

Village Volunteers in Action!

Supporting Facilitation Training in Kenya 2023

In October 2023, Village Volunteers funded a five-day training of facilitators in the Technology of Participation (ToP) Group Facilitation Methods. The training was requested and hosted by Support for Community Response (SCR), a locally based NGO and long-term partner of ICA:UK. The training was held in Mariakani (Coast Province) and conducted by local trainers Patrick Mbullu and Nathan Andika, assisted by Beatrice Imali of SCR and John Cornwell, a freelance facilitator and ToP Trainer based in Mombasa. 13 participants attended the training, drawn from a range of organisations, including WOFAK (Women Fighting AIDS in Kenya) who are a neighbouring and partner organisation to SCR.



The intent of the course was to develop and strengthen the competence and confidence of the participants in facilitation, specifically to enable them to play a greater role with SCR, either as volunteers on programmes in the community, or as consultants able to complete paid assignments for clients, as part of SCR's income generating efforts.

The focus of the training was to introduce the two core methods of the ToP methodology (the Focused Conversation and Consensus Workshop methods) to the group through a process of demonstration, explanation, practice and application. Built into the training were visits to community groups that SCR has been working with to practice the methods (*pictures below*), and an exploration of how the facilitators can best work together once the training is over.



The participants were very pleased with the course, highlighting the value of the methods taught, giving examples of how they see themselves applying the methods in their own context, including building consensus in a non-confrontational manner, establishing teamwork, proper planning, co-operation, and commitment. It was also noted that many of the facilitators still need to build their confidence through practice, sharing and learning from experiences and working with experienced facilitators.

Six Months on...



Two follow-up events were facilitated by John Cornwell at the end of April 2024, one online for trainees based away from Mariakani and one in-person. Attended by seven of the original participants with support from members of the Pwani Facilitators Network, a local network of Facilitators in the Coast region of Kenya, these events provided a useful opportunity for trainees to share their experiences and

insights. All the trainees who met in-person were able to report on how they had applied the methods in practice to facilitate discussions, make decisions, resolve conflict and set goals with (e.g.) local community groups, office teams, church groups, local youth groups. They also recognized the challenges brought by difficult power dynamics, divergent opinions and maintaining engagement. For those online, all recognized the value of the training, but their lack of proximity to each other or to local facilitator networks, meant that they hadn't had the same opportunities for support or practice.

The overall conclusion of the review was to recognize the importance of developing a community of practice, with regular follow ups, opportunities for ongoing sharing and learning, with links to local networks, peers and mentors. Equally, the need for further outreach to boost the visibility of the profession, identify new opportunities to expand and deepen the facilitators' practice, both on a voluntary or paid basis.



The Village Volunteers sponsorship scheme is a project of ICA:UK, registered charity no. 1090745

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