**A Field Guide to Community Based Adaptation: Field Assignment 1, Chapter 1**

Tim Magee

**Field Guide 1: Workshop Lesson Plan on Participatory Community Needs Assessment**

**Duration of Workshop: 3 hours**

**BACKGROUND FOR LESSON PLAN**

**Assumed Knowledge**

The community has agreed that a community needs assessment will be beneficial.

**Anticipated Difficulties/Problems**

* Information may not be well received due to cultural differences between workshop leaders and participants.
* Community members may be resistant to behavioral changes.
* Strong personalities may dominate workshops.
* Stakeholders with vested interests may want a needs assessment favorable to them.

**Solutions**

* It is important that the facilitator is from a similar culture and speaks the same language as the participants.
* Drawings and illustrations should be appropriate for and familiar to the community members.
* Strong personalities may be able to be reasoned with in order to understand the importance of the participatory process, given projects that will occupy them, or taken aside for a VIP interview.

**PURPOSE:** What workshop participants will be able to do as a result of the lesson.

The purpose of the workshop is for community members to assess and to prioritize needs within their community.

* Participants will work in an environment where they feel safe discussing community needs and developing a needs list.
* Participants will use drawings to identify needs so that non-readers members will be able to participate.
* Participants will agree upon a prioritized list of needs most important to the community.

**MATERIALS**

* Large sheets of newsprint.
* Notebook sized paper.
* Colored pens or markers.
* Sticky tape.
* About 15 drawings of community needs traditionally identified by community members.
* Beans, slips of paper or grains of corn for voting tokens.

**BEGINNING OF LESSON:**

**Activity 1. 1/2 hour. Introduction**

**Purpose**

* To help build a feeling of team spirit and mutual understanding. To generate group self-esteem and creativity.
* To understand the purpose of the workshop.

**What to do**

**Introduction:**

1. Introductions. Ice Breaker: Sing a song or play a game.
2. Tell the participants what they’ll be able to do as a result of the lesson. Use the how-to card or a poster to visually show them the process:
   * Discuss community need.
   * Vote on the needs.
   * Total the votes.
   * Prioritize the needs.
   * Discuss underlying causes and potential solutions.

**GUIDED PRACTICE:**

**Activity 2. 1 1/2 hours. Open discussion about community need and prioritizing challenges and needs**

**Purpose:** Participants will openly discuss problems and needs within the community.

**What to do**

**Guided Practice**

1. Ask the group to imagine and discuss the challenges and needs faced by the community.
2. As each need is identified by a community member, begin making simple illustrations that represent the challenges on notebook sized sheets of paper (you can bring a selection of typical drawings to reduce time spent drawing).
3. After the group has come up with a good set of needs/problems, arrange the different illustrations side-by-side into a rectangle on the ground or on a table.
4. Have everyone leave the voting area and give each individual in the group 10 or 15 beans, slips of paper or grains of corn.
5. Ask them to place the voting tokens on the challenges they feel are the most important. It is their decision if they want to put all 10 tokens on one drawing or if they want to distribute them around several different challenges.
6. When the participants have finished voting, count the total tokens on each drawing and write up a prioritized list ordered by the number of votes each challenge received—with the need that received the most votes at the top. This would be a good time for the participants to take a break so that you can take a few minutes alone with the list and to draw a two column matrix on a sheet of newsprint that everyone can see. In the left column write down the individual needs in their prioritized order (or draw little pictures again) and in the right column write the number of votes each one received.

**BREAK:** 15 minutes

**Activity 3. 1 hour. Discovering underlying causes to problems and needs**

**Purpose:** Participants will discover underlying causes to problems to challenges and needs.

**What to do**

**Guided Practice**

1. Review the results of the prioritized matrix with the group.
2. Ask them if the top items on the prioritized list represent the needs that are most important for the community.
3. If there are competing items at the top of the priority list asked them to choose the ones that they would like to include in the first project.
4. Can they determine the underlying causes of the problems? List these underlying causes beneath the prioritized challenges that will be focused on during the first project. Frequently underlying causes are already on the priority list—simply move them into position beneath the top priorities.
5. If the matrix doesn't have any underlying causes this would be a good time to ask the participants what they feel the causes of the top priority challenges are.
6. Discuss potential solutions which they may see and what local coping strategies they are already using.

**Workshop Participants:**

Take 5 minutes to discuss the prioritized list, the problems chosen with the highest priority, and the underlying causes. Have participants talk about what they do and don’t understand, what they do and don’t like.

**CONCLUSION:**

**Activity 5. 30 Minutes. Conclusion**

**Purpose**

To reinforce what has been learned.

**What to do**

**Guided Practice**

1. Discuss and review what has been learned and decided.
2. Summarize the two or three challenges that the community places as their highest priority.
3. Discuss the relationship between the challenges and their underlying causes.
4. Review potential solutions to the community’s challenges.
5. Ask the group to ensure the validity of the summarized information.
6. Make sure that there are no more questions and that everyone understands what happened in this process.

Copyright © 2012, Tim Magee. All rights reserved.