

Conflict Management & Resolution

Part IV



Dealing with Conflict Within and Between Refugee Sponsoring Groups

Overview

- I. Group decision-making
- II. Skills for effectively managing group process
- III. Group problem solving process
- IV. Role play exercise



I. Group decision-making



How groups make effective decisions when they do not agree

- **Majority rule**
 - Fixed majority vote of members; encourages competition
- **Minority rule**
 - Decision made by a subgroup for the group as a whole
- **Autocracy**
 - Decision made by a single person in authority
- **Autocracy with polling**
 - Decision made by a single person in authority after each member has given their input

How groups make effective decisions when they do not agree

- **Unanimity**
 - Each group member agrees to the decision and to fully support it
- **Consensus**
 - The whole group agrees to the best decision that all members can commit themselves to
- **Decision by non-decision**
 - No conclusion is reached because the group is unable to reach agreement or any other decision

What is consensus?

- A process in which all those who have an interest or stake in a matter, aim to reach a mutually acceptable agreement without imposing the views or authority of one member or members upon the others.
- In a consensus process, people work together as equals in a problem solving process which maximizes their ability to resolve differences.
- Although all members of a group may not agree with all aspects of the ultimate agreement, consensus is reached if all of them are willing to “live with” the total package worked out by the group.
- Even if all matters are not resolved, the consensus process can crystallize discussions, clarify underlying issues, identify options for dealing with outstanding disagreements, and build respect and understanding among group members.



Consensus is not...



A majority vote, as this means only the majority of the group gets something they are happy with.

The Guiding Principles of Consensus

- Everyone is respected and all contributions are valued
- Ideas and concerns are expressed first, before any conflict resolution or debate on the issues occurs

Standing Aside vs. Blocking

- When an unresolved concern remains after discussion, the concerned person must decide either to stand aside (thereby giving consent) or to withhold consent (thereby raising a question of blocking). A block occurs when the entire group agrees that the person's concern is based upon the group's very principles and foundations. If so, the decision may be blocked.
- Periodically, a group member may be unable to agree with an important decision and may effectively "block" consensus. In this situation, the group may delay a resolution until further information can be gathered. A deadline for a final decision must be determined.
- Rather than block consensus on a decision, however, the member may agree to "stand aside" under certain circumstances.



The Consensus Environment

- For consensus to work well, the process must be conducted in an environment which promotes:
 - Trust
 - Respect
 - Unity of Purpose
 - Nonviolence
 - Shared empowerment
 - Cooperation
 - Constructive Conflict Resolution
 - Commitment to Group
 - Active Participation
 - Equal Access to Power
 - Patience



The Characteristics of Consensus Decision-Making

- Each group member feels that he or she has been heard and understood by the rest of the group
- Each group member feels that he or she can live with the decision
- Each member is willing to commit to his or her role in carrying out the decision, or at least will in no way block or hamper its implementation.

When to Use Consensus Decision-Making

- When the issue is important
- When group unity is significant
- When there are a number of alternatives and problems may arise if one alternative is chosen over another
- When the process of reaching a decision is as important as the decision itself

Required Behaviours for Consensus Decision-Making

- Seek to understand and to be understood.
- Use active listening skills.
- Express constructive criticism - do not make personal attacks.
- Listen to the opinions of others; test them and build on them – be open-minded.
- Allow sufficient time to discuss all of the different viewpoints.
- Ensure the participation of all group members.
- Search for mutually supported alternatives.
- Determine between factual and non-factual information.
- Acknowledge the feelings of all group members in a nonjudgmental way.
- Think creatively.
- Strive to give consensus decision-making a real chance.

Consensus Decision-Making Process

Introduction of proposal or issue



Conduct a broad, open discussion



Identify concerns



Resolve concerns



Alternative closing options to consensus

II. Skills for Effectively Managing Group Process


Making Group Meetings Work

1. Prepared ahead for a focused meeting
2. Encourage diverse points of view
3. Keep focused and moving right up to the end of the meeting



Tips for Effective Meetings

- Members should attend all meetings
- Members share responsibility for meeting effectiveness
- Group uses an agenda
- Members listen carefully to other members
- All members participate in discussions
- Members remain positive and keep an open mind
- Members are patient and tolerant of each other



III. Group Problem Solving Process



Group Problem-Solving Process

- Identify the problem
- Generate options
- Establish objective criteria
- Problem solve
- Implement the solution
- Evaluate the solution



IV. Role Play Exercise

Thank-you



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