communities, were formed and began to work.

4. Area coordinators

   The territorial facilitators, worked to connect people across communities for sharing and learning from experience. To support them in this work, they identified local individuals who could connect across several communities for sharing and learning. These people became known as area coordinators.

Support to the teams

Country facilitators, local volunteers and area coordinators were supported by the core team. Workshops were held every three months in multiple locations in each country and were used as one format for sharing and transferring the processes and skills involved in implementing a community counselling response to country teams (see the manual 'Theory, processes and skills: A community counselling response to the tsunami, 2006').

The needs and form of workshop necessarily altered as communities healed and moved forward and as the team members became more confident of the concepts inherent to the approaches. With increased confidence, communities sought to expand and deepen their responses and this was reflected in the content and nature of the workshops.

In between the country-based workshops, the country facilitators and the core team supported the communities through systematic visits, to encourage and motivate the teams implementing on the ground, i.e. the teams used SALT principles. In each country, community teams working near each other were encouraged to meet once a month for mutual sharing and learning. Community-to-community visits between also occurred.

Outcomes

1. Within 12 months, community-based teams emerged in over 166 communities across the three countries.

2. The territorial facilitators, supported by the core team, nurtured and mentored volunteers. As a result, the ownership by the implementers of the response was evidenced by the continued growth in new communities.

3. As the community work developed and deepened, community members and Salvation Army team members recognised that a community approach might be applied to any issue – such as drugs, alcohol and HIV/AIDS – impacting on a community. After 18 months of implementing a community counselling response, many communities took the initiative to expand their response to include broader psychosocial issues in their communities.

Example 3: A learning network of strategic conversations (Victoria, Australia)

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is the government department that manages public land in the state of Victoria. One important aspect the DSE's work is bushfire management and developing public awareness of bushfire.

Bushfires and planned fires can affect people and the environment in profound ways. Fire can have a positive influence on the Australian environment but fires in the wrong place and/or the wrong time can harm people and damage the environment that people care about. As fire is an important part of life in rural Australia, people have important knowledge to share about the subject as well as differing opinions about how fire should be managed. For this reason, facilitating conversations for learning that help people make-sense of what fire means for them is considered a critical part of DSE's work.

In 2008, a staff member, who had worked with The Salvation Army using the processes described above, joined the DSE. She brought with her experience in working with the facilitation of community conversations that she had applied in both health response (HIV/AIDS) and

the design and implementation of the tsunami response. She argued that a relationship-focussed approach centred on building relationship networks and that using SALT principles would be the way to achieve a network of people who were learning and sharing through conversation. Others joined the facilitation team with backgrounds in health development and anthropology.

In Australia, as elsewhere, the approach was to build relationships and team with those who shared similar values and ideas about how to work with people and build their resilience and capacity to respond to their life issues, whether this is fire, loss or HIV/AIDS, etc.

The language used to describe the principles and concepts of facilitation and learning through conversation were foreign to most working within the DSE. The facilitation team worked to share concepts and adapt their language while learning from those around them. The team worked to understand the context and language that would resonate and be owned within the new culture and context – i.e. land and fire management in Australia. Consequently, community conversations/counselling were termed 'strategic conversations'. These strategic conversations could involve two people or many and were connected to become a network. The approach of building relationships

and community-to-community visits was translated into the concept of a 'learning network'. Moving from health and disaster relief fields into the field of natural resource management meant that conversations now often emphasised people's connection to, and care for, their environment, landscape and place, and opened-up a new dimension of human concern. One of these conversations began in a place called Gellibrand.

Photo credit: M. Campbell

Gellibrand, Victoria, Australia: A conversation to strengthen community capacity to 'live with fire'

Background

Gellibrand is a small town of around 300 people situated in Victoria, Australia. It is situated in a valley surrounded by tall eucalypt forest and, like many places in South-eastern Australia, is considered by residents and fire agencies to be at risk of bushfire. The people who live here have diverse lifestyles and occupations, including farmers, retirees, seasonal holiday-makers and small business owners.

Invitation

About a year before the start of the first conversation, the facilitation team was connected to an energetic and creative woman – Kara[3] – working within the CFA[4], Geelong. She related to the concept of learning and connecting through facilitated conversation. She continued to stay in touch with the team over the course of the year. After the devastating fires of 7 February 2009, in which 173 people were killed, many communities in Victoria became concerned about bushfire safety. Gellibrand was one of these. A resident of Gellibrand – Josie – contacted Kara and asked for some support in developing a community-based initiative with the hope of building greater awareness of fire safety. Kara felt that this was something the facilitation team could potentially support, so she connected them to Josie.

Josie asked to meet the facilitation team. After sharing hopes and visions, Josie invited the facilitation team to support a community fire conversation and to 'see how it went'.

Strengths focus, listen, learn

The team members listened and learned about Gellibrand. They found out about who lived there, what they cared about, what they were like, how they interacted, where people felt comfortable and why. Josie identified the pub as one local gathering-point and so the first conversation took place there. It was immediately clear that a key strength of the community was residents' energy, creativity and love of place. A key challenge that emerged was residents' sense that they felt they did not know who lived in Gellibrand any more and that they didn't have enough infrastructure and resources to support fire safety.

Accompany

The facilitation team made it a general practice to stay overnight in Gellibrand when they worked there and to connect with community members and others over coffee outside of formal group conversation spaces. Making time for people is simple and can mean a lot to them and can build trust. Most importantly, spending time with people also enriches a facilitation team's understanding of local context, enabling them to adapt ways of working and processes. By doing this, the team members learned, for example, that different community members felt more comfortable in some buildings and locations than others, and that the café was the 'hub' of the community.

Transfer

The group met five times in the first year. As the conversation continued, new relationships emerged and strengthened between the team and the residents and between the residents themselves. The team learned much more about Gellibrand as time went on. A key lesson that emerged, which was not evident initially, was that there were many different disconnected groups in the town. A number of residents identified this as being one factor that made their town vulnerable to disasters and would make recovery from disaster more difficult.

People felt it was important to ensure that what was being learned would be transferred throughout the community. People identified that, by changing the location of the conversation, new people would feel able to participate. A number of Gellibrand locals visited a neighbouring community conversation group in the nearby valley and this visit grew or transferred relationships and knowledge at a regional level.

The Conversation Cycle continues

At the time of writing, the group continues to focus on how to build inter-community networks through activities that combine action and reflection.

Photo credit: U. Klink

Some process outlines from the Australian context

Before facilitating a conversation, it can be useful to write down a process outline. Process outlines are not a necessity, but they can remind the facilitator of the direction of each conversation, how it builds on the previous conversation, and where the conversation is placed within the conversation cycle. Outlines can also give confidence and structure, especially in situations where groups are large. Facilitation skills and approaches are always applied to any and all conversations (one-on-one, one-off, group, ongoing) – making them strategic or deliberate.

Two process outlines are described below. These were written in 2009. We note that when the team members facilitated each conversation, adapted what were doing in the moment. As a consequence, what was planned and what occurred was actually quite different in each case.

Conversation 1

Purpose

• To explore interest in a learning network and the motivation for being involved in such a network

• To determine key issues of interest that the group may want to explore in the future

• To identify key people, 'champions', to lead the group's ongoing conversation.

Organisation

Those who are interested are personally invited to gather for an initial discussion. Many people would be met individually and invited personally by the facilitation team. These, in turn, are asked to invite others they feel would be interested to join. Ideally, conversations should begin by involving a maximum of 7 – 15 participants.

The facilitation-team leader allocates responsibilities: one facilitator to guide the discussion, preferably from the locality in which the conversation is occurring, and one facilitator to support and document the process.

Local ownership and direction is emphasised at every stage.

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

It is easy for people to get bogged-down in what is wrong, but this does not help anyone figure out what to do about it. Knowing what people care about and what they already do well gives the group a way to move forward. For example, a community may feel it is fragmented, but realising there are some people who know everyone because of something they do, the group could work to figure out how to make this behaviour more prevalent.

IT'S A MATERIAL WORLD!

Ask people what they hope for, not what they want. Experience has shown that asking people what they want leads to people listing-off material items. A list of 'wants' does not reveal the underlying reason why people want these things. Similarly asking the question what are your concerns is different from asking what are your needs. For example, attaining a power generator does not necessarily fix the problem of 'community anxiety' about fire or increase community competence to live with fire. When people can articulate this for themselves, they can then look at what they may require to realise their vision.

Process

The facilitator guides the conversation forward, using the steps listed below to guide the participants' thinking.

- Welcome everybody. Ask opening question such as, 'What motivated you to join the conversation?', 'What do you love about the place you live?', 'What makes you proud about this community?', 'Where do you love to be in this place?'.

- Allow the answers to the opening question to open-up the discussion, and follow the natural course of the conversation, asking strategic questions of the group – i.e. questions that positively re-frame issues or probe for deeper thinking about why something is happening.

- After people have had an initial conversation, ask them to identify what they perceive to be the top priority areas for discussing in the next conversation.

- List the priority areas identified by the group.

- Ask the group to decide what they feel are the top five areas and why: the participants guide the discussion.

- Decide what issue will be discussed next time.

- Ask for contact details and permission to use them.

- Decide on a time, location and who will take responsibility for organising the next meeting (the venue could be one of the participant's homes).

- Make it clear that the participants can personally invite anyone else they feel would be interested to participate to join the next conversation. Stress that personal invitation is the most effective form of invitation.

Informal conversation afterwards

The time between the end of the conversation and when people leave is most important. This is an opportunity for people to connect with each other one-on-one. This period is part of the conversation cycle and is as important as any formal conversation.

Debrief

- Debrief the facilitation team using action, reflection and review processes.

- Fill in the facilitator's journal.

Conversation 2

Purpose

- To discuss a topic chosen by the group in the previous conversation.

Organisation

The facilitation-team leader allocates responsibilities: one facilitator to guide the discussion preferably from the locality in which the conversation is occurring, and one facilitator to support and document the process.

Local ownership and direction is emphasised at every stage.

Process

- Ask an opening question – e.g. 'How do you describe your community to people who have never visited before?', 'What strengths do you see in your community?'

- Recap the last session.

- Ask what people have been doing in the interim.

- Ask strategic questions to guide the conversation. These could include:

- What are the concerns for this community? Why?

- What don't we know about this place?

- What is already being done to address this? Who? What? How?

- What lessons can be learned from what is already being done?

- Realistically, how do things change?

- How can we all take responsibility for change?

- End the conversation by asking, 'What did you learn from this conversation?', 'What will you take away from this conversation?'

- Decide on the time and place for the next conversation, and who will take responsibility for organising.

- Record the contact details for any new participants.

Informal conversation

As mentioned, this is a crucial time for people to connect. It is also an important time for facilitators to find out how people are feeling, thinking, experiencing the process, what their views are, how it may be improved or who else could be invited.

- The facilitation team debriefs using the process of action, reflection and review. Invite possible facilitators from the group to join.

- Fill in the facilitator's journal.

Subsequent conversations

Conversations continue to develop over time, guided by the participants' interests and concerns. Ideally, the facilitation team should work to identify possible teammates within the conversation group who can be mentored to take on the responsibility of facilitating the conversations in an ongoing way. This supports the local ownership and sustainability of the strategic conversation. This local facilitator is then supported by regional, state or national team members, to ensure that they themselves are connected to wider networks and continue to learn, share, stimulate and motivate.

MESSING AROUND

Conversations can be 'messy' and 'jump around' from one topic to another. This is part of group sense-making and figuring out what people care about and what a priority is. For some people, this will be their first time speaking about their community and their place with others. They may feel the need to 'dump' everything they have thought and felt for many years. This is one reason why conversations should occur more than once, so that people have time to prioritise their thinking and story telling.

The story continues …

Facilitated conversations continue to be initiated and evolve around the world; for example, the Nelson Mandela Foundation is currently using the community conversations approach to enhance community capacity to respond to HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa (2009a, b).

It is up to you as to how the principles and concepts of facilitating conversations that build knowledge, learning and resilience of all involved continue to develop.

Photo credit: C. Campbell

Photo credit: C. Campbell

It is important to use a mechanism to capture the knowledge that emerges from strategic conversations. These records support the process of learning and can be the basis for more conversations which, in turn, lead to strategic change in future action and behaviour.

External evaluation interventions can and should be complementary to the vision and direction of strategic conversations. External evaluation is often useful, and it can reveal the potency of self-assessment and shared measurement of progress, which is the focus of this section. The outcomes and impact, and their relationship to facilitated conversations, cannot be adequately assessed by external evaluation interventions done in isolation from the qualitative and quantitative influence of local community-driven change.

Self-measurement of change can merge with some tools that also objectively measure outcomes and impact. For instance, transfer mapping, self-assessment and process recording during strategic conversations.

There are many ways to achieve documentation, along with measurement of progress and outcomes. Five simple tools are suggested (see Table 6). The tools complement the activities of a facilitation team (Table 5, Part 4). It is important to note, however, that the tools offer a framework for capturing knowledge, rather than being prescriptive. They can be adapted and adjusted to fit the particular context in which they are being used.

WHAT ARE YOU WRITING ABOUT ME?

Documentation is essential for measuring and observing change, and keeping a historical record of content and process. But… there's a time and place for this to happen, and a method too. When facilitating a conversation with one person or a group, any documentation that happens during the conversation should happen publicly on a flipchart or whiteboard. This demonstrates transparency and allows participants to see how their contribution is valued as part of the whole process. As a facilitator you should avoid taking personal notes on a notepad as it can appear secretive, clinical, and 'researchy'.

The tools need to reflect the basic foundation for the strategic conversation approach; that is, that local communities have human capacity for response.

In addition, the tools should not be viewed as producing a final knowledge product. As knowledge evolves and develops from continued conversations, the users must be flexible in their ability to recognise this continual development. The captured knowledge is merely a tool in and of itself for continuing the conversation. The 'conversation' has the direct influence on future strategy and action.

Table 7. Tools to support the capture of knowledge and measurement of change

Tool	Use
1. Facilitator's journal	The facilitator's journal entry is filled in following every conversation – whether a group or individual encounter. This keeps track of the issues and conversation flow and can inform the ongoing conversation, ensuring it is moving forward.
2. Development planning tool	The development planning tool is for use in conversations that have progressed forward to the extent that participants are looking to take action. The tool enables systematic thought and discussion around areas that are critical to successful action.
3. Learning events	Learning events provide an opportunity for participants from different conversations to come together for sharing and learning in a strategic way. Facilitators support the conversation so that the experiences from several different conversations can be pooled for greater overall understanding and strategic thinking.
4. Mapping	A community map is drawn to show the current situation in relation to the issue of concern as well as impact.
5. Self-assessment and the river diagram	The self-assessment is a tool that opens-up discussion about where people/group/community currently sit in relation to a key issue or concept. For example, the ability of a community to transfer a vision/knowledge/information to others; capacity to care; or a more concrete issue such as preparedness for a bushfire.
	Identifying where they currently sit in relation to aspects of the concept/issue supports developing the conversation into identifying where the community wants to be and how they can get there.
	The river diagram is used when a number of communities are taking part in a self-assessment. The river diagram supports the conversation, becoming an opportunity to identify who are the people resources who can be turned to for support in developing that concept/issue.

Photo credit: Land and Fire stock photo

The tools

1. facilitator's journal

Event

Meeting type

Venue

Date

Topic

Participants

Context/background

1. What was supposed to happen?

3. What actually happened?

4. Why was there a difference?

5. What can we learn from that?

The tools *Continued*

1. facilitator's journal *Continued*

Summary

Include a few key reflections from the participants about their experience of the following.

Concerns What concerns did people name? (Different to immediately-felt needs)	
Hopes What hopes were expressed? (The vision, or dream)	
Strengths What strengths did people name for response? (Not just technical, but human relationship strengths)	
Ways of working How did you approach/behave as a team? (Not what we do, but how we do it)	
Action and results – a reflective story (Illustrates the reality)	
Core response indicators (Personal, family, community, organisations, policy, transfer)	
Contacts that emerged	

Key learning

List the key things you have learnt from this conversational event.

1.

2.

3.

Reporter

Name: Date:

The tools *Continued*

2. Development and forward-planning tool – a result of strategic conversations

Concerns What concerns did people name? (Different to immediately-felt needs)	
Vision What hopes were expressed? (The vision, or dream)	
Ways of working or thinking How did you approach/behave as a team? (Not what we do, but how we do it)	
Activity areas	
Desirable results	
How do we know results have happened? (Indicators)	
Issues	

The tools *Continued*

3. Learning event

Learning events provide an opportunity for participants from different conversations to come together for sharing and learning in a strategic way. Facilitators support the conversation so that the experiences from several different conversations can be pooled for greater overall understanding and strategic thinking.

1. **Communicate the purpose.** Learning events work well when the purpose is clear and you communicate that purpose to participants.

2. **Identify a facilitator** for the meeting. The role of the facilitator is to ensure that, by managing the process, the participants reach the desired outcome.

3. **Schedule a date** for the learning event. Ensure it is early enough to do something different with what you have learnt.

4. **Invite potential participants** who have the diversity of skills, competencies and experienced needed for the learning event. Avoid the 'usual suspects'. It works well with six to eight people. Break up larger groups so that everyone gets to voice their experience and ideas.

5. **Get clear on the desired deliverables** of the learning event (usually options and insights) and then plan the time to achieve them.

6. **Allow time to socialise,** in order to develop rapport.

7. **Schedule time to tell, ask, analyse and feed back.**

8. **Create the right environment.** Spend some time creating the right environment for sharing. Plan the event to allow a balance between telling and listening.

9. **Listen** for understanding and how you might improve your own activity.

10. **Consider** who else might benefit from this knowledge and then share it with them.

11. **Commit** to actions and keep the team updated.

The tools *Continued*

4. Mapping

A community map is drawn to show the current situation in relation to the influence of the issue of concern, as well as impact. A map can be used in a variety of ways. For example:

Put yourself on the map

Community members identify where they are on the geographical map. This opens-up discussion about who people are connected to, how they can connect, what the visual risks surrounding where and how they live are, etc.

Transfer map

Based on the information collected, a transfer map is created by the team, which visually maps the spread of influence within and beyond the communities involved. The map explores how community members are influencing each other and those outside the community. The map is then examined using the questions:

1. Where has transfer occurred?
2. How has the transfer occurred?
3. What is the result of the transfer?

If possible, the team returns to the communities and completes a second transfer map that can be used to verify the map produced, by asking the community group, 'How have others (clients, families, members of the community/other communities, churches and other groups, e.g. Non Government Organisations) been influenced after seeing what you are doing?' The two maps can then be discussed and compared.

Photo credits: M. Campbell; M. Campbell

The tools *Continued*

5. Self-assessment and river diagram

Stage 1: small-group discussion

In small, randomly allocated groups, participants are given a selection of images that reflect aspects of a key concept such as 'care' or 'transfer'. Using these pictures and their personal experiences as a reference, groups are asked to discuss what does and does not illustrate/demonstrate the concept and why.

Groups are then tasked with developing a list of critical 'components' to successfully achieve the concept.

### Stage 2: Dissecting the key concept

Participants are tasked with grouping and sorting the components into five broad components.

The box below shows how the ideas around a concept can be converged to a single word through a facilitated discussion. A brief descriptor for each word is provided to remind people of what that word refers to in the context of the key concept.

E.g. Critical components of transfer	Description/definition	Converging to a single word
Nurture	Allowing to evolve Building community Need to feel 'safe' to be able to open-up to new things	Foster – nurture and care Patience Allowing time Comfortable Confidence (trust)

Stage 3: Self-assessing ourselves on the key concept

Participants are broken up into community-based groups. Each group reflects on each of the five components of the key concept and assesses their community's 'competence' for each component on a scale of 1 to 5 (see below).

5. We act naturally

4. We act voluntarily

3. We act once in a while

2. We know enough to be able to act

1. We know, but not enough to act
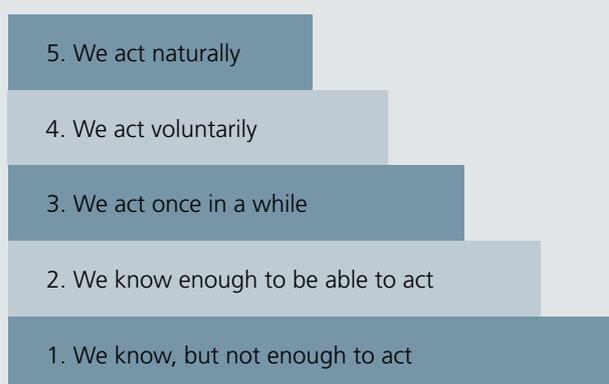
The tools *Continued*

5. Self-assessment and river diagram *Continued*

Stage 3: Self-assessing ourselves on the key concept *Continued*

Emphasise that the self-assessment exercise is not a competition, nor intended to be representative of the whole community – the value lies in the discussion, and the sharing with other community groups to learn about who can connect to whom, in order to get better at the key concept.

Having self-assessed, each group plots their assessment on a graph (see photos below) and shares how they came to a decision on each component.

Once all the communities have been plotted, one line is drawn above the uppermost scores and another line is drawn below the lowermost scores. This transforms the graph into a 'river diagram', showing that the assessments with the highest and lowest scores form the bank of the river (the river being where our collective experience lies). This highlights, for each component, which group has something to share about how to do this well and who has something to learn, providing a stimulus for participants to connect across communities for learning.
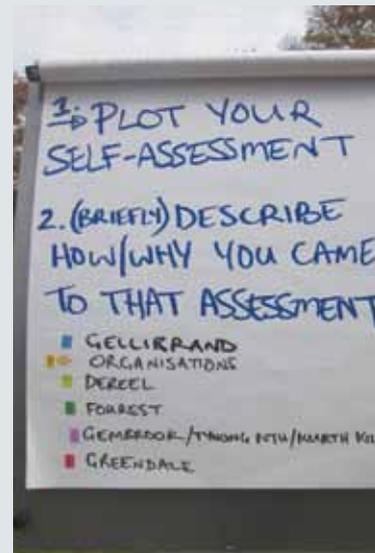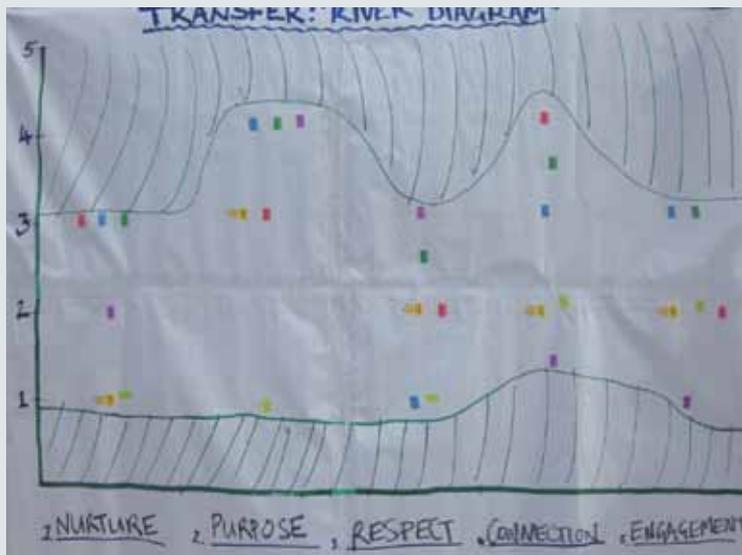

Photo credits: C. Campbell; C. Campbell

The tools *Continued*

5. Notes

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