

Workshop Two Summary

Introduction

The group session commenced with an introduction to the aims and objectives of the workshop drawing attention to the focus question “*What principals will inform our collaborative work with women in Timor-Leste?*”. Following this it was emphasized that the workshop could touch on all possible issues of interest to the group as the groups had been assigned no specific theme to explore.

The group was encouraged to share with one another their interests in Timor-Leste and these introductions revealed an impressive diversity within the room.

Discussion Groups

The next task was to divide into small groups around the room to share experiences that have led to an understanding about how working with women of Timor-Leste could have been done more collaboratively. These experiences were to be discussed with a view to informing the principles. A member of the workshop suggested that both times when something did work and when something didn’t work should be considered during this discussion.

Groups of 3 or 4 were formed and members discussed a variety of experiences among themselves for several minutes. Before coming back to the workshop, groups were asked to compile a list of ideas that emerged within the individual sessions and select one point as their most important and another as their boldest.

Presenting the Ideas

The following ideas that emerged from each individual group were regarded as the most important:

- Consultation with people on real needs – not the superimposition of our expectations and values... Long-term collaboration that results in trust. . Allow time for relationships.

- Building genuine relationships (structure of trust) through meaningful dialogue and forums for women.
- Be flexible, don't take yourself too seriously.
- Women can do anything required in the development process so should be involved at all stages in development activities.
- Communication requires listening and consulting so that trust can be developed. Two-way learning is essential.

The following ideas were regarded as the boldest of the group findings:

- Learn the language in order to listen well.
- Learn, understand, respond appropriately. Learning about the extreme tragedy of many women creates a greater commitment to support Timor Leste's women's struggles. The political becomes personal.
- Planning of long term programming with clear focus.
- Take time, let things develop slowly. It's our project but it's their life.

Following this similar points were grouped together thematically to allow for any remaining ideas to be added to these themes or create an additional theme. As the themes were created key words were drawn out and gradually a principle was coined from the ideas.

The Principles

1) The first theme is comprised of the following ideas:

*Consultation with people on real needs – not the superimposition of our expectations and values. Long-term collaboration that results in trust. Allow time for relationships.

*Building genuine relationships (structure of trust) through meaningful dialogue and forums for women.

* “Relationships” are fundamental to all work at all stages of engagement, with each other, with outside groups and agencies.

* Equal not hierarchical working relationships between international and local staff.

From this the participants extracted some key words including: Relationships, Trust, Equality, Allowing time. Some were of the opinion that relationships are an activity and important, they should be valued, resourced and it takes time to develop trust and equity within them. However, others were concerned by what was meant by the term “resourced” leading to a debate about how relationships need time and money and that it should not be assumed that they develop outside the work environment. In addition to this, some members of the workshop were uncomfortable with the term “equality” stating that they often did not feel equal to the Timorese in the workplace and that observation had led them to believe that the Timorese often came off with less in a relationship. It was then pointed out that the term “equity” was being used instead of “equality” as a means of emphasizing fairness within such relationships.

2) The second theme comprised of the following ideas:

* Learn the language in order to listen well.

* Communication requires listening and consulting so that trust can be developed. Two-way learning is essential.

The key terms in this theme were: Listen, Communication, Two Way, Learn. From this participants believed that the principle should essentially state that communication is about two-way listening and learning with an emphasis on that order considering one must listen in order to learn. Some members of the group pointed out that the principle needed to be made more specific from a women’s point of view offering that listening to women was an important point to add. Additionally, it was suggested that providing forms and opportunities for communication so that it is about listening and learning was essential to this principle.

While this discussion was occurring, other group members became concerned with the use of the term “communication”. It was debated that the term was very abstract and that what people learn from these communication processes and the actual

experience of communication needed to be considered. Participants offered that communication in essence is an exchange of information and a form of exploration.

3) The next theme was comprised of the following ideas:

*Women as facilitators will encourage greater participation of women and 50% of the team should be women.

*Women can do anything required in the development process so should be involved at all stages in development activities.

This theme led to a debate about the percentages of women involved in projects with the opening statement suggesting women should be involved in all stages and levels, with at least 50% involvement. However, some were concerned that the type of issues should determine who is consulted and that this should be considered prior to applying percentages. It was then pointed out that ideas were getting confused, the facilitators and people involved in projects were two different concepts and thus it is important regardless of the issue to maintain 50% of female staff as it gives an impression of 50% of importance within a community. It was finally decided that women's involvement should be encouraged as much as possible.

4) The following theme was regarded as a principle in itself:

* A clear mapping of organizations overseas and in Timor Leste (who is doing what, etc). So women workers know who to contact and how.

5) The next theme was comprised of the following ideas:

* Learn, understand respond appropriately. Learning about the extreme tragedy of many women creates a greater commitment to support T.L women's struggles. The political becomes personal.

* Patience – Western expectations will be challenged!

* Operate within cultural and experiential framework, initially – change from within.

The key ideas within this theme were thought to concern the idea of culture, a commitment to cross-cultural communication and respect for values. In addition, the notion of dialogue was extended to emphasize the importance of context and that an understanding of the context and cultural values within Timor Leste was integral to this process.

Some group members were uncomfortable with the term “patience” regarding it as somewhat patronizing. It was explained that this term was in fact referring to patience towards Western workers within Timor-Leste who needed to work on not imposing their own values on the situation.

6) The next theme focused on the following ideas:

* Take time, let things develop slowly. It’s our project but it’s their life.

*Planning of long term programming with clear focus.

*Guarantee practical outcomes. Not just consultation and reporting.

*Engaging women initially is best done at the UMA (family) or aldeia level beginning with small groups of women who already know each other.

This theme was mainly concerned with the key ideas of: Time, Sustainability, Practical outcomes and Focus. Group members were largely of the idea that women needed to be more involved in the frame regarding strategies for engagement.

7) The final theme consisted of the following two ideas:

* Need for flexibility within planning to cope with the nature of change in Timor... Things don’t happen as planned i.e. Human rights/serious crimes unit.

*Be flexible. Don’t take yourself too seriously!

Due to time constraints a general consensus agreed that the final point in this collection would be enough to constitute the principle without debate.

The workshop session ended with participants agreeing that the process had been a very successful and productive one.

Session Two

The second session opened with a brief introduction of the 8th and 9th principles to be discussed.

General thoughts about the principles were offered around the group with ideas about what needed to be addressed in this session. The general consensus was that the principles had “lost their teeth” and they needed to be made more dynamic. It was agreed that this should be the objective of session with a commitment to avoid jargon within the principles due to the diversity of the forum. In addition more detail was required as the principles were too vague as they stood and it was suggested that dot points would be useful to help expand upon the principles. Rather than splitting into smaller groups as had been done in the previous session, it was agreed that the diversity of opinions were important for discussing both principles so the group remained as a whole.

Following this concern about the wording of the focus question was raised with some members wishing to define the term “our”. After the term was clarified as meaning “foreigners” it was requested that it be removed from the question as for the majority of those working in Timor-Leste the majority of their staffs comprised of Timorese people.

A discussion of how to build upon principle 8 followed. The group was concerned with bringing back more of their original principles into this principle as it had become too passive. It was decided it needed to be made into something more tangible as a way to encourage women to be more active.

While some members of the group believed the principle was complete, they agreed that perhaps it needed to focus more on the different capacities of women and men or their strengths and weaknesses. They felt that it needed to address the differences between men and women as there may be more specific skills that women need. In addition to this it was agreed that the principle needed to address engaging women and simultaneously providing opportunities for women. It was argued that women need to be involved from the beginning and need to be brought to the forefront. This was thought to ensure that women have power in the decision making process, especially if it is a program for women.

The final revised principle was agreed to as follows:

Enable women to be more active in decision making especially decisions that their day to day lives.

The 9th principle was similarly discussed. The main concern in regard to this principle was the notion of culture and what was meant by it. A background to the situation was offered explaining that people recognize the current culture as not enabling women to participate in decision-making process. This is regarded as the traditional culture in Timor Leste. Some group members raised the question of whether this was the culture referred to in the principle or was it a new tradition that enables women to be more active. It was discussed whether the idea was to focus on the past or create a new tradition and that only when this was established could talk begin on what to do with this tradition or culture.

From this other members argued that culture was not a static concept. It was felt that culture should be regarded as always changing and evolving and as such the principle should aim for the future. These members believed the starting point was where the situation was at currently and that it needed to be worked with and understood perhaps despite working towards another goal.

This notion provoked more thoughts from the group who believed the answer was to delve into the known history of the culture drawing upon deeply valued achievements and practices of the past. It was suggested that it was important to not just looking at

the static or current situation but what made sense to the community from a historical perspective. The emphasis here was to search for an articulate what is deeply valued and what has been most successful in previous situations for the Timor Leste people.

A suggestion was put forward that an extension to the principle should read:

* Articulate and build on deeply valued practices and experiences of the past to develop a future program.

This was accepted, however, group members were still concerned with the body of the principle and that the term “culture” was too abstract. The issues emerging from the differences in how people work was thought to be an important aspect to consider. The question of whether the term should be left in or completely reframed was raised and from this the group agreed that it needed to be further described so as to be read from a variety of perspectives.

The final version of the principle was agreed to as follows:

Respect and celebrate the diversity of Timorese culture and leadership that supports the participation of women.

- *Articulate and build on deeply valued practices and experiences from the past.*