

Facilitation of a TIG Open Forum

Open forums are designed to bring together youth from a particular country to discuss real and relevant issues that they deal with in their communities. It gives youth a platform for safe, open discussion to reflect and express what they face in their every day lives. Open Forums can range from 5 to 50 young people. The topics can range from poverty, violence, HIV and AIDS, issues in the cities, language barriers, to environmental degradation. Also it gives youth a unique opportunity to describe and share how these issues are affected their regions, as well possible ideas how to effect change.

Basic Principles of an Open Forum

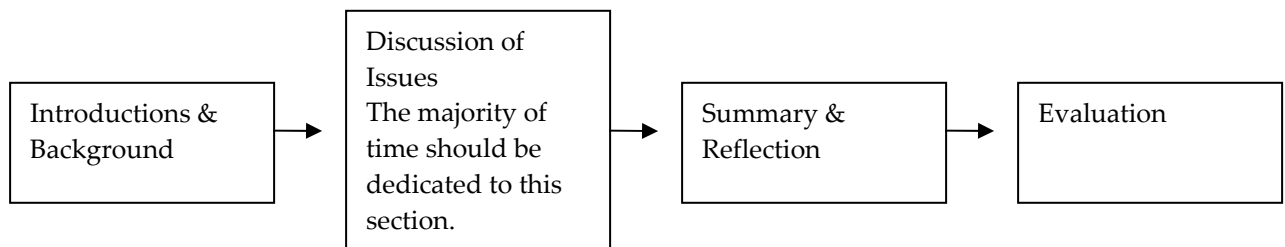
1. Having Inclusive Participation - the facilitator should help keep the discussion open and flowing allowing everyone to have a chance to fully and equally participate and share their views. It is important to encourage people who want to take more time than their share of air time to also spend time listening to others.
2. Increasing personal learning - participants should come away with a new ideas and insights shared in the group.
3. Creating Solidarity – new contacts are made though attending such events, helping young people around the country to become more connected.
4. Providing access – much of TIG’s activities takes place online. Open Forums extend an opportunity for youth to have a voice in a physical setting.
5. Making a Local – Global Connection – a strong emphasis is placed on sharing what is discussed locally in a global context.
6. Being a Catalyst for Action – in bringing people together to discuss issues of common concern, ideas can be exchanged that lead to action and new collaborations.

Steps to holding an Open Forum in your community:

1. Determine the issue - It is important to have a general consensus of what the discussion will revolve around, in that it is a relevant and pressing issue for youth in your community; giving youth the opportunity to share their experiences offline. It is also important that you are confident in your ability to facilitate an open discussion as well as being able to provide sound information to foster a dialogue which allows people to feel comfortable discussing real issues around this topic. Starting July 2004, Open Forums will correspond with TIG monthly themes; however, TIG members have the option of running an Open Forum of a different topic.
2. Identify an available location – The location for the Open Forum could be a community centre, library, or a school gymnasium. It should be a public place where people will feel safe and comfortable to express themselves fully which creates an atmosphere of genuine understanding and tolerance.
3. Set your agenda and submit it to the Open Forums page – once you have determined your agenda and location, please submit your proposal to: <http://www.takingitglobal.org/action/openforums>
When your proposal is approved, your forum will be displayed on the TIG website to inform other TIG members about your upcoming forum. This will also give you a space to upload documents and picture about the open forum, a weblog to document the process, as well as to submit a closure report.
4. Announce and Promote the Open Forum – Once your Open Forum proposal has been approved, you can begin promoting the Forum in your community and online. One idea could be to print flyers to promote the forum by placing them in strategic areas such as community centers, universities, etc to help create awareness to the offline community.
5. Take Pictures and Document the Process and Outcome – it will be necessary to submit a report and download pictures to the Open Forums section after the forum is over, the link to this will be sent to you once this feature is set up on the TIG website. It is essential that the process is documented. This allows other TIG members to view how the forum

went and what was discussed. Pictures of the event, the issues discussed, how many youth attended, the outcomes of the forum, and an evaluation by participants are important information that should be included.

Structuring the Forum:




Introductions & Background

Introduce yourself, and give time to allow others to introduce themselves. It is good to understand what kind of group you may be working with, so also ask them to include in their intro why they have chosen to attend the forum. It may be necessary to provide information and reasons why the forum is important, however, please keep in mind that this should not take up all the time as the discussion should have most of the time allocated to it. So remember to be short and concise. Also, allow for a time period of questions and answers with a specified time limit of 10 minutes max.

Discussion of Issues

One way to facilitate the discussion in an inclusive fashion is to listen to everyone's opinion by going in a complete circle, having people aware of a general time restriction.

Types of Discussions - There are various types of discussions that vary from being exclusive to inclusive. It is up to the facilitator to ensure that all participants have a fair and equal time to express themselves.



Exclusive Only a select few dominate the discussion, their thoughts and ideas are only heard, while others remain unheard.	Partial Collaboration People are encouraged to talk, yet some people are taking more time than others, there is still a lack of balance in the distribution of time and ideas shared.	Inclusive This group discussion includes all participants, allowing for difference of opinions but also trying to reach a consensus.
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To help achieve a more inclusive model the following is a list to keep in mind while facilitating the Forum.

Facilitation skills:

- The facilitator does not “lead” the discussion, but helps direct it in towards a positive and productive outcome.
- The facilitator needs to be clear about the sequences of discussion as well as have a set agenda and timeline to ensure there is structure during the forum, yet also allowing for some flexibility if necessary.
- The facilitator helps channel the issues raised by participants into organized and recorded ideas while encouraging people to share and exchange their thoughts and opinions.
- The process can be documented through the combined use of flip- charts, art (murals), record of minutes, and written evaluations by participants.

Summary & Reflection

Finish by writing down the achieve outcomes with the group. Ask people to give their reflection of their overall thoughts about the forum and give their ideas of possible next steps. It may be most beneficial to go in a circle so everyone has a chance to respond.

Evaluation

To be able to assess how valuable the forum was for the participants, a short evaluation should be handed out close to the end of the forum so be sure to allocate time towards this final activity. This will also provide them an

opportunity to record their personal thoughts about their experience. Such questions to include would be: 1. What did you learn during this forum? 2. What do you feel were the positive outcomes resulting from this forum? 4. What do you think worked and what didn't? 3. Do you have any other recommendations for future Open Forums? 4. Please comment on your personal experience you had while at the forum.