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OVERHEAD 0.1: COURSE OVERVIEW

SECTION 1 – THE NATURE OF CONFLICT IN THE REFUGEE/ SPONSOR RELATIONSHIP

SECTION 2 – PERSONAL RESPONSES TO CONFLICT IN THE REFUGEE/SPONSOR RELATIONSHIP

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SECTION 4 – DEALING WITH CONFLICT WITHIN AND BETWEEN REFUGEE SPONSORING GROUPS

OVERHEAD 0.2: COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To educate participants about the nature of conflict in the refugee/sponsor relationship and the impact of cultural diversity and power imbalances upon the management and resolution of conflicts that arise between them
- To assist participants to become more aware of their own attitudes, values and beliefs about conflict and how these personal attitudes, values and beliefs affect how they respond to conflict situations, including cultural differences
- To provide participants with a culturally sensitive model for conflict management/resolution
- To teach participants interpersonal skills for dealing effectively with conflicts in the refugee/sponsor relationship
- To provide participants with techniques for dealing with conflicts within and between sponsoring groups, and for developing group consensus

OVERHEAD 1.1/SECTION 1: THE NATURE OF CONFLICT IN THE REFUGEE/SPONSORSHIP RELATIONSHIP

OBJECTIVES

- To educate participants about the nature, types and sources of interpersonal conflict in a multi-cultural society;
- To assist participants to identify specific conflicts which occur in their work with refugees and sponsoring groups;
- To identify the kinds of responses which lead to the escalation or de-escalation of conflict;
- To explore various factors, including cultural factors, which may impact upon successful conflict management/resolution;
- To consider the relationship between conflict resolution and power in our society.

OVERHEAD 1.2: THE NATURE OF CONFLICT

Conflict is:

- everywhere
- inevitable
- universal
- natural
- neutral
- all about Differences – in expectations, values, goals, culture
- generally perceived as negative
- can have positive or negative outcomes
- needs to be resolved

Conflict is:

An opportunity for change, growth and problem-solving.

A DEFINITION OF CONFLICT

There is no single definition of conflict. It is a complex human response that occurs along a number of dimensions:

1. **Thought** – A belief or understanding that one's own needs, interests, wants or values are inconsistent, if not incompatible, with someone else's. Conflict exists if at least one person believes it to exist.
2. **Emotion** – An emotional reaction (fear, sadness, bitterness, anger or hopelessness) to a situation or interaction that indicates a disagreement of some kind.
3. **Action** – The behaviours (actions we take) to express our feelings, articulate our beliefs, and get our own needs met in a way that has the potential for interfering with someone else's ability to do so.

(Adapted from Bernard Mayer, *The Dynamics of Conflict Resolution: A Practitioner's Guide*)

OVERHEAD 1.3: FOUR TYPES OF CONFLICT

1. Intra-Personal Conflicts

- Conflicts that occur within the individual
e.g. *Should I take this job or wait for a better one?*

2. Inter-Personal Conflicts

- Conflicts that occur between different persons
e.g. *Sponsor and newcomer disagree about use of financial support.*

3. Inter-Group Conflicts

- Conflicts between members of a particular group
e.g. *Group members disagree about who to sponsor.*

4. Inter-Group Conflicts

- Conflicts between different groups
e.g. *Sponsorship agreement holder and sponsoring group disagree about division of roles.*

OVERHEAD 1.4: CAUSES OF CONFLICT

- Unsatisfied wants
- Limited resources
- Unmet emotional needs
- Different perceptions, assumptions, values
- Lack of information or mis-information
- Competing interests
- Differences in power and authority/Powerlessness
- Different perceptions of entitlement
- Ineffective communications
- Time constraints
- Failure to trust
- Different personality styles
- Cultural Differences
- External pressures
- Different priorities
- Discrimination, Prejudice, Racism

OVERHEAD 1.5: THE ESCALATION OF CONFLICT

CONFLICT WILL PROBABLY, BUT NOT ALWAYS, ESCALATE WHEN:

- Other persons become involved in the dispute and act as “cheerleaders;”
- The dispute becomes personalized;
- Past hurts and historical injuries are added into the present conflict;
- Emotions escalate and are acted out behaviourally;
- There is little interest on either side in maintaining the relationship;
- Important needs and interests are not identified and acknowledged;
- The parties lack the necessary skills to resolve the conflict;
- The disputants are not sensitive to cultural differences between them and engage in cultural stereotyping, racism, prejudice and discrimination.

OVERHEAD 1.6: DE-ESCALATION OF CONFLICT

CONFLICT WILL TEND TO DE-ESCALATE WHEN:

- The disputants focus on the problem, not each other
- Emotions such as anger, fear and frustration are expressed verbally rather than physically
- The disputants stick to the current issue between them
- Threats are not made
- An ongoing relationship is acknowledged as important to both
- Needs and concerns are disclosed and discussed
- The disputants have some knowledge and skills to resolve conflict
- The disputants are sensitive to and respect each other's race, religion and cultural differences

OVERHEAD 1.7: RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

In general, responses to conflict fall into three main categories:

1. **FIGHT**
2. **FLIGHT**
3. **COLLABORATION OR PROBLEM-SOLVING**

1. Fight Responses:

- Direct confrontation
- Physical attacks, use of fists and weapons
- Name-calling
- Threats
- Use of verbal “put-downs”
- Blaming the other
- Dredging up past hurts and injuries
- Personalizing the conflict
- Emotional explosions
- Seeking to win – might is right!

OVERHEAD 1.7 (continued)

2. Flight Responses:

- Conflict avoidance or denial
- Bursts into tears – “don’t hurt me”
- Blames self, not the other
- Doesn’t stand up for one’s own needs and interests
- Scapegoats another person
- Capitulates or gives in
- Intellectualizes
- Minimizes the problem
- Walks out and refuses to talk about the problem
- Changes the subject
- Cuts off all communications
- Makes a joke
- Apologizes
- Makes excuses, rationalizes

3. Collaborative or Problem-Solving Response:

- Focuses on the problem not the person;
- Attempts to understand the nature of the conflict and what it means to the other person;
- Seeks to understand, then to be understood;
- Looks for creative solutions to the problem that meets the needs of both disputants, i.e. a “win-win” solution;
- If no solution is possible, agrees to disagree.

OVERHEAD 1.8: SOURCES OF POWER

THERE ARE GENERALLY TWO SOURCES OF POWER:

1. Structural Power – the power of the situation:

- Access to and control over economic/financial resources
- Formal authority
- Status (marital, professional, etc.)
- Hierarchical position (and the ability to control access to funds)
- The ability to control a decision-making process
- Legal rights
- Political realities
- Associations (connections with other powerful persons)
- Support groups
- Nuisance (the power of the flea over the dog)
- Membership in the dominant group
- The power of the “status quo”
- Moral and religious power

2. Personal Power – the power of the individual:

- Intelligence
- Knowledge
- Education
- Expertise
- Experience
- Charisma
- Self-esteem
- Language and communication skills
- Physical size, stamina and strength
- Determination and endurance
- Age
- Gender
- Wit
- The ability to tolerate hostility and conflict
- A sense of entitlement

OVERHEAD 2.1/SECTION 2: PERSONAL RESPONSES TO CONFLICT IN THE REFUGEE/SPONSOR RELATIONSHIP

OBJECTIVES

- To assist participants to become more aware of their own attitudes, values and beliefs, and how these personal attitudes, values and beliefs affect how they respond to conflict situations involving refugees and their sponsors;
- To educate participants about the various styles of response to conflict and how to identify their preferred individual response style;
- To raise the awareness of participants as to the role of emotions in conflict situations and to provide them with strategies for dealing with their own emotions and the emotions of others;
- To help participants identify their own personal “hot buttons” in the refugee/sponsor relationship.

OVERHEAD 2.2: FIVE STYLES OF RESPONSE TO CONFLICT

1. Avoiding:

- Most unassertive and most uncooperative style
- In this style, we satisfy neither our own concerns nor those of others
- Avoiders withdraw from and avoid conflict
- Avoiding may lead to the persistence and escalation of conflict over time
- May be useful to avoid trivial conflicts or those where we have no possible chance of satisfying our own needs and concerns

2. Accommodating:

- Highly co-operative, but very unassertive style
- Attempts to satisfy the needs and concerns of others, while neglecting our own
- Accommodators usually have a high regard for relationships and are willing to forgo personal goals in order to preserve relationships
- Always subordinating one's own needs and concerns to those of others may lead to a sense of frustration and resentment over time
- But, accommodating may be necessary at times, to preserve peace and harmony and to demonstrate a willingness to think about the needs of others

3. Competing (Forcing)

- Satisfying our own needs without regard for those of others
- Highly assertive style, low in terms of cooperation
- The exact opposite of accommodating
- Persons who take this approach seek to force their will upon others to win at all costs
- Low concern for relationships
- Competing can be useful in an emergency when there is little time and a decision needs to be made immediately
- It may lead to resentment and retaliation if used exclusively in times of conflict

OVERHEAD 2.2 (continued)

4. Compromising

- A willingness to give up some of our own goals and objectives, if our opponent is willing to do likewise
- This style is all about splitting the difference
- Moderately assertive, moderately cooperative style
- Results in a win-some, lose-some outcome
- Compromising can be useful, when working under a deadline, when the issues are too complex to be addressed in a timely manner, or when disputants' goals are likely to remain incompatible. Both disputants get some measure of satisfaction. However, they may be leaving further gains on the table.

5. Collaborating

- Collaborating results in a win-win outcome
- Disputants work together to satisfy as many of their interests as possible
- Collaborators are both highly assertive (with respect to their own interests) and highly cooperative (in regard to their opponent's interests)
- Collaboration satisfies the concerns of all parties to the conflict. It represents the "elegant" or "integrative" solution to the dispute
- Collaboration is the preferred method of conflict resolution when relationship issues are at stake and when disputants' concerns are too important to be compromised or accommodated
- Successful collaboration requires time and commitment since it involves identifying the interests of all disputants at all levels (substantive, emotional and procedural)

OVERHEAD 2.3 STAGES OF ANGER

THERE ARE CERTAIN IDENTIFIABLE STAGES IN THE EXPRESSION OF ANGER:

1. The Triggering Event
2. Escalation
3. Crisis
4. Recovery stage
5. Post Crisis Depression

OVERHEAD 2.4: STAGES OF GRIEF

AS WITH ALL LOSSES, THERE ARE SOME PREDICTABLE STAGES IN THE GRIEVING PROCESS. THESE ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. Denial
2. Anger.
3. Sadness
4. Acceptance

OVERHEAD 2.5: STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH ANGER

1. Our Own Anger:

- Be aware of your own personal triggers.
- Have strategies ready that you can use when your “hot buttons” are pushed.
- Take a few moments to calm down. Take a break, go for a walk.
- Don’t react right away. Go to the “balcony,” i.e. step back mentally (not physically) and think about the problem objectively.
- Practice stress management techniques, i.e. take several deep breaths and control your breathing
- Try to imagine yourself in the other person’s position and what they might be feeling and upset about. What might they be needing from you?
- Don’t reject their views outright. Instead of arguing or defending, take the time to listen to them first. Then, ask them to hear you out in the same manner.
- Reframe any negative judgmental comments into more positive or neutral language.

OVERHEAD 2.6: STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH ANGER

2. Anger of the Other:

- Allow other person the right to feel angry. Don't try to talk him or her out of it. Say things like "I know you're upset."
- Recognize the angry person may be feeling helpless and threatened and try to understand what lies underneath the anger.
- Stay calm and try to resist any temptations to respond with angry comments of your own, directed at the person.
- Instead, focus on the problem and try to co-opt the other person to do likewise.
- Use active listening responses. Determine the intensity of the feeling and acknowledge the feeling in a word that reflects that intensity.
- If the other person is escalating, remove yourself from any situation of potential danger and say you will discuss the matter further when you are both feeling less intense.

OVERHEAD 2.7: STRATEGIES FOR DEALING WITH GRIEF AND LOSS

- Use active listening. Try to choose a word that accurately reflects the level of intensity of the feeling that is being expressed, i.e. sorry, sad, depressed, despairing, hopeless. Acknowledge how they are sounding, using this word.
- Continue to actively listen, trying to sum up the substance of what they are saying to you.
- The feelings should subside somewhat as they begin to talk. If the feelings escalate, you should tell them what you are observing, i.e. that they seem overwhelmed by these feelings, and how you feel inadequate to help. You can help by finding them someone with necessary expertise and let them know you will accompany them personally for support.
- If the person denies the feeling, you can reflect back your observations of their non-verbal behaviour: "You say you're not sad, and yet you look as if you have been crying."

OVERHEAD 3.1/SECTION 3: A PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT IN THE REFUGEE/SPONSOR RELATIONSHIP

OBJECTIVES

- To introduce participants to “interest based” negotiation theory so they will be able to distinguish between positions and underlying interests in conflict situations;
- To sensitize participants to the importance of our “identity” needs as individuals in a multi-cultural society;
- To teach participants some basic interpersonal skills for dealing effectively with conflicts, including cross-cultural conflicts;
- To provide participants with a culturally sensitive, problem solving model for conflict management/resolution;
- To give participants an opportunity to practice the model and skills in a simulated conflict between a refugee and sponsor.

OVERHEAD 3.2: HOW CONFLICTS GET RESOLVED: INTERESTS, RIGHTS, POWER

1. Power-Based Methods:

- Disputes are settled on the basis of who is more powerful i.e. who has more structural or personal power to influence the outcome
- Examples of power based methods are legal or illegal strikes, lock-outs, violence, war, use of authority, “pulling rank” etc.

2. Rights-Based Methods:

- Disputes are determined on the basis of rights and entitlements e.g. by referring to the collective or sponsorship agreement, contract, statute law, precedents, norms etc.
- Examples of rights-based processes are formal grievances, arbitration and litigation. They look to the “rights” rather than to the needs of the disputants

3. Interest-Based Methods:

- In these processes, disputants seek to identify and reconcile their respective interests e.g. their needs, desires, hopes, fears, and concerns underlying the conflict in order to achieve a mutually satisfactory, win-win outcome

OVERHEAD 3.3: CONFLICT MANAGEMENT VS. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

In many cases, conflict cannot be eliminated altogether. However, it may be controlled or managed so that it does not escalate in emotional intensity, spread to involve other persons and other issues, and lead to deteriorating relationships between the parties in conflict. Appropriate interventions can prevent conflict escalation and allow the disputants to continue to work productively together in future.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In certain cases, conflict can be truly resolved in the sense that the disputants reach a mutually acceptable agreement that meets as many of their competing needs and interests as possible. There is resolution as opposed to simply a settlement (which is more along the lines of let's cut a deal).

OVERHEAD 3.4: CONTINUUM OF CONFLICT INTERVENTIONS

1. Conflict Prevention:

Be familiar with the common types of disputes that arise between sponsors and newcomers and act proactively to prevent them from arising in the first place. Discuss potential problems up front and frame them as problems to be solved together, as and when they arise.

2. Conflict Management/Containment:

Recognize the warning signs of incipient conflicts with newcomers, and intervene as before they escalate out of control. Use a direct approach only after a careful cultural assessment. Where necessary, recognize that the sponsor and newcomer will never agree on a resolution. Ask "Can we get through this for one year even though we don't agree?" and then come to an agreement about how to carry on.

3. Conflict Diversion:

Where none of the preceding approaches are successful, find another way to deal with the sponsorship. The group or the SAH continues with the funding, and finds another group to provide the ongoing personal support.

4. Breakdown:

In extreme cases, it may not be possible for the sponsor/refugee relationship to continue, even in altered form. The refugee/sponsor relationship is terminated.

OVERHEAD 3.5: NON-CONFRONTATIONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Direct confrontation of a conflict may be very inappropriate in a culture where harmony or the appearance of harmony and “saving face” are highly valued. In such cultures, non-confrontational strategies are utilized such as:

1. **Anticipatory management** – a conflict can be anticipated and defused in a preventive way before it becomes manifest.
2. **Negative communication** – remaining silent, avoiding, evading and being absent conveys disagreement or even anger without a direct confrontation.
3. **Situational friendliness** – allows persons who are avoiding each other to assume friendliness under certain circumstances.
4. **Triadic mediation** – using a go-between to reduce or manage conflict and save face
5. **Displacement** – Anger is displaced onto a third party who is more vulnerable or less threatening.
6. **Self-aggression** – a grievance is expressed through exaggerated compliance.
7. **Acceptance** – A conflict situation is acknowledged as inevitable and accepted with resignation.

OVERHEAD 3.6: INTEREST-BASED CONFLICT RESOLUTION

PRINCIPLES AS ADAPTED FROM GETTING TO YES

1. Separate the People from the Problem

Be soft on the people and hard on the problem. Focus on the issues and how to resolve them, rather than blaming the persons involved in the dispute. This gets the disputants to work together. Attack the problem, not each other.

2. Focus on Interests, not Positions

Move away from positional statements and identify the individual and common interests underlying and driving the dispute, i.e. the needs, desires, hopes, fears of both disputants

3. Invent Options for Mutual Gain

Expand the possibilities for settlement beyond what was originally proposed, in order to maximize the satisfaction of all identified interests.

4. Use Mutually Acceptable Objective Criteria

To arrive at an outcome which is independent of the naked will of either party and fair to both sides, e.g. reported cases, technical criteria, precedents etc.

5. Develop the Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (BATNA) and the Worst Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement (WATNA) for each disputant

OVERHEAD 3.7: INTERESTS VS. POSITIONS

Positions

A fixed stance or ideas about what they want or demand to see happen. A position is the perfect solution viewed from their self-interested point of view.

e.g. "You have got to get a job immediately, no matter what kind of job".

Interests

Underlying these fixed positions are the individual disputant's interests. These are the unexpressed needs, desires, concerns, hopes and fears that underlie and inform positions.

e.g. "I am afraid that if you don't find work, we will have to find other sources of funding for you."

OVERHEAD 3.8: KINDS OF INTERESTS

INTERESTS CAN EXIST ON MANY LEVELS:

1. Substantive or Content Interests

- These are the needs that reflect the substance or content of the dispute – what the dispute is all about.

e.g. *"I need \$50 additional money so I can pay this utility bill."*

2. Emotional or Psychological Interests

- These are the needs that relate to the feeling or relational aspects of the dispute – the underlying feelings that are driving the dispute.

e.g. *"I need to feel capable once again of handling my own finances and my own life."*

3. Procedural Interests

- The way in which the problem is resolved may be just as important as the actual outcome itself.

e.g. *"I don't care what the final decision is as long as you listen to my side of the story and act fairly."*

4. Identity Interests:

Identity-based needs are the needs that all of us have for autonomy meaning and community in our lives.

OVERHEAD 3.9: ACTIVE LISTENING

When to Active Listen:

- Before reacting, responding, arguing, blaming or criticizing
- Whenever the speaker is expressing strong feelings or a pressure to talk
- When the speaker needs to sort out his or her feelings or thoughts

How to Active Listen: Four Basic Steps

- a. Concentrate fully on what is being said and the way in which it is being said. Pay particular attention to all non-verbal indicators such as tone of voice, facial expressions, gestures, posture, etc.
- b. Identify the major content of the speaker's message – the speaker's main thoughts and ideas – as well as the accompanying affect, i.e. the speaker's feelings about what is being said.
- c. Paraphrase (i.e. restate in your own words) what you believe to be the central ideas that the speaker is communicating, along with the accompanying feelings, using words of a comparable emotional intensity.
- d. Listen for the speaker's response, either confirming that you have heard and understood accurately or correcting your misunderstanding. If your first response was not accurate, try again.

OVERHEAD 3.10: ACTIVE LISTENING (cont'd)

Tips for Active Listening:

- Try putting yourself in the other person's shoes to understand how he or she might be thinking and feeling.
- Resist the temptation to argue, interrupt or finish the speaker's sentences for him or her.
- Do not offer advice, give suggestions or recount your own personal experiences to the speaker.
- Remain neutral (i.e. nonjudgmental) at all times.

An example of active Listening:

Speaker: "People in this country don't know what it's like to live in a refugee camp."

Listener: "It sounds as if it makes you mad that we don't appreciate the hardships you've been through."

OVERHEAD 3.11: CLOSED QUESTIONS

CLOSED QUESTIONS

- The kind of question a lawyer uses on cross-examination to pin down a witness to a specific answer.
- The closed or “leading” question, as it is also called, narrows the focus of discussion, suggests the answer to the question or calls for a “black and white,” “yes or no,” “either/or” response.
- Frequently the leading question implies the particular thinking or values of the questioner, and makes an assumption about the expected response.
- Closed questions are useful when there is a need to clarify a response that is vague or unclear, to focus the attention of the person being questioned, or to bring closure to a discussion.
- Closed questions are not all that helpful in exploring or probing the matter under discussion because they foreclose other possible responses.

Some examples of closed questions are:

- “Isn’t it true that . . .?”
- “Don’t you agree that . . .?”
- “Do you believe that . . .?”
- “Are you sure that . . .?”

OVERHEAD 3.12: OPEN QUESTIONS

OPEN QUESTIONS

- The type of open-ended or journalistic question that encourages the broadest possible response.
- Open-ended questions are non-directive, they do not suggest the thinking or values of the questioner.
- Open-ended questions usually begin with the words “what” “why” “when” “where” or “how.”
- Questions beginning with “why” may elicit a negative or defensive response, since they are often perceived as evaluation or judgmental in nature.
- Open-ended questions are especially useful at the beginning of a discussion when you are seeking to obtain the maximum amount of information.

Some examples of open-ended questions are:

“What happened to lead you to make a complaint?”

“On what basis did you believe that you were being treated unfairly?”

“When did you start to feel uncomfortable?”

OVERHEAD 3.13: REFRAMING

- This skill involves restating an emotionally charged, negative statement and turning it into a neutral or even positive statement, while retaining the essential content of the speaker's message.
- Reframing is used to de-escalate and control conflict, to facilitate positive communication and constructive problem-solving, to identify the interests underlying stated positions, to moderate demands, and to eliminate negative, value-laden language from communications.
- The reframed statement is put in terms that can be heard and understood by all, rather than simply reacted to.

Examples of reframed statements are as follows:

Statement (said angrily): "I'm not going to sit here and listen to these crazy accusations."

Reframed as: "You'd like to take some more positive action to deal with the issues."

OVERHEAD 3.14: INTEREST-BASED PROBLEM SOLVING MODEL FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Stage 1: Pre-Negotiations - Conduct a Culturally-sensitive Assessment of the Situation

Stage 2: Set a Positive Environment for Conflict Resolution

Stage 3: Define the Issues

Stage 4: Explore the Underlying Interests of Both Disputants

Stage 5: Problem Solve

Stage 6: Implementation

OVERHEAD 4.1/SECTION 4 DEALING WITH CONFLICT WITHIN AND BETWEEN REFUGEE SPONSORING GROUPS

OBJECTIVES

- To provide participants with specific skills and techniques for dealing with conflicts within and between sponsoring groups
- To teach participants processes for reaching consensus in group meetings and for group problem-solving.
- To give participants an opportunity to practise group conflict resolution skills in role play simulations.

OVERHEAD 4.2: GROUP DECISION-MAKING

HOW GROUPS MAKE EFFECTIVE DECISIONS WHEN THEY DO NOT AGREE

Majority Rule – The decision is made on the basis of a fixed majority vote of members. Majority rule voting encourages competition in which the goal for each side is to win, often at the expense of the legitimate concerns of the opposing members.

Minority Rule – The decision is made by a subgroup for the group as a whole.

Autocracy – The decision is decreed by a single person in authority.

Autocracy with Polling - The decision is made by a single person in authority after members have given their input.

Unanimity - Each group member fully agrees to the decision and to fully support it.

Consensus - The whole group agrees to the best decision to which all members can commit themselves at the time.

Decision by Non-Decision – No conclusion is reached because the group is unable to reach agreement on any other decision.

OVERHEAD 4.3: 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.

OVERHEAD 4.4: CONSENSUS IS NOT...

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

OVERHEAD 4.5: STANDING ASIDE VS. BLOCKING

- In a consensus process, everyone is respected and all contributions are valued. Ideas and concerns are expressed first, before any conflict resolution or debate on the issues occurs.
- 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.

OVERHEAD 4.6: 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

OVERHEAD 4.7: 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.

OVERHEAD 4.8: 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

OVERHEAD 4.9: 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 non-judgmental way.
- Think creatively.
- Strive to give consensus decision-making a real chance.

OVERHEAD 4.10: THE CONSENSUS DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

1. INTRODUCTION OF PROPOSAL OR ISSUE:

- Clarify the issue or proposal prior to discussion so that all participants understand what is about to be discussed and the process for discussing it.
- Present the proposal or issue to group.
- Answer any questions to clarify the presentation.

2. CONDUCT A BROAD, OPEN DISCUSSION:

- Have a broad, free-ranging general discussion on the proposal or issue.
- Call for consensus.
- If there is no consensus, move to next step.

3. IDENTIFY CONCERNS:

- Poll the group to identify all of their concerns about the presentation.
- Write down group-related concerns on a flip chart.

4. RESOLVE CONCERNS:

- Discuss grouped concerns, one group at a time.
- Call again for consensus.
- If there is no consensus on all issues, restate the remaining concerns.
- Ask questions to clarify the remaining concerns in depth.
- Discuss and attempt to resolve one concern at a time.
- Call again for consensus.
- If there is no consensus, move to next step.

OVERHEAD 4.10 (continued)

5. ALTERNATIVE CLOSING OPTIONS TO CONSENSUS:

- Consider outcomes if no consensus is reached.
- Brainstorm possible options to consensus e.g. alternative forms of decision-making.
- Discuss options and their potential outcomes.
- Call for consensus on a “procedural” solution:
 - send the issue or proposal back to committee for further discussion;
 - declare a block;
 - get the agreement of those opposed to “stand aside”;
 - “park” the issue for further discussion at a later date;
 - seek additional information and input;
 - call upon an outside facilitator to continue the discussions;
 - call a vote to be carried by the majority or a fixed percentage of members, etc.

OVERHEAD 4.11: MAKING GROUP MEETINGS WORK; KEY FACTORS

1. PREPARE AHEAD FOR A FOCUSED MEETING:

Before the group meets –

- Think about the purpose and the desired outcomes of the meeting.
- Determine the topics to cover and the best format for discussing each topic – set an agenda.
- Estimate the required length of the meeting.
- Identify who needs to be present.
- Plan for someone to take notes of all important decisions.
- Communicate the purpose and desired outcome to all participants.

At the start of the meeting –

- Restate the purpose and desired outcomes of the meeting.
- Review the agenda.
- Develop or review ground rules for discussion.
- Provide any key information.

2. ENCOURAGE DIVERSE POINTS OF VIEW

- Agree on the type of participation desired by members.
- Show that you value the ideas, opinions and questions of others.
- Clarify and paraphrase key ideas to make sure you understand correctly.
- Be selective about contributing your own ideas and opinions – do not dominate discussions.
- Seek out different points of view.
- Use brainstorming techniques in cases of impasse.
- Record ideas on a flip chart.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Protect new ideas.
- Focus on the ideas, not the people who make them.
- Use positive reinforcement to encourage everyone to contribute.

OVERHEAD 4.11 (continued)

3. KEEP FOCUSED AND MOVING RIGHT UP TO THE END OF THE MEETING

- Pay attention to the flow of the meeting.
- Acknowledge and reinforce constructive contributions.
- Use agenda, desired outcomes, ground rules and structured discussions to stay on track.
- Adjust the pace to suit the discussions.
- Keep aware of where you are in the process.
- Periodically summarize key points and ask for agreement.
- Reach conclusions, discuss implementation and the next steps with appropriate time frames.
- Write down agreements so all participants can review and ratify them.

OVERHEAD 4.12: 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.

OVERHEAD 4.13: GROUP PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCESS

Identify the Problem:

- Clearly define the actual problem(s).
- Agree on agenda.
- Search for underlying concerns and interests.
- Distinguish between issues and personalities.
- Frame the issues as joint problem-solving tasks.

Generate Options:

- Develop a safe and creative environment.
- Brainstorm options – “anything goes”.
- Fine tune the brainstormed ideas into possible options.

Establish Objective Criteria:

- Determine mutually acceptable interests, principles and standards.
- Set criteria against which the options will be measured.

Problem Solve:

- Evaluate the Options.
- Determine which options meet the agreed criteria
- Prioritize the options to determine a solution

Implement the Solution:

- Determine who has to do what, when and how.
- Ensure that the decision is communicated and that all parties know their roles.

Evaluate the Solution:

- Did the solution work?
- If not, return to step one.