



Leading to Choices

# Learning To Facilitate Interactively

# **Learning To Facilitate Interactively**

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**WOMEN'S  
LEARNING  
PARTNERSHIP**

for Rights,  
Development,  
and Peace

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## Introduction

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In 2001, the Women's Learning Partnership for Rights, Development, and Peace (WLP) and its partners—the Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc in Morocco, BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights in Nigeria, and Women's Affairs Technical Committee in Palestine—published *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women*.<sup>1</sup> The handbook promotes progressive and principled leadership skills for women and men, and explores the theoretical framework of participatory leadership in promoting democratic and egalitarian societies.

During the testing and evaluation process for *A Leadership Training Handbook for Women* WLP and its partners realized the need for additional training materials in three areas: facilitation, communication, and advocacy. Even experienced facilitators and trainers felt they would benefit from more skill-building exercises that apply the theoretical framework of participatory leadership to the strengthening of facilitation, communication, and advocacy skills.

In response, WLP produced a series of three *Leading to Choices* guides and videos: *Learning to Facilitate Interactively*, *Communicating for Change*, and *Developing Effective Advocacy Campaigns*.

- *Learning to Facilitate Interactively* helps train facilitators to conduct effective workshops using inclusive and participatory strategies. Facilitators gain the skills to promote participative listening, share responsibility for leading activities, stimulate discussion, encourage enthusiasm for divergent opinions, and work cooperatively.
- *Communicating for Change* provides material to help improve personal and organizational communication skills. The guide contains skill-building activities on how to create concise, compelling messages that resonate with specific audiences, how to create strategic communications plans to disseminate messages through locally appropriate communication channels, and how to convey messages through interviews with the media.
- *Developing Effective Advocacy Campaigns* builds on the exercises on principled leadership and participatory communication found in the *Learning to Facilitate Interactively* guide<sup>2</sup> and the *Communicating for Change* guide<sup>3</sup> respectively. Successful advocacy campaigns enable disempowered and disenfranchised citizens to become effective change agents for influencing policy that impacts their lives. The guide contains skill-building activities on ways to define advocacy, analyze the components of an advocacy plan, and implement a successful advocacy campaign.

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1. *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women*. 2001. Bethesda, Maryland: Women's Learning Partnership.

2. Specifically the exercises on "Power and Leadership" (*Learning to Facilitate Interactively*, pages 9 - 16).

3. Specifically the first three exercises on "Communication Skills" (*Communicating for Change*, pages 11 - 19).

The three guides and videos can each be used alone, together, or in conjunction with *A Leadership Training Handbook for Women*, either in an independent leadership training program or as components of other human rights, gender training, and skill-building projects. The exercises in these guides are presented as learning models intended to be revised and customized for the specific needs of various training groups.

## Using this Guide and Video

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This guide begins with a brief summary of the conceptual basis for participatory leadership in learning societies. The learning exercises that follow are intended to help facilitators explore—using their own words and experiences—the benefits of revising power and leadership dynamics and of creating learning societies.

The next two sections of the guide explain the role of facilitators in learning societies and offer examples of best practices for facilitators. The learning exercises for this section present opportunities to try out many of the suggested best practices.

The guide concludes with an evaluation exercise to help participants assess what they have learned and to critique the learning process. There is a postscript for those who want to apply what they have learned about specific interactive learning techniques to the twelve sessions described in *A Leadership Training Handbook for Women*.

We recommend the following learning process:

- Before meeting with other participants, read through the guide, watch the *Learning to Facilitate Interactively* video, and begin thinking about new approaches to facilitating.
- Participate in the exercises provided in this guide.
- Watch the video again in conjunction with the eighth exercise—“Facilitating Interactively”—on page 32.
- After completing the final exercise—“Effective Facilitation”—participate with your group in the evaluation.

- Once you have had the opportunity to facilitate the twelve sessions in *A Leadership Training Handbook for Women*, review the postscript exercise at the end of the guide.

Although every facilitation situation is unique, the basic principle described in this guide remains the same: democratic and egalitarian learning societies are encouraged through inclusive, horizontal, and participatory decision-making processes. This approach can be productive for all of us, from teachers and administrators, to activists, civil servants and political leaders. The more people we engage in principled and participatory leadership, the more beneficial it will be for everyone.

## Leadership in Learning Societies: Conceptual Summary <sup>4</sup>

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In many social environments—including most families, work places, local civic organizations, militaries, and government institutions—leadership styles are hierarchical or “top-down,” based on command rather than consensus, dictation rather than dialogue, obedience rather than shared vision. However, leadership in a learning society is horizontal or “two-way,” based on mutual respect, dialogue, ethical conduct, and a shared vision. Every member of a learning society is at once a potential leader and a follower. Everyone works toward a common meaning, a vision of life that all may share. Leadership is about developing and implementing that vision.

Certain personal values contribute to the development of a learning society. In their attitudes toward others, members of a learning society see each person as a genuine, whole human being who is intent on doing good. They work, communicate, and learn as a team, measuring their progress in terms of how much each team member has grown. All members of the group cultivate sensitivity to the needs of others and commit themselves to working together for a better world.

Learning societies vary and evolve according to the culture of the society where horizontal, participatory leadership is developed and exercised. However, a learning society will have most of the following characteristics:

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4. This section is a summary of the ideas presented by Mahnaz Afkhami in “The Building Blocks of Leadership: Leadership as Communicative Learning,” in *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women*.

- It will be gender-inclusive, where women and men become partners in defining, working for, and achieving goals that benefit everyone.
- It will foster meaningful communication, where dialogue is based on trust and mutual respect.
- It will be grounded in democratic and egalitarian principles, ensuring that all members take part in defining the goals and vision of the society.

Finally, no learning society can exist without ethical principles that foster communal integrity, a sense of mutual responsibility, and commitment to using principled means for achieving shared goals.

## Part I

### Exercises on Power and Leadership

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#### EXERCISE 1: Dynamics of Power

##### Objectives:

- To discuss different definitions of power
- To analyze the connection between gender and power

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:** Large piece of paper or chalkboard, markers or chalk

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*A volunteer facilitator from the group leads the group discussion. The facilitator is responsible for assisting the group to follow the exercise instructions, keeping time, and calling on participants who wish to speak. A second volunteer records participants' findings on a large piece of paper or chalkboard that is visible to all.*

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1. A volunteer writes the word POWER at the top of the piece of paper or chalkboard.
2. Taking turns, participants identify words, phrases, or concepts that they associate with POWER, and the volunteer records them.
3. When the group has generated a substantial list, consider some or all of the following questions for each power-associated word:
  - *Is this form of power good for society? Why or why not?*
  - *Is this form of power inevitable in society? Why or why not?*
  - *Is the concept honorable? Why or why not?*
  - *Can this power be dangerous? Why or why not?*

- *Do people who possess it have integrity? Why or why not?*
- *Do all leaders have this characteristic? Why or why not?*
- *Are men more likely than women to possess this form of power? Why or why not?*

4. Participants vote on each word or phrase with regard to whether it is more commonly associated with men, or women, or both. The volunteer marks each word with a color or symbol indicating whether it is usually associated with women, men, or both. Next, the group considers some or all of the following questions:

- *Do women and men define power differently? Why or why not?*
- *Do women and men use power differently? Why or why not?*
- *Are there certain kinds of power that are more helpful to men? If there are, which ones?*
- *Are there certain kinds of power that are more helpful to women? If there are, which ones?*
- *What is the connection between gender and power? Is the connection universal or does it depend on the particular social or community environment?*

## EXERCISE 2: (Re)Defining Leadership

### Objectives:

- To discuss definitions of leadership
- To gain a deeper understanding of horizontal, inclusive leadership

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:** Large piece of paper or chalkboard, markers or chalk

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*A volunteer facilitator from the group leads the group discussion. The facilitator is responsible for assisting the group to follow the exercise instructions, keeping time, and calling on participants who wish to speak. A second volunteer records participants' findings on a large piece of paper or chalkboard that is visible to all.*

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1. A volunteer writes the word LEADERSHIP at the top of the piece of paper or chalkboard.
2. Taking turns, participants identify words, phrases, or concepts that they associate with LEADERSHIP, and the volunteer records them in a column on the left side of the paper or chalkboard.
3. When the group has generated a substantial list, the volunteer writes the following qualities of leadership in a column on the right side of the paper or chalkboard:

### LEADERSHIP

Gender-inclusive
Communicative
Purposeful
Egalitarian
Ethical

4. Participants discuss whether any of the words from the first column are similar to or reflect qualities in the second column. Next, the group considers some or all of the following questions:
- Which qualities might make a leader more authoritarian? Which qualities might make a leader less authoritarian? Why?
  - Which qualities might help a leader sustain more power? Less? Why?
  - Which qualities might make a leader more effective? Less? Why?
  - Which qualities might make a leader more popular? Less? Why?
  - Which qualities might make a leader more honorable? Less? Why?
  - Which qualities do women employ more often? Which qualities do men? Is there a difference?

### EXERCISE 3: Leadership in Learning Societies

#### Objective:

- To gain a deeper understanding of leadership in a learning society

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Materials:** A copy of the boxed description below of learning societies

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*A volunteer facilitator from the group leads the group discussion. The facilitator is responsible for assisting the group to follow the exercise instructions, keeping time, and calling on participants who wish to speak.*

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1. A volunteer from the group reads aloud the following description of learning societies:

#### Learning Societies based on horizontal and participatory leadership have certain characteristics

People are **inspired** by the vision they share and the goals they are working to achieve, rather than seeking individual rewards or glory.

Everyone is **committed** to working together to further their goals, in the belief that cooperative action enhances the outcome of their efforts. Dedication, patience, and perseverance are qualities that come to the fore when working cooperatively.

Interactions in a learning society are characterized by sensitivity to the **needs of others**, mutual respect, and acceptance of diversity.

Learning societies function smoothly due to **teamwork and team learning**, and emphasize trust, respect, dialogue, and skill-building.

Decisions are made and implemented collaboratively. The result is that everyone in a learning society feels they have contributed to the process and has **a stake in the outcome** of their efforts.

From Mahnaz Afkhami's "The Building Blocks of Leadership: Leadership as Communicative Learning," in *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women*, pages 5-15.

**2.** Participants discuss the characteristics of a learning society and how these can be applied to families, organizations, communities, and society as a whole. Among the questions the group considers are the following:

- *How does horizontal, participatory leadership enhance a learning society?*
- *What are some examples of how teamwork, cooperation, and team learning enhance a learning society?*
- *Why is it important for everyone to feel they have a stake in the outcome of their efforts?*

#### EXERCISE 4: Transforming Leadership

##### Objectives:

- To critique hierarchical leadership strategies
- To consider how the principles of a learning society transform hierarchical leadership into horizontal, participatory leadership

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Materials:** None

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*A volunteer facilitator from the group leads the group discussion. The facilitator is responsible for assisting the group to follow the exercise instructions, keeping time, and calling on participants who wish to speak.*

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- 1.** Working in teams of two or three, participants plan and present short skits that demonstrate forms of hierarchical leadership or authoritarian decision-making they have experienced. Examples might be of politicians and constituents, employers and employees, parents and children, or teachers and students interacting with each other.
- 2.** After each skit, the group discusses how the leadership situation it demonstrated would be different if principles from a learning society were introduced. For example,
  - *What would happen if the leader or leaders were communicative, purposeful, and egalitarian?*
  - *What if the decision-making processes were ethical?*
  - *What if the organizational structure was gender-inclusive?*
- 3.** Next, each team re-enacts its skit, this time including one or more principles from a learning society and the skills developed in previous exercises.

4. Participants discuss the differences between the first and second skits. Among the questions the group considers are:

- *What principles of a learning society made the most impact on leadership styles?*
- *How were leadership styles transformed by principles of a learning society?*
- *Are these leadership styles more **effective**? Are they more **efficient**? Is there a difference? Explain.*
- *Are these leadership styles more productive? Explain.*
- *Are these leadership styles practical? Explain.*
- *Do these leadership styles promote a greater sense of ownership and mutual responsibility for a given task? Explain.*

## Part II

### Facilitating Learning: The Role of the Facilitator

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Most people attend schools where teachers talk and students listen, except when called on to ask or answer questions about what the teacher has said. This traditional model, which assumes the authority of the teacher and the ignorance of the students, is both inappropriate and ineffective for a learning partnership. By contrast, an inclusive, participatory learning partnership engages each individual and empowers her to think and interpret for herself. It encourages critical analysis of real-life situations and leads to cooperative action toward a common goal.

A learning partnership calls for a method of learning in which the learners, not the teacher, are at the center of the experience and share authority and “ownership” of their own learning. In such a cooperative context, the word facilitator is more appropriate than teacher, for everyone in the group is a learner engaged in a common effort towards a shared goal. The aim of a learning partnership is not to generate a “right answer” or even agreement, but to collectively explore ideas and issues.

Becoming an effective facilitator requires both practice and a clear understanding of the role of the facilitator. In leadership training workshops or other learning situations, the role of the facilitator is to:

- **Establish a relationship of equality and cooperation with participants.** The facilitator is “first among equals,” but responsibility for learning rests with the whole group.

- **Create an environment of trust and respect.** The facilitator helps participants feel safe and encourages them to speak honestly with the knowledge that differences of opinion are welcomed and respected.
- **Ensure that everyone feels included.** The facilitator ensures that everyone has an opportunity to participate.
- **Provide a structure for learning.** This might include setting and observing meeting times, opening and closing sessions, and keeping to an agenda. The facilitator continually consults participants about the effectiveness of the structure.
- **Fulfill the logistical needs of the meeting.** This might include gathering and preparing materials, setting up the meeting space, notifying participants, and seeing that necessary preparations are made.

However, there are many roles that an effective facilitator does not play. For example, a facilitator is not:

- **A teacher.** The whole group is responsible for learning. The facilitator is a co-learner, exploring all subjects as an equal partner with other participants.
- **A judge.** In a horizontal, inclusive learning environment, nobody—least of all the facilitator—determines that some opinions are “correct” or “better.”
- **An expert.** Although she or he leads each session, the facilitator may not know as much about a subject as some other members of the group.
- **The center of attention.** An effective facilitator generally speaks less than other participants and concentrates on including others in the discussion.
- **The housekeeper.** While the facilitator takes initial leadership in coordinating the sessions, she or he is not the only person who maintains the learning environment.

As with any skills, the best way to improve facilitation skills is to practice them often, employ self-critique, and always seek improvement. For example, the facilitator needs to continually evaluate herself as she facilitates:

- **Be very clear about your role.** Your behavior more than your words will convey that you are not the teacher but a fellow learner.
- **Be aware of your eyes.** It is important to maintain eye contact with participants when you are speaking and when you are listening.
- **Be aware of your voice.** Try not to talk too loudly, too softly, or too much. The tone of your voice is also an important part of creating a trusting, respectful learning experience.
- **Be aware of your body language.** Where you sit or stand will indicate if you may be unconsciously exercising authority. Sitting down when entering the discussion as an equal rather than being the only one standing may help everyone feel at ease.
- **Be aware of your responsibility.** Make sure everyone has a chance to be heard and is treated with respect; encourage differences of opinion but discourage argument; draw in those who are hesitant to participate.
- **Be aware of when structure is needed.** Explain and summarize when necessary; decide when to extend a discussion and when to go on to the next topic; encourage the group to remain on the subject.
- **Be aware of your role and share it.** Ask others to take on responsibilities whenever possible, such as taking notes, keeping time, and facilitating the discussion.

## Interactive Learning: Learning Styles, Leading Discussions, and Dealing with Difficulties

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In addition to effective facilitation, a learning partnership requires the establishment of an interactive learning environment through incorporating diverse learning styles, techniques for leading discussions, and ways of dealing with difficulties.

*Leading to Choices* is designed to interactively involve participants in their own learning. Each session seeks to encourage participants to:

- Involve themselves fully and without preconceptions in new experiences
- Observe and reflect on these experiences from many perspectives
- Use the concepts and skills learned in the workshop to make real-life decisions and solve problems

### Learning Styles

Everyone has a different style of learning. Some people learn best by listening, others by observing; some are better at abstract thinking, others at practical applications.

Since an effective learning experience combines many ways of learning, exercises in *Leading to Choices* balance presentation and discussion with a variety of activities to help participants reflect on what they are learning and different ways to apply it. The sessions include more than one mode of learning:

- hearing
- discussing
- trying new things
- seeing
- imagining
- taking small steps
- repeating
- practicing skills
- sharing experiences

### Leading Discussions

Discussion is one of the most important ways for people to participate in their own learning; hence, it is important that facilitators lead discussions skillfully. There are several strategies that can help a facilitator maximize the learning (and enjoyment) in group discussions.

**Ask open or leading questions.** Questions for discussion can be open, leading, subjective, or closed:

- Open questions encourage a wide range of answers, from personal (“This reminds me of a time when I was a child”) to objective (“I have heard that people in some countries are allowed only one child”). Open questions cannot be answered by “yes” or “no.” For example, “How do you define leadership?” and “Can a leader also be a follower?” are open questions.
- Leading questions take participants step by step toward a learning goal. Each question builds on the previous answer and leads to another

question. For example, asking “Can you think of a time when you were not permitted to express your opinion about something important that concerned you?” might lead to asking, “How might things have turned out differently if you had been consulted?” This in turn might lead to asking, “What are some results of the failure to permit you to express an opinion?”

- Subjective questions invite strictly personal responses. This technique is useful for determining how participants are feeling but does not necessarily lead to dialogue or discussion. For example, “Did you like this learning exercise?” is a subjective question, as are “What was your first reaction to being asked to participate in a skit?” and “Did I repeat what you said accurately?”
- Closed questions restrict the range of answers, usually to specific information or “yes” or “no.” For example, “Are you prepared to facilitate a workshop?” and “What is the time now?” are closed questions.

**Respect all answers or opinions.** The role of the facilitator is to create a safe, trusting environment where participants' opinions are acknowledged and respected. However, comments that are disrespectful of other participants or contrary to the ethics of a learning partnership should be addressed. (See the next section on “Dealing with Difficulties” for ideas.)

**Resist answering all questions.** When someone asks a question, the facilitator should resist the instinct to answer it. Instead, such questions should be passed to the whole group by saying, for instance, “Who else would like to answer this question?” or “What do you think?”

**Repeat and restate.** The facilitator often needs to acknowledge that participants' comments were

heard and understood. Sometimes the facilitator may need to restate a comment to make sure that it was understood, but it is important to get the participant's assent that the restatement was accurate. Asking a question such as “Did I understand what you just said?” can be a helpful way to approach this issue.

**Signal attention.** In addition to verbal responses, the facilitator can communicate attention in many ways including nodding, writing down comments, and making eye contact.

**Resist imposing opinions.** The facilitator's role is to invite the sharing of opinions, not impose her own. As co-learners, facilitators may add their own views to a discussion, but only with discretion and tact.

**Share the conversation.** The facilitator should ensure that no individual dominates the conversation, that everyone gets a chance to speak, and that the discussion stays on topic.

## Dealing with Difficulties

Difficulties will inevitably arise in a workshop setting and facilitators should be prepared to address problems.

**Difficult issues.** Sometimes a topic will arise that causes discomfort or offense. When this occurs, the facilitator should acknowledge that there are different responses and opinions on this topic and seek consensus about how the group wants to deal with it. Ideally, as a member of a participatory group the facilitator herself should also be able to express her own reservations about a topic. The important principle here is that the workshop belongs to the participants and they determine what is discussed and how it is discussed. The facilitator's role is to help keep the discussion relevant, avoid arguments,

maintain a safe environment, and provide a nonjudgmental forum for interactive learning.

**Difficult situations.** These problems are not the facilitator's alone but the group's and should be dealt with by the group. The following is one example of addressing a difficult situation collectively:

- Outside opposition to the group. Some women may find that people close to them feel threatened by their participation in the group. A few may drop out as a result. Others may remain but endure continual criticism. The facilitator can help by providing an opportunity to talk about these negative responses, either in private or openly within the group. Even if the situation cannot be improved, the group can be strengthened by confronting such problems together. Sometimes people within the community may criticize the group and its activities. Some groups confront such criticism by inviting their critics to attend a session in order to see what goes on. The discussion at the visitors' session may not be as open or frank, but it can provide an excellent opportunity to dispel misunderstanding and raise awareness among the visitors.

**Difficult individuals.** Sometimes, one or two individuals either intentionally or unintentionally obstruct the solidarity and effectiveness of the group and become a challenge to group learning. Solutions are as varied as individuals, but these strategies can help:

- Private consultation. The facilitator can speak with the difficult person privately and express concern about the way things are going. Without blaming, the facilitator can suggest ways this participant could help improve the group discussions.

- Group guidelines. Another approach is for the facilitator to acknowledge that the personal dynamics of the group are not working well and suggest that participants draw up a few general guidelines to improve their interactions. These guidelines might cover such topics as limiting interruptions, keeping discussions confidential, and respecting everyone's opinion. Abiding by these guidelines becomes everyone's responsibility, and should encourage solidarity and camaraderie.
- Request to leave. A last resort is to ask the person to leave the group. The bad feelings evoked by such a step must be weighed against the bad feelings already created in the group. The facilitator may suggest that the difficult person join a later group where the blend of personalities might be more harmonious.

## Exercises on Interactive Facilitation

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### EXERCISE 5: Personal Learning

#### Objectives:

- To analyze personal learning experiences
- To understand how these experiences can enhance facilitation skills

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:** Large piece of paper or chalkboard, markers or chalk

*A volunteer facilitator from the group leads the group discussion. The facilitator is responsible for assisting the group to follow the exercise instructions, keeping time, and calling on participants who wish to speak. A second volunteer records participants' findings on a large piece of paper or chalkboard that is visible to all.*

1. Participants divide into pairs. Taking turns, partners describe to one another a situation in which they had a positive learning experience. This might include an experience from childhood or adulthood, from either a formal learning situation or from an informal one.
2. Working together, the partners analyze their stories and discuss the factors that made the learning experience positive, including both the individuals involved and the learning environment.

3. The whole group comes together to discuss the factors from these stories that contributed to the positive learning experience. A volunteer from the group records, in two columns, the various people involved in the learning experiences and the different environments where they took place:

**PEOPLE INVOLVED**

**LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

4. When the group has generated two lists, consider the following questions:
  - Was it the people involved or the environment that influenced the learning experience the most?
  - When you are facilitating a workshop, which of the learning techniques from these experiences would you use? Why?
  - Which learning techniques would you avoid? Why?
  - Are there other learning techniques you would like to use that have not yet been discussed? If so, what are they?

## EXERCISE 6: Learning Styles

### Objectives:

- To consider a variety of learning styles
- To practice different learning styles

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:** Large piece of paper or chalkboard, markers or chalk

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*A volunteer facilitator from the group leads the group discussion. The facilitator is responsible for assisting the group to follow the exercise instructions, keeping time, and calling on participants who wish to speak. A second volunteer records participants' findings on a large piece of paper or chalkboard that is visible to all.*

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1. A volunteer writes down the following learning strategies:

**HEARING  
SEEING  
REPEATING  
DISCUSSING  
IMAGINING  
PRACTICING SKILLS**

**TRYING NEW  
THINGS  
TAKING SMALL  
STEPS  
SHARING  
EXPERIENCES**

2. Taking turns, participants describe how they each learn best. The volunteer adds the participants' findings to the list of learning strategies.
3. Participants divide into teams of three or four, and each team chooses two different learning strategies from the list. Each team plans a short skit that demonstrates the strategies.
4. Without verbally identifying the learning strategies beforehand, the teams present their skits to the whole group. Members of the audience try to identify which strategies are being used.

5. After all the skits have been presented, participants discuss ways that a facilitator might incorporate a variety of learning strategies into a workshop. Among the questions the group considers are the following:

- Which learning styles are you most comfortable using?
- Is it possible to utilize more than one learning technique at a time? Why or why not?
- How are your facilitation skills enhanced by implementing these learning techniques?

### EXERCISE 7: Learning To Listen

#### Objective:

- To develop and practice participative listening skills

**Time:** 60 minutes

**Materials:** None

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*A volunteer facilitator from the group leads the group discussion. The facilitator is responsible for assisting the group to follow the exercise instructions, keeping time, and calling on participants who wish to speak.*

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1. Two participants volunteer to role-play in front of the group. The group sits in a circle around the two volunteers. (This facilitation tactic is sometimes referred to as a fishbowl conversation.<sup>5</sup>)
2. Participants suggest several controversial or commonly debated subjects, and then vote on which one will be used in the role-play. When the conversation subject has been chosen, each volunteer takes one position of the controversy that she will discuss in front of the group. The side each volunteer takes will not necessarily reflect her real opinions. (This is why the technique is called role-playing.)
3. First, one volunteer—"A"—explains her assigned side of the issue in two minutes or less.
4. When "A" has finished, the second volunteer—"B"—summarizes what "A" said. For instance, "B" might state, "You are in favor of the death penalty because..." and then list the reasons that "A" provided. "B" then checks with "A" to make

sure she has provided an accurate summary by asking, "Did I understand your points correctly?"

5. Once "A" agrees that "B" has understood her position, "B" then states her side in two-minutes or less.
6. When "B" has finished, "A" summarizes what "B" said. For instance, "A" might state, "You are opposed to the death penalty because..." and then list the reasons that "B" provided. "A" then checks with "B" to make sure that she has provided an accurate summary by asking, "Did I understand your points correctly?"
7. Following this role-play, the whole group divides into pairs and goes through the same exercise. The pairs can use the same topic or choose another for practicing their listening skills.
8. When the whole group reconvenes, among the questions to be discussed are the following:
  - *What are some positive aspects of participative listening?*
  - *Why is it important for a facilitator to employ participative listening in a workshop setting?*
  - *When might this kind of communication be applied in other real-life situations?*

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5. For more on fishbowl conversations and other facilitation tactics, see Appendix B and Appendix C (pages 127-132) in *Leading to Choices: A Leadership Training Handbook for Women*.

## EXERCISE 8: Facilitating Interactively

### Objective:

- To identify interactive facilitation and learning methodologies

**Time:** 90 minutes

**Materials:** *Learning to Facilitate Interactively* video, video player, television, a copy of the boxed list of interactive learning tactics for each participant, large piece of paper or chalkboard, markers or chalk

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*A volunteer facilitator from the group leads the group discussion. The facilitator is responsible for assisting the group to follow the exercise instructions, keeping time, and calling on participants who wish to speak. A second volunteer records participants' findings on a large piece of paper or chalkboard that is visible to all.*

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1. A volunteer writes the word INTERACTIVE at the top of the piece of paper or chalkboard.
2. Taking turns, participants identify words, phrases, or concepts that they associate with being INTERACTIVE, and the volunteer records them.
3. When the list is complete, the volunteer reads aloud the following description of some interactive learning tactics used by facilitators:

## Interactive Learning Tactics

**Energizers and ice-breakers:** Activities that help participants and facilitators become more familiar with one another and more comfortable talking in a group.

**Sharing participant expectations and goals:** Participants share their reasons for taking part in the workshop and what they hope to gain so facilitators can become aware of the needs of the group and try to meet them. Facilitators may also make clear from the start which expectations they can meet and which they cannot.

**Stimulating discussion:** Techniques that encourage everyone in the group to participate. These include creating a "safe space" where everyone's opinion is respected. Often the facilitator will open with a leading question that invites a variety of responses.

**Encouraging participative listening:** Good listeners learn from what they hear, suspending assumptions and trying to enter the speaker's frame of reference. This is a skill every member of a learning partnership needs.

**Working in small teams:** Breaking the whole group into smaller teams to discuss or perform a task encourages participants to share with greater depth and permits more people to be active.

**Team reports:** An elected spokesperson from each team reports its discussion or completion of the task. Everyone's contribution is valued.

**Avoiding power spots:** Too often, the person who stands or sits at the front of the room is assumed to have importance or authority. Arranging seating in a circle or other format that encourages sharing of leadership roles will help avoid this notion.

**Sharing responsibility:** Shared leadership and responsibility involve exchanging roles so everyone has an opportunity to facilitate, read exercises, be the

group recorder, or deliver the team report, among other leadership roles. Within a learning partnership, this exchange is fluid.

**Participant evaluation:** Participants and facilitators should have opportunities to evaluate the learning process and workshop structure. Evaluations are important to ensure that everyone is getting the most out of the learning experience.

From *Leading to Choices: Learning to Facilitate Interactively* video. 2003. Bethesda, Maryland: Women's Learning Partnership.

4. Keeping the interactive facilitation tactics in mind, the whole group views the *Learning to Facilitate Interactively* video.
5. After viewing the video, the group considers some or all of the questions:

**Energizers:** The first simulated workshop in the video begins with an energizer called “Draw Your Animal Self,” where each participant draws an animal she identifies with and explains why she believes the animal represents her. For example, Masooda Amozgar, a women's rights activist from Afghanistan, explains, “I picked a lamb because it is a very peaceful animal. It never fights and the skin and the meat are always useful.”

- *Would you use this technique to help participants in your workshop relax, have fun, and become more comfortable talking in a group? Why or why not?*
- *What other energizer techniques would you use?*

**Ice-breakers:** Facilitator Asma Khader, a lawyer and leading activist working to end honor killings in Jordan, simulates a workshop on developing a political advocacy campaign in Jordan. She begins the workshop with an ice-breaker on role-playing: “What I suggest is that we start with a session of imagination.... Imagine yourself as one of the Jordanian women in southern Jordan. Choose her profession, her age, her family situation, and give yourself a different character. Do you accept this suggestion?”

- *How can role-playing a different character and voicing opinions that are not necessarily one's own help encourage individual participation and group interaction?*
- *What are some difficulties you would face in using this technique? How would you overcome them?*

**Participants' goals and expectations:** In the video each participant articulates what she expects to gain from the workshop on developing political advocacy campaigns. For example, Sindi Médar-Gould, a woman activist in Nigeria, says: “I hope to be able to convince the women from my association that the vote is powerful and they should not sell their vote to the man who talks the most and gives the most money.”

- *How can asking participants to express their goals for the workshop help enhance the individual and group learning process?*
- *How will you as the facilitator adapt the workshop to incorporate participants' goals and expectations? Consider the difficulties you might face in creating flexible and adaptable workshops. What strategies can you use before the workshop and during the workshop to overcome any obstacles?*

**Small and large groups:** Participants break into three small teams during the simulated workshop to have in-depth discussions and devise advocacy strategies for before the elections, during the elections, and after the elections in Jordan. They reconvene as a large group where an elected representative from each small group shares the group's plan of action with the others.

- *What are the drawbacks and advantages of using a large group versus small teams for encouraging group discussions?*
- *What did you observe the facilitator Asma Khader doing during the small group and large group discussions?*

**Facilitation technique evaluation:** Before concluding the political advocacy workshop, participants evaluate and analyze the facilitation techniques used. They comment on ways of refining techniques, including how to avoid power spots, encourage participative listening, stimulate discussions, and share responsibilities. Participants in the video—a diverse group of women including educators, lawyers, and activists, many of whom are leadership workshop facilitators in their countries—offer examples of facilitation tactics they have used.

Participants then simulate another exercise—on building a shared vision—in which two facilitators try to model the techniques discussed. In this exercise, participants begin by sharing their personal vision statements, identifying the commonalities in their statements, and then collectively developing a single statement that represents their individual visions.

- In the video's evaluation discussion on avoiding power spots, Mishka Mojabber Mourani, an educator from Lebanon, said: "Someone told me to go to the front and I chose to stay

because I wanted to be closer to my group."

- *Why is it important for a facilitator to avoid power spots?*
- *How does this facilitation technique model the principles of horizontal leadership?*
- *Are the facilitators in the shared vision exercise successful in avoiding power spots by participating in the group discussions from various points in the room?*
- Asabe Audu, a workshop facilitator from Nigeria, described her role as a facilitator: "Some groups want you to take the lead," she said, "but we say, 'We are also here to learn, to learn from you.' That makes them comfortable, at ease, and they open up."
  - *How do facilitators in the shared vision exercise share facilitation responsibilities and exchange roles with workshop participants?*
  - *What are some techniques you would use to create an environment of co-learning and shared responsibilities in a workshop?*
- Activist Amina Lemrini talks in the video about how she encourages workshop participants in Morocco to draw on personal experiences and to share their stories.
  - *What are some ways you would encourage participants to contribute to group discussions and to create an inclusive, participatory learning environment?*
  - *How would you ensure that group members have an equal opportunity to speak and listen constructively to others?*
- *If you were facilitating these workshops, what other facilitation techniques would you have used that illustrate inclusive, horizontal, and participatory leadership? How would you convey this in the way you act, where you stand or sit, and the language you use?*

- *What are some ways of inviting participants to critique styles of facilitation? How can being aware of your facilitation style help improve future facilitation sessions?*
6. Evaluate the *Learning to Facilitate Interactively* video as a group. Among the questions participants consider are:
- *Did the video help you get a sense of the vibrant atmosphere and solidarity that can be generated in participatory workshops?*
  - *Did the video help you visualize the role of a facilitator in creating a participatory learning workshop environment?*
  - *What is the most valuable section of the video? What is the least valuable section of the video?*
  - *What additional visual materials would be useful to you?*

### EXERCISE 9: Effective Facilitation

#### Objective:

- To understand the qualities of an effective facilitator

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:** Large piece of paper or chalkboard, markers or chalk

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*A volunteer facilitator from the group leads the group discussion. The facilitator is responsible for assisting the group to follow the exercise instructions, keeping time, and calling on participants who wish to speak. A second volunteer records participants' findings on a large piece of paper or chalkboard that is visible to all.*

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1. A volunteer writes the words EFFECTIVE FACILITATOR at the top of the piece of paper or chalkboard.
2. Taking turns, participants identify the words, phrases, or concepts they associate with an EFFECTIVE FACILITATOR. The volunteer records these in a column on the left side of the paper or chalkboard.
3. When the group has generated a substantial list, the volunteer writes the following list on the right side of the paper or chalkboard:

Sensitivity to the feelings of individuals

Sensitivity to the feeling of the group

Ability to listen

Tact

Commitment to cooperation

Sense of timing

Flexibility  
 Sense of humor  
 Resourcefulness  
 and creativity

4. For each quality listed, the participants take turns providing examples of how the quality can enhance facilitation, and how its absence might have negative effects.
5. Next, the group considers some or all of the following questions:
  - *Are there people who are born with these qualities for whom facilitation comes naturally?*
  - *Can these qualities also be learned like other skills?*
  - *Does every facilitator need to possess all of these qualities?*
  - *Which qualities are most important for a facilitator to foster? Why?*
  - *Which qualities are least important? Why?*

## Evaluating this Guide and Video

Evaluation is a critical part of every learning experience during which participants have the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned and the effectiveness of the learning process itself. Moreover, facilitators can use the information provided in evaluations to revise and enhance future sessions.

### EXERCISE 10: Evaluation

#### Objectives:

- To evaluate what participants have learned from this guide and video
- To evaluate the learning processes used in this guide and video

**Time:** 30 minutes

**Materials:** Large piece of paper or chalkboard, markers or chalk

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*A volunteer facilitator from the group leads the group discussion. The facilitator is responsible for assisting the group to follow the exercise instructions, keeping time, and calling on participants who wish to speak. A second volunteer records participants' findings on a large piece of paper or chalkboard that is visible to all.*

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1. Going around the whole group, participants identify which aspects of the *Learning to Facilitate Interactively* guide and video they liked most, and explain why. A volunteer records participants' comments on paper or chalkboard.
2. Using the same process, participants identify which aspects of the guide and video they liked least, and explain why. A volunteer also records these comments.
3. Next, the participants consider the following questions:
  - *Did this workshop and lessons presented in the Learning to Facilitate Interactively guide and video meet your expectations?*
  - *What obstacles might you encounter in encouraging principled leadership and promoting learning partnerships? How will you overcome them?*
  - *Are there aspects of facilitating that you feel you need more information about? If so, what are they?*

- *How do you anticipate being able to use your new facilitation skills in daily life?*
- *Are you looking forward to facilitating a workshop in the future?*

## **Postscript: Interactive Learning in *A Leadership Training Handbook for Women***

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**A**nalyzing the tactics and learning methods presented in *A Leadership Training Handbook for Women* will give you greater insight into facilitation strategies and objectives, and will help you become a more effective facilitator. Once you are familiar with the twelve sessions in the handbook, apply the skills and strategies you have learned from this guide.

Before conducting a workshop, alone or with other facilitators, try to answer the following questions for each session in *A Leadership Training Handbook for Women*:

- *What interactive learning methods were used in the session?*
- *Why do you think the particular methods were chosen?*
- *What was accomplished by using these methods?*
- *Do you see opportunities for including additional interactive methods in the session?*
- *How do the methods used in the session help foster participatory leadership and build a learning partnership?*

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