

**Uttaran Foundation Training  
on 'Facilitation'**

**Participants: Uttaran SALE  
Staff**

**Dates: 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2014**

**Venue: IDRT Bhaban, Uttaran,  
Tala, Satkhira**



**SALE Partners:**



- Uttaran staff will have further developed their skills to facilitate meetings.
- New and existing staff members will have got to know each other and will form a strong team;

**Training method:**

The training was fully participatory and practical. Experiences and questions of and actual challenges faced by the Uttaran SALE staff were used to shape the training. The aim of the chosen training methods was to get all training participants actively involved. Above all the training had to be fun as well.



**Day One**

**Introductory Session:**

All participants gathered in a circle and threw a ball to each other. The person who caught the ball had to introduce him or herself in the first round. In the second round the person who caught the ball told about his or her expectations of the Foundation Training. The project coordinator Mr. Mamun Rashid explained the objectives of the Training.

### **Expectations:**

All participants wrote down their expectations of the Training on VIPP cards. These cards were put on the wall and were used throughout the training to see which points were tackled and which points remained to be tackled. Just like the tools and methods, the training schedule itself was participatory as well. The Training Schedule was continuously adapted to the wishes, questions and needs of the participants.

### **Vision & Mission of Uttaran:**

The director of Uttaran, Mr. Shahidul Islam, gave an inspiring introduction on the history, mission and vision of Uttaran. The participants asked him many questions.

### **Intro on facilitation:**

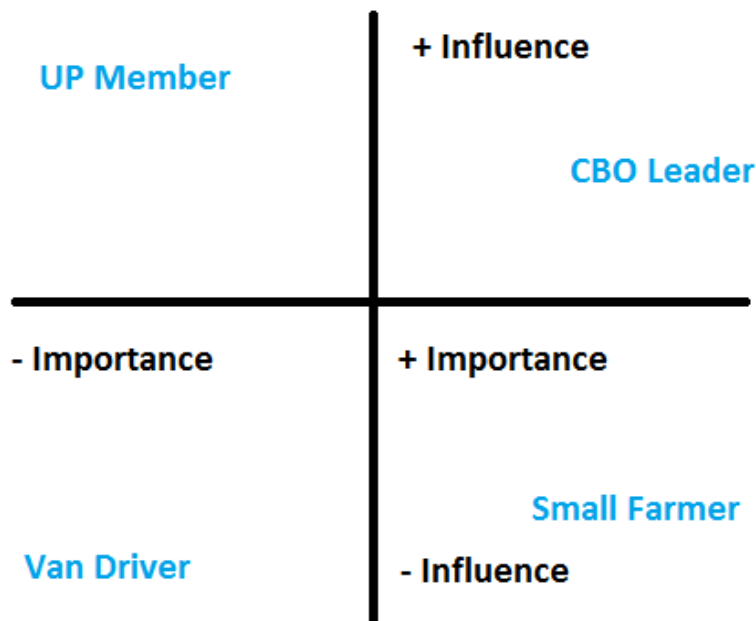
The Training facilitator, Mr. Niels van den Berge, gave an introduction about facilitation. He stressed the importance of building relationships and trust before jumping into business. It is a pitfall to start talking about concrete solutions for development challenges right after entering a community. It is important to gain the trust of the community members. Otherwise, they will probably be less eager to follow up the advices.

### **Drama:**

After the introduction, the participants were divided into four groups to prepare a drama play on facilitation. This exercise was meant to share the challenges that training participants face when facilitating meetings.



Most participants faced the same challenge; powerful people in their working area (for example Union Parisad members/chairman) are not always willing to cooperate towards their project goals. It is important to work step by step when facilitating meetings. As a facilitator, one first needs to analyze the community to identify which people are influential and for which people the project is important. Anyone can do this by making a power/importance diagram (please see below).



Before jumping into business, the facilitator shall make sure that all stakeholders are involved. The higher a stakeholder is placed on the influence axis, the more influence a stakeholder has on the success of the project. The higher a stakeholder is placed on the importance-axis, the more important the success of the project is for that stakeholder.

To place a stakeholder on the importance-axis, one can ask self: what does success or failure of the project mean for the life of this stakeholder? Does it change anything? It is crucial for the success of a project to get the influential people actively involved in the project? However, this can be challenging when the importance of the project is relatively low for these people. They might think; why should I spend my time on this project?

When starting facilitation it is important to work on the relation with the influential stakeholders. Talk informally with them. Try to find out what they think of the project and what is in it for them. Try to convince them of the importance of the project. Visit them, drink tea with them and get to know them. Sometimes, development workers only look at the project beneficiaries (often high importance, low influence) when facilitating meetings. This is a risk. Of course the project beneficiaries are very important. Those are the people we do it for. Though, it would not be wise to forget to look at the influential people too.

**Building Bridges Session:**

This session was a mix of practicing facilitation and team building. The participants were divided into four groups and each group was provided with 'building materials', such as hard paper, pieces of rope, tape, wood, etc. Each group got the exercise to build a bridge between two villages.

training  
acted

behalf

vague  
on

given

will use  
strong  
be?) of  
was  
given  
there  
before



Interestingly, in the session Mr. Niels as the representative on of the local communities. The exercise was a bit and this was done purpose. No information was on the specifications (who the bridge, how should the bridge the bridge, neither any information on the history (has been a bridge and if yes, what

happened to that one?).

The groups had to answer these questions by talking to the local communities, represented by Mr. Niels. The groups had great fun and they built beautiful bridges. However, the groups often forgot to build relationships and trust with the local communities. Some groups started building a bridge without asking any questions from the local communities and some groups started asking all kinds of technical questions without building relationships and trust first.

The same often happens in real projects. Development workers go into a community and start 'building' their solution, without gathering useful information from the local communities. If they gather information they often jump into technical questions right away. If one ask technical questions without

building relationships first, might not get the answers what is looking for. Local community members might not understand the questions properly and they might not like it that they don't seem to be interested. This puts the success of the project at risk. It might be good end up implementing solutions that don't fit with the local needs and wishes.

**Different tools / methods for facilitation:**

Mr. Niels gave an introduction on tools and methods that could be used for facilitation. Choosing the right tool for the right objective is crucial to achieve the desired project outcomes. Each tool has its strong and weak points. It's good to think about these points when choosing a tool.

Are you aware of your rights as a land owner?

The attached 'Tools' includes examples of tools and methods.

Furthermore, the participants discussed about the importance of



setting the right scene. As a facilitator one has to be a catalyst for participation and should to stimulate community members to actively participate. It is important to make sure that participants feel confident enough to participate. One can do this by creating an open atmosphere and by avoiding putting pressure on participants. Sentences like "Tell us quickly/bolento apu" can better be avoided. As a facilitator s/he should be patient. Some people are not used to speak in public. They might feel shy. As a facilitator one should give them time to make contribute.

**Watching movie:**

The participants watched the Indian movie "Chack De India". This was an enjoyable team building exercise. "Chack de India" is a movie about forming a new national hockey team for women. It was both interesting, as well as educational to see the development from a group of competitive ego into a real team that works together and helps each other.

**Mood meter:**  
A facilitator asks a question and community member's answer by choosing a smiley. Strong point: everybody can use it, both literate and illiterate people. Weak point: it does not give the detailed information. People can only choose between 3 answers (satisfied, moderately satisfied and not satisfied) to answer the question.

**Cultural night:**

During diner we sang, danced and enjoyed. This too was an enjoyable team building exercise. Besides, it helped us to clear the minds after a full day of facilitation exercises.

***(The attached power point presentation on Facilitation was used throughout the different sessions on Day One)***

**Day Two**

**Field visiting:**

In this session we applied all lessons learnt from the first day in the field. In the morning we formed groups. Each group chose an objective and tool for its facilitation session. A summary of the objectives and tools:

\**Objective:* Gather information on the socio-economic conditions of the community.

*Tool:* Questionnaire.

\**Objective:* Increase awareness on water, sanitation and hygiene. *Tool:* Poster Presentation.

\**Objective:* Increase awareness about women's land rights. *Tool:* Drama Play.

\* *Objective:* Increase awareness on rights. *Tool:* Discussion

### **Reflection:**

After coming back from the field, we discussed the facilitation sessions.

A summary of the positive comments:

\*We were satisfied with the outcomes of the facilitation sessions. All sessions more or less achieved their target/objective.

\*All facilitators did a good job to stimulate participation.

\*All facilitators did a good job in building relationships. The local community members were happy to participate. They enjoyed it.



On Day Two we visited Maguragoona village to practice with facilitation. All facilitators did a great job. It was impressive to see how they all successfully facilitated sessions and how they used the lessons learnt from Day One.

Points for improvement:

\*The facilitators didn't pay enough attention to a man who was not a direct participant in the meeting, but who was clearly influential. At some points he started contributing to the meeting without being asked to do so. It would have been good to more actively involve him and to find out what his position in the community is.

\*Due to a lack of time, some facilitators spend more time on explanation than on participation. This can be a risk. Without participation you can't be sure whether or not the community members got your message and whether or not they agree with it. As a facilitator one should be patient. If you face time pressure, it's better to limit the number of messages you want to bring than to cut time on community participation.

### **Objectives, Targets and Outcomes of SALE**

The training participants worked in small groups to discuss the objectives, targets and outcomes. By this means new staff members got the opportunity to learn from the experience of existing staff members. Learning from each contributed to both knowledge gathering as well as to teambuilding.

### **Conducting session:**

Four groups were formed, each group with its own leader and task. The tasks were:

- ✚ 1st group built a relationship and gained trust of the community people. They did this by asking questions about a discussing topic that was popular in the specific area.
- ✚ 2nd group discussed about how landless people can apply for khash land to Upazilla Bhumi Office.
- ✚ 3rd group discussed about improving the institutional linkage through arranging Union Parishad meeting in a community.
- ✚ Lastly the 4th group tried to find out a special thing (a tree of chuijhaal, a special spice) of the area building a good relationship with the community people.

Every group did their tasks with their best and explained their work procedure and outcome with all participants. It was arranged to develop the facilitation skill as every group firstly gained trust of community people before starting the work. This way reflected the work of the facilitator completing the tasks of project at the field level.

### **Evaluation**

Short evaluation sessions were done throughout the training. The evaluation sessions were done in a participatory way, using the VIPP card with expectations or the football. These sessions were both evaluation and energizing exercises in one. When facilitating sessions it is important to make sure that all participants have enough energy and concentration to actively participate and to remember the key messages. When organizing long meetings, it would be good to include energizers in the session plan. An energizer is a short, active, participatory exercise. It gives energy and helps clearing the mind.

Summary of the evaluation sessions:

- \*All relevant challenges/expectations of the participants were dealt with during the training.
- \*The participants were successful in further developing their facilitation skills.
- \*The participants liked the participatory approach used in the training.