Chapter 2 Collaboration and conflict

Collaboration and conflict

This section contains training activities designed to facilitate a deeper understanding of conflicts and collaboration.

To manage a conflict effectively, participants have first to understand the thinking, attitudes and behaviour that drive the conflict. By engaging in the activities and exercises in this chapter, participants will gain firsthand experience of how they and others behave and react when confronted with competition and/or conflict. Participants will observe factors that undermine collaboration and that can lead to tension, friction and eventually conflict. This experience will serve as the starting point for discussions about the factors that enable collaboration and consensus decision-making.

The first training session "Moving chairs" is key in this, as it can be used to illustrate a number of important considerations for conflict management. It allows participants to experience for themselves how a person's behaviour is driven by the assumptions that she/he makes about a situation and how changing people's interpretations enables creative solutions.

Session 2.2 follows on from "Moving chairs" to make participants aware of the range of possible responses to conflict and the factors that influence how to choose the best one. This activity also emphasizes how conflict management is not an end in itself, but rather a means of achieving broader objectives and goals. Conflict management is a means of enabling joint decision-making by different actors in collaborative natural resources management.

Session 2.3 "Uses of a rock" clearly demonstrates one of the many advantages of collaboration and can be used as a warm-up for Session 2.4, which allows participants to review jointly the basic considerations and prerequisites of collaboration and consensus decision-making.

Session 2.5 "Picture of conflict" explores the types of conflicts that participants are confronted with in their work environments, and demonstrates how most conflicts have multiple causes and many dimensions. This central aspect of conflict management is followed-up on and deepened in Session 2.6.

In conflict management it is particularly useful to have an understanding of the different issues that lead to conflict and the different perceptions that different parties have of a situation. Partisan perceptions about substantive matters can make disagreements difficult to solve. Session 2.7 "Partisan perceptions" helps to raise awareness about this important point and illustrates the different possibilities for dealing skilfully with preconceived ideas and views.

SESSION 2.1 MOVING CHAIRS

PURPOSE:
- to demonstrate the difference between actual and perceived incompatible interests;
- to demonstrate how conflict can be managed through cooperation.

CROSS REFERENCE: Section 2.3.1

TIME: one hour.

MATERIALS: about 20 chairs.

PREPARATION:
- copy equal numbers of instructions A, B and C (see Attachment 2.1.A) on to separate pieces of paper, ensuring that there is one instruction for each participant;
- clear the room of all tables and all but about 20 chairs, which should be placed in the centre;
- choose two points – X and Y – at opposite corners of the room, and mark these prominently.

STEPS

1 Do not explain the purpose of the activity, but tell participants that this will become apparent by the end.

2 Give each participant an instruction A, B or C from Attachment 2.1.A. Distribute equal numbers of each instruction randomly among the group. Tell participants not to read the instructions until they have been told to. Tell them not to show their instructions to anyone else, but do not say anything about not talking to anyone else.

3 Explain that the participants will be asked to carry out the instructions given to them.

4 Once all the participants understand what they are to do, ask them to read their instructions and carry out the tasks described.

5 Watch the process in the different groups, and in the overall group, noting whether and how participants start to cooperate and reach a solution. If participants do not reach agreement, stop the activity.

6 Start a discussion with the following questions:

■ What did you experience during this activity? Answers will probably range around conflicts, confusion, communication breakdown, etc.

■ How did you interpret the instructions? Did you follow them? Why or why not?

■ When did you start to cooperate? What made you start to cooperate? If the participants did not cooperate at all, ask them how they could have.

■ Were there any obvious mediators? What was their role?

■ How did different people relate with and/or confront one another?

■ How does this activity relate to a real situation in your work context? Bring out issues of conflict, collaboration, working in isolation, partnerships, etc.

■ People often interpret the instructions as "competing" rather than "collaborating" – relate this to resource management situations.

■ Individuals often focus on their own specific tasks without relating these to what others are doing or how they can work with others to complete a task.

■ What does this tell us about conflicts over limited resources?

■ What did you learn about collaboration?

Conclude the session by emphasizing the key learning points and introducing a definition of conflict.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

• Incompatibilities can be real or only perceived, because people cannot see ways in which their different goals/views/interests can be brought together. This exercise shows that a goal that seemed impossible because of conflicting interests can be modified to accommodate different stakeholders so that everyone's interests are met. Because conflicts are based on perceptions, there are opportunities for resolving a conflict through changing the ways in which people think and act. This might sometimes be the only way to move a conflict forward.

HINTS This activity is best followed by Session 2.2 "Identifying different individual responses to conflict".

TRAINER'S NOTE 2.1.A WHAT IS CONFLICT?

Conflict occurs when two or more people have or perceive themselves as having incompatible interests.

Two things that are incompatible are of different types, so cannot be used or mixed together. Incompatibilities can be of a physical nature, for example, new computer software is often incompatible with old computers, and sometimes two different blood groups cannot be mixed. Actions or ideas can also be incompatible, when they are not acceptable or possible together, for example, working hours are incompatible with family life.

Attachment 2.1.A Instructions

A. Arrange all the chairs in a circle.

B. Put all the chairs near the point marked X.

C. Put all the chairs near the point marked Y.

SESSION 2.2 IDENTIFYING DIFFERENT INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES TO CONFLICT

PURPOSE:
- to learn about the different ways in which people respond to conflict;
- to learn about the advantages and disadvantages of the different responses to conflict;
- to build understanding that the focus of the training is collaboration.

CROSS REFERENCE: Section 2.2 and 2.3.

TIME: 45 minutes.

MATERIALS: markers, flip charts, cards.

PREPARATION: Copy:
- Attachment 2.2.A "Determinants of personal responses to conflict" on to a flip chart;
- a set of cards for five different responses to conflict (Attachment 2.2.B) for each small group of participants;
- Attachment 2.2.C "Conflict responses answer sheet" for each small group of participants.

STEPS

1 Explain that the purpose of this activity is to look at some of the behaviours that were displayed in Session 2.1 "Moving chairs" and the way in which individuals respond to conflict.

2 Introduce the determinants of personal responses to conflict graph (Attachment 2.2.A) and explain that two key considerations determine individual responses to conflict: relationships with the other parties; and the reaching of personal goals. Point out that there are five main responses to address conflict – avoidance, accommodation, compromise, force and collaboration – but do not explain them at this stage.

3 Divide the participants into small groups. Explain that each group will receive a set of cards describing different responses to conflict. Each set contains one card for each of the different responses to conflict and additional cards that describe actions. Each group is to sort the action cards and place them under the appropriate response card.

After 15 minutes, provide each group with a copy of the conflict responses answer sheet (Attachment 2.2.C) and ask them to:
- assess how their categories match those on the answer sheet;

■ discuss the terms as shown on the determinants of personal responses to conflict graph;
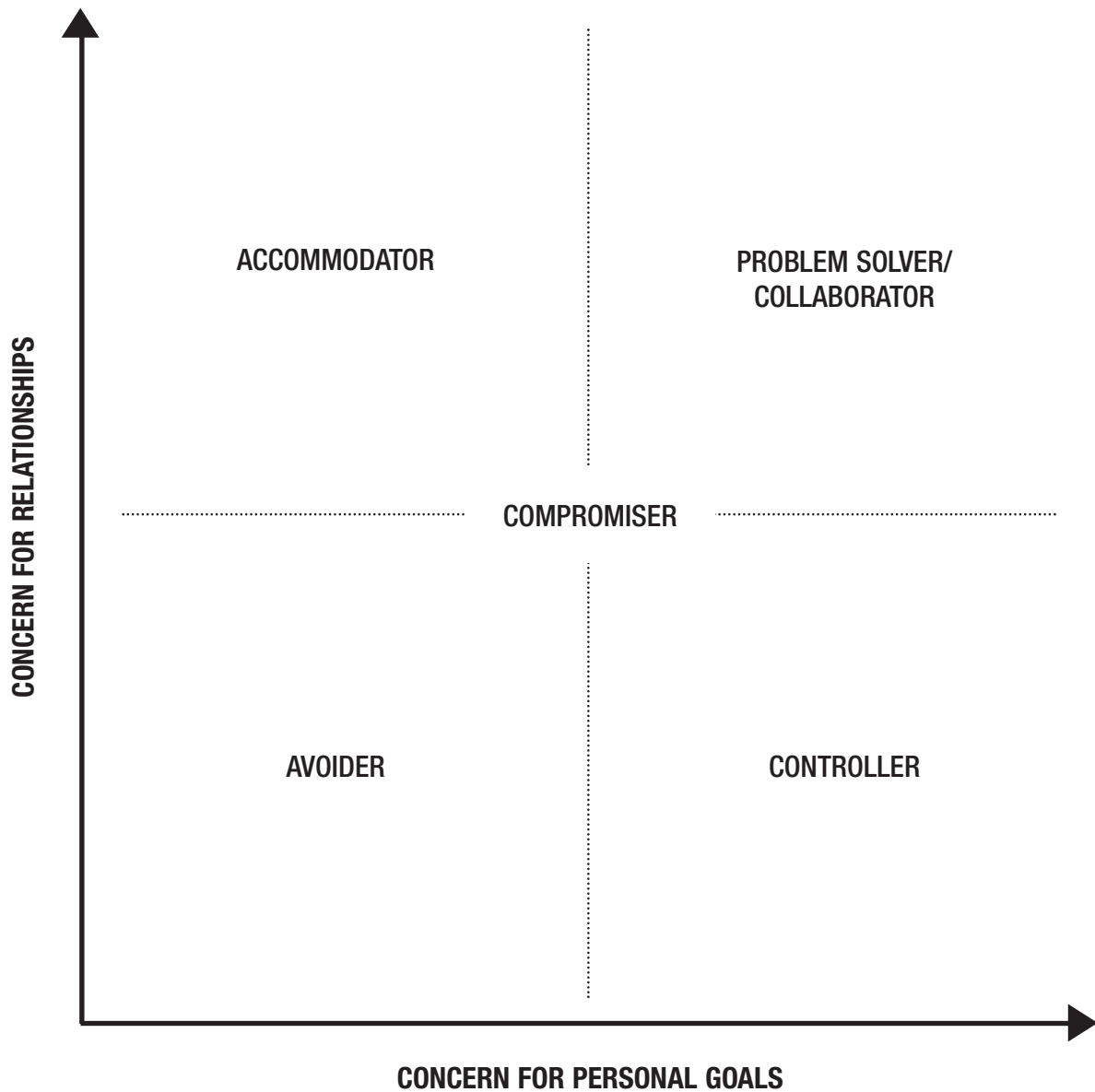Reconvene the overall group, and ask for suggestions of where the terms should be placed on the graph.

4 Initiate a discussion with the following questions:

■ What are the inherent advantages and disadvantages of each approach (see Attachment 2.2.D)?

■ Why is it important to know about the five main responses and their inherent advantages and disadvantages?

■ What do you think influences your personal response to conflict?

5 Close by explaining that the focus of this training is on collaboration because of its many advantages for natural resources management, when the necessary frame conditions are in place. Mention that these advantages and frame conditions will be reviewed in later sessions.

6 Wrap up the session by emphasizing the following key learning points.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- There is no right or wrong way of responding to conflict. Every response has its own advantages and disadvantages, and any might be the most appropriate for the specific circumstances. For example, it may be difficult to avoid conflict in the long term when a situation is escalating; in other situations avoiding conflict for the moment may be the most appropriate response. It is important to know why one response (or several) has been selected and not others.

- Everybody has personal preferences that influence their response to conflict. Factors that influence personal preferences include:
  - past experiences of conflict;
  - one's culture;
  - one's family history;
  - the specific conflict situation.

- Learning to identify and work with personal and cultural differences – others' and one's own – is an important component of effective conflict management.

- The response selected depends on many factors: personal preferences, the conflict situation, the time and other resources available for finding a resolution, the readiness and abilities of main stakeholders, etc.

HINTS   Ideally, this activity should be combined with Session 1.5 "Discover your own conflict style", provided that participants have filled out the questionnaire in advance. It can then also serve to stimulate participants' reflections about their own conflict styles.

Attachment 2.2.A Determinants of personal responses to conflict

CONCERN FOR RELATIONSHIPS

ACCOMMODATOR

PROBLEM SOLVER/
COLLABORATOR

COMPROMISER

AVOIDER

CONTROLLER

CONCERN FOR PERSONAL GOALS

Attachment 2.2.B Cards for five different responses to conflict

|	
Force	Works to satisfy all interests and needs
Avoidance	May be used when participants are unwilling to spend much time
Accommodation	The attempt of one group to impose its interests over others
Compromise	Results in win-win situation
Collaboration	Parties have no interest in maintaining a relationship
Neglects interests of all parties by postponing decisions, retreating, using delaying tactics	Can involve threats, harassment, use of supernatural powers, peer pressure, etc.
May be used when one party has more power or is willing to preserve the relationship	Useful for quick solutions
Requires time to involve all parties actively and equally in the process	Satisfies the other parties' interests, while foregoing own needs
Results in lose-lose situation when used in isolation	Creates hostility and resentment
Parties sacrifice something to gain something else	Used when it is important that all parties are committed to the resolution
Results in lose-win situation	Outcome uncertain
Results in a sort of win-win/lose-lose situation	All parties sacrifice something in order to achieve a mutually workable solution
Results in only a temporary solution	Results in win-lose situation
May seem easier than getting involved	Focuses on goals and consensus agreements

Attachment 2.2.C Conflict responses answer sheet

RESPONSES TO CONFLICT	CHARACTERISTICS
FORCE	• The attempt of one group to impose its interests over others • Can involve violence, threats, harassment, use of supernatural powers, peer pressure, etc. • Creates hostility and resentment • Outcome uncertain • Parties have no interest in maintaining a relationship • Results in win-lose situation
AVOIDANCE	• Neglects interests of all parties by postponing decisions, retreating, using delaying tactics • May seem easier than getting involved • Results in lose-lose situation when used in isolation • Results in only a temporary solution
ACCOMMODATION	• Satisfies the other parties' interests, while foregoing own needs • May be used when parties are unwilling to spend much time • May be used when one party has more power or is willing to preserve the relationship • Results in lose-win situation
COMPROMISE	• Useful for quick solutions • All parties sacrifice something in order to achieve a mutually workable solution • Parties sacrifice something to gain something else • Results in a sort of win-win/lose-lose situation
COLLABORATION	• Works to satisfy all interests and needs • Focuses on goals and consensus agreements • Requires time to involve all parties actively and equally in the process • Results in win-win situation • Used when it is important that all parties are committed to the resolution

Attachment 2.2.D Trainer's background to the five main responses to conflict

RESPONSE	CHARACTERISTICS	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
FORCE	A person or group attempts to impose her/his/its interests over those of others	Can induce changes or lead to progress	Can result in violence, threats, harassment, use of supernatural powers, peer pressure, economic and policy sanctions, and pressure through mass media and intimidation Creates hostility and resentment Puts the relationship among parties at risk Results in win-lose situations
AVOIDANCE	Delays a response temporarily	Buys time for exploring the situation or devising an appropriate response Can save time and energy Can save face in delicate situations	Neglects the interests of all parties Results in lose-lose situations when used in isolation Might result in only a temporary solution
ACCOMMODATION	Satisfies the other parties' interests while foregoing one's own needs	Useful when quick solutions are required Useful when resources (time, money, etc) for searching solutions are limited Useful as a temporary solution or where a partial solution is better than none Useful when preserving the relationship is more important than finding a solution	Results in lose-win situations Sometimes arises because one party has more power than the other(s)

COMPROMISE	All parties sacrifice something in order to achieve a mutually workable solution	Useful when quick solutions are required Useful when resources (time, money, etc) for searching solutions are limited Useful as a temporary solution or when a partial solution is better than no solution Useful when preserving the relationship is more important than finding a solution	Results in a sort of win-win/lose-lose situation Parties have to sacrifice something to gain something else
COLLABORATION	Works to satisfy all interests and needs Focuses on goals and consensus agreements	Improves relationships Offers shared benefits to all parties Best possible outcome when many different people have different and sometimes divergent interests	Requires time to involve all parties actively and equally in the process Works only when all parties are committed to finding a resolution
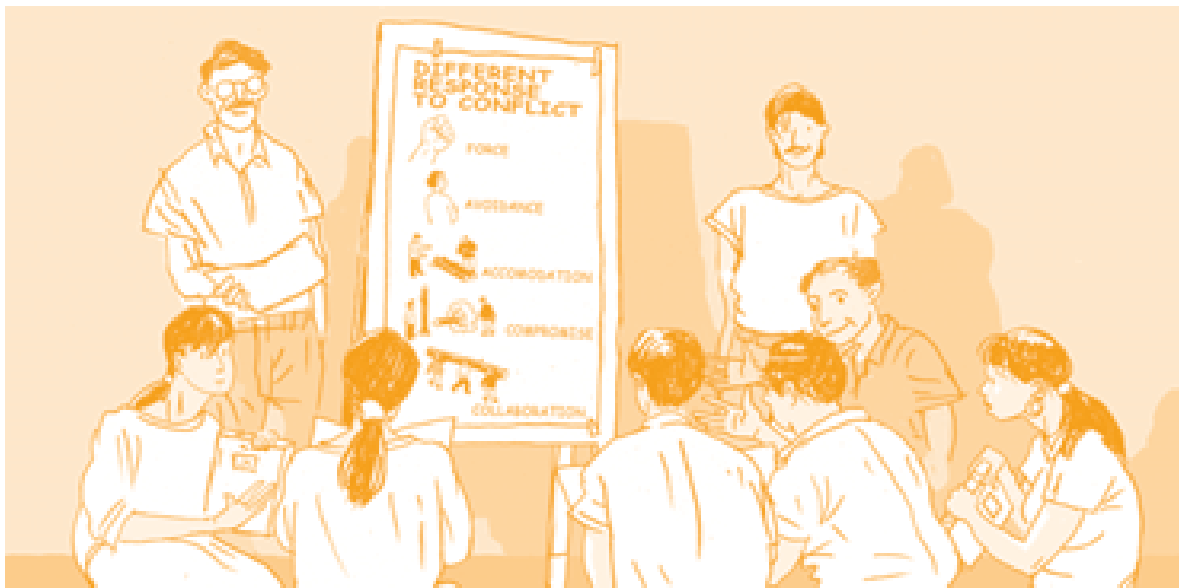
SESSION 2.3 USES OF A ROCK

PURPOSE: to introduce the value of working collectively and keeping an open mind, in order to identify new solutions.

CROSS REFERENCE: Section 1.2.

TIME: 15 to 20 minutes.

MATERIALS: flip chart, coloured pens, a notepad and pencil for each participant.

PREPARATION: none.

STEPS

1 Do not explain the purpose of the activity. Instead, ask all the participants to take a pencil and paper and explain that there is going to be a short competition.

The participants will have five minutes to list all the uses of an object (which will be named) that they can think of. Encourage them to be creative and to list as many uses as possible. They may record the use in one or a few words.

When everyone has understood the instructions, ask the participants to begin.

2 After five minutes, ask them to put down their pencils and ask who has the most items listed – start by asking who has five, ten, 15, more than 15, etc.

3 Ask the person with the most items to read them out. Record them on a flip chart. Then, ask the other participants to add any other uses that they had thought of. Continue until all the uses thought of by the group have been recorded. Count the total number and compare it with the highest number from one individual.

4 Start a discussion with the following questions:
- What do you think the purpose of this activity was?
- Why do you think that the group generated so many more ideas than any one individual did? If necessary, mention how people think of uses on the basis of their social and cultural experience and of what they are familiar with. Different ideas may reflect the diversity of experiences represented by the group.

- What does this activity demonstrate about collective problem solving?
- In what ways do we block ourselves from thinking of new ideas? Participants commonly mention prejudging an idea, lack of confidence, cultural norms, and not being encouraged to think abstractly.

⑤ Close the session by mentioning that complex problems often require creative solutions. The exercise shows that no individual can produce as many ideas/solutions as a group of people; this is one of the key advantages of collaboration. More advantages of and preconditions for collaboration will be reviewed in later sessions.

Source: WWF, 1993.

SESSION 2.4 COLLABORATION: WHAT, WHY AND HOW?

PURPOSE:
- to clarify what collaboration is and the main factors that support it;
- to relate collaboration to natural resources management.

CROSS REFERENCE: Sections 1.2 and 2.2.

TIME: two and a half hours.

MATERIALS: 25 to 30 coloured index cards and one roll of adhesive tape for each small group. Flip chart, coloured markers.

PREPARATION:
- for each small group, copy Attachment 2.4.C "Instructions for group work" and Attachment 2.4.D "Observer's guidelines";
- prepare flip charts from Attachment 2.4.A "Collaborative management is…" and Attachment 2.4.B "Group characteristics for effective collaboration".

STEPS

1. Explain that the participants will work together on an activity related to planning. Explain that the purpose of the activity will be discussed after the exercise.

2. Divide the participants into groups of five or six. Select one volunteer from each group to be an observer.

3. Meet briefly with the observers and explain the questions that they will have to consider during the activity (Attachment 2.4.D). Emphasize that the observers must not talk, discuss with the group or interfere in any other way during the activity.

4. Distribute the index cards and tape to the groups. Explain that they have 15 minutes to build the most beautiful and tallest free-standing tower with their cards and tape.

5. Assign each group a working space in the plenary room, or in separate rooms if available, and instruct them to begin.

6. After 15 minutes, ask the groups to stop.

7. Bring the groups together and have them compare their towers. Ask the observers to share their observations with the plenary group.

8 Review the group processes with the following questions:
- How did each group start? Were the task and objective clarified before the construction work started ? (Common goals.)
- How were decisions made about making the tower the most beautiful and tallest? (Agreed interaction.)
- Were roles "officially" assigned – for example the leadership role – or did they evolve informally? (Agreed roles.)
- Were there tensions or conflicts about goals, procedures or norms? How did the group deal with these?
- What was the level of participation and how did this change?

Relate this activity to the training by asking:
- How does this activity relate to other forms of collaboration in real life?
- What can be learned from this activity regarding preventing or managing conflicts?

9 Explain the purpose of the activity. Explain that the worldwide trend for decentralization and increased community involvement in natural resources management is leading to rapid changes in resource tenure patterns and increasingly complex stakeholder relations. This shift from State monopolies to pluralistic structures can be challenging because different stakeholders have different and often diverging interests, and stakeholders often lack the necessary knowledge and skills for joint decision-making and collaborative arrangements. Conflict management is one of these skills.

10 Ask participants what they understand by the term "collaborative management". Record their answers on a flip chart. Show the flip chart that defines collaborative management (Attachment 2.4.A). Explain that this is one view of collaboration. Have the participants compare this with their own views, and discuss.

11 Present and explain the group characteristics for effective collaboration (Attachment 2.4.B).

12 Divide the participants into groups of four or five. Distribute the instructions (Attachment 2.4.C) and explain that they have 30 minutes to discuss the questions and record their responses on a flip chart.

13 After 30 minutes, reconvene the participants. Ask one person from each small group present and explain its chart to the other groups.

14 Conclude the session by emphasizing the following key learning points.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- If one or more of these necessary group characteristics is not present, tensions, friction and eventually conflict will develop and the group will be in danger of breaking up.

- Collaboration is often not initiated until stakeholders have perceived its benefits and are certain that collaboration serves their interests better than other options, such as competition or fighting.

- A defining characteristic of collaboration is that decisions are made by consensus. Consensus does not mean unanimous consent, nor does it mean adopting anyone's preferred option. Consensus is reached when each stakeholder feels that an agreement meets at least some of his/her/its interests and can be supported by everybody.

- Collaborative management approaches have two main objectives: managing the use of natural resources and products through negotiating mutually agreeable principles and practices among stakeholders; and establishing ways of sharing among stakeholders the power to make decisions and exercise control over resource use.

- Collaborative management is effective when institutions and processes that regulate resource use can anticipate and respond to stakeholders' different interests regarding resource use, and can seek solutions of mutual gain. Resolving conflict is not a stand-alone activity – it is always a process for achieving broader goals, such as collaborative or participatory natural resources management, sustainable livelihoods and/or poverty alleviation.

Attachment 2.4.A Collaborative management is…

a situation in which two or more parties

■ negotiate
■ define and
■ guarantee,

among themselves, the sharing of the management functions, entitlements and responsibilities for a given territory or set of natural resources.

Other ways of viewing collaborative management are:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Attachment 2.4.B Group characteristics for effective collaboration

Groups do not function effectively unless certain preconditions are in place. Collaboration can be effective only when the following conditions have been met:

1. The group has established common agreed goals and objectives.

2. There is coordinated action and interaction to achieve the goals.

3. There is an agreed group structure.

4. The group members have agreed roles and well-defined functions and responsibilities within the structure.

5. There are accepted common rules, norms and values.

6. The group is linked by a "we feeling" – a common sense of affinity and belonging together.

When one or more of these characteristics are not present, tensions, friction and conflict will develop and the group will be in danger of breaking up. Conflicts can be about goals, the best way of achieving goals, roles and status, prestige, responsibilities, etc. It is very important to recognize that some group characteristics are formal or official, and others are informal or private.

Formal characteristics

Formal or official characteristics are features that have been formally agreed and recorded in official documents. They are usually made known to every group member.

Examples:

■ *Goals:* An organization, institution or committee has officially defined goals and a hierarchy of objectives. Each section of the organization has an additional set of goals and objectives.

■ *Structure:* The official structure is usually illustrated by an organizational chart, which shows the position of each group member.

■ *Roles:* Both the hierarchical and the professional roles and functions of group members are described in their job descriptions.

■ *Norms:* Organizational rules, regulations and norms of conduct are defined and laid down officially. Their violation is punished by disciplinary action.

■ *We feeling:* The official form of "we feeling" is an organization's demand for loyalty.
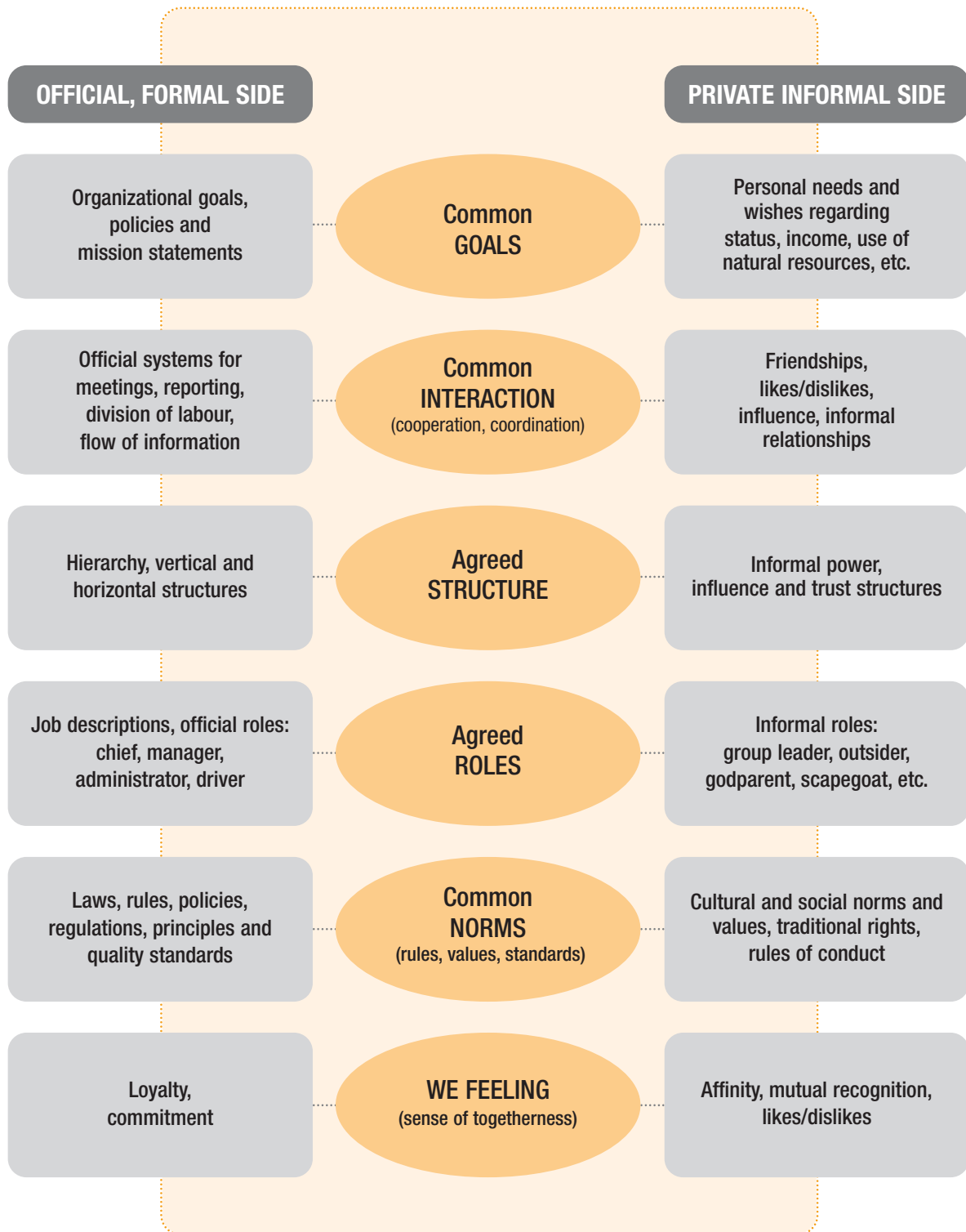
Informal characteristics

Informal characteristics may already exist – for example, traditional rights and norms – or develop as groups work and live together. These aspects of group life are usually not laid down in "black and white" and group members are often not even fully aware of them. However, they exist in every group and have a very strong influence on working procedures, relationships, efficiency and the atmosphere.

Examples:

■ *Goals:* Group members have informal objectives and interests, such as career, status and/or making money, which guide their actions as much as official organizational or communal goals do.

■ *Interaction:* Rather than following official routes, group members try to achieve things by using shortcuts and personal relations.

■ *Structure:* The power structure in a department or community may be quite different from the power obtained from official roles and functions. Sometimes the most influential person is not the formal leader at the top of the official hierarchy – for example, the chief of the community administration may have less influence than a village elder or traditional healer has.

■ *Norms:* In addition to the official national policy frameworks there are also customary tenure systems. Different authorities with different rules may make decisions that are contradictory – one based on customary law, another on statute law.

■ *Roles:* In addition to their official roles, group members have informal roles, such as opinion leader, outsider, scapegoat, black sheep or group clown.

It is important to know both the official/formal and the private/informal aspects of collaborative group work. Conflicts and frictions within a group often have their roots in the incompatibility of the formal and the informal aspects. In analysing conflicts, both aspects have to be taken into account.

OFFICIAL, FORMAL SIDE		PRIVATE INFORMAL SIDE
Organizational goals, policies and mission statements	Common **GOALS**	Personal needs and wishes regarding status, income, use of natural resources, etc.
Official systems for meetings, reporting, division of labour, flow of information	Common **INTERACTION** (cooperation, coordination)	Friendships, likes/dislikes, influence, informal relationships
Hierarchy, vertical and horizontal structures	Agreed **STRUCTURE**	Informal power, influence and trust structures
Job descriptions, official roles: chief, manager, administrator, driver	Agreed **ROLES**	Informal roles: group leader, outsider, godparent, scapegoat, etc.
Laws, rules, policies, regulations, principles and quality standards	Common **NORMS** (rules, values, standards)	Cultural and social norms and values, traditional rights, rules of conduct
Loyalty, commitment	**WE FEELING** (sense of togetherness)	Affinity, mutual recognition, likes/dislikes

Attachment 2.4.C Instructions for group work

Your task as a group is to discuss collaborative natural resources management in your communities.

Please discuss the following questions and record the major outcomes on a flip chart:

1. Which groups are either involved in or affected by natural resources management?

2. Why should these different groups collaborate in natural resources management?

3. For each group, what are the advantages (benefits) and disadvantages of collaboration?

4. Review the necessary preconditions for collaboration by looking at the group characteristics for effective collaboration:

- Which of the characteristics are unproblematic, according to your experience – i.e., which are understood and followed?
- Which of the characteristics are problematic – i.e., unclear, groups have different understandings?
- Do problems arise from the differences between the official/formal side and the private/informal side?

5. Are there additional factors that make collaboration difficult or impossible?

Attachment 2.4.D Observer's guidelines

Carefully observe the members of your group to determine the following:

1. How does the group get started?

2. Does the group clarify the task prior to commencing?

3. How does the group develop a common *goal* or vision?

4. Do the group members plan their *interaction* for constructing the tower? How?

5. Are *roles* – leader and other – assigned formally, or do they develop informally?

6. To which common *norms and values* do group members refer when speaking to each other – for example, when there are differences of opinion?

7. What went particularly well? Why?

8. What was difficult and did not go well? Why?

9. How did the group deal with difficulties or problems?

SESSION 2.5   A PICTURE OF CONFLICT

PURPOSE:
- to explore the kind of conflicts that participants encounter in their work;
- to develop a common understanding of conflict;
- to encourage participants to consider different scales and the positive, as well as the negative, outcomes of conflict.

TIME: two to three hours, depending on group size.

MATERIALS: flip charts, index cards and coloured pens.

PREPARATION: prepare a flip chart from Attachment 2.5.A "Conflict: some definitions ".

STEPS

1 Explain the purpose of the activity. Explain that before participants investigate approaches to managing conflict, it is important to know how they define the term "conflict".

2 Ask each participant to think about the word "conflict" and his or her experiences of conflict (in personal life, at work, etc.). Ask the participants to list on their notepads the words that they use in their local language for conflict.

Post the flip chart with Attachment 2.5.A and ask the participants how well it captures what they have identified as conflict. Record the ideas or other descriptions of conflict that the group presents. Pay particular attention to different cultural interpretations of the term "conflict". What do these terms tell us about local definitions or reactions to conflict?

3 Hand out paper and pens to the participants. Ask them to spend five minutes drawing a picture of a natural resource conflict that they have encountered in their work. Explain that it can be a sketch, a cartoon or an abstract using symbols – whatever they like.

4 After five minutes, ask participants to post their pictures on the wall and to pair up and spend 15 minutes discussing possible positive and negative outcomes of this conflict.

5 After 15 minutes, reconvene the overall group. Record the positive and negative outcomes of conflict on a flip chart as they are presented.

Initiate a discussion with the following questions:
- Are there differences between conflicts within local communities and those that involve local communities and other outside organizations or stakeholder groups? What are these differences? (Point out some of the following differences, if the group does not mention them: need to continue relationships, past history, etc.)

■ Given the possible positive and negative outcomes of conflict, what do participants feel is the aim of managing conflict? (At this point, it may be useful to explain the difference between conflict resolution and conflict management.)

6 Conclude the session by emphasizing the following key learning points.

🔑 KEY LEARNING POINTS ···

- Conflict is a normal part of life and society, and is often necessary to the dynamics of change.
- Viewing any conflict as either positive or negative is not particularly helpful. It is not the conflict itself that is positive or negative, but its outcomes and the ways in which people respond to them.
- Conflict can have constructive and positive outcomes, depending on the way people handle it. For example: conflict can help to clarify and improve policies, institutions and processes that regulate access to resources; it can be an important force for social change, because it alerts people to:
  - competitive or contradictory laws or policies regulating access to or control over natural resources;
  - lack of or insufficient coordination in the implementation of natural resources management policies or laws;
  - neglect of people's need, rights, interests and priorities.
- Most conflicts have multiple causes because it usually takes more than one problem for a dispute to occur. Some causes may be related to the local level, while others are connected to wider social, economic and political processes. Breaking the big conflict picture down into smaller pieces makes it less overwhelming and more manageable.

HINTS If the group is small, each participant can be asked to explain his/her conflict, which encourages recognition of the different conflict scales and dimensions.

If the group is large, the presentation of every participant's picture may be too time-consuming. The trainer can suggest a "bazaar" approach in which participants walk around the room, looking at the pictures and asking and answering questions.

The conflict pictures form the basis for Session 2.6 "Main conflict ingredients", and should be kept safely so they can be revisited at later stages of the training.

Attachment 2.5.A Conflict: some definitions

One definition:

Conflict is… a relationship involving two or more opposing parties, whether marked by violence or not, based on actual or perceived differences in needs, interests and goals. Conflicts are a normal part of human interaction, and many conflicts can be managed productively.

Other ways of viewing conflict: ….

SESSION 2.6 MAIN CONFLICT INGREDIENTS

PURPOSE:
- to help participants recognize the different issues in a conflict;
- to help participants recognize that all issues must be addressed for effective conflict management.

CROSS REFERENCE: Sections 1.1 and 2.1.

TIME: one hour.

MATERIALS: three pin boards, cards, coloured markers.

PREPARATION: prepare flip charts from:
- Attachment 2.6.A "Different conflict issues";
- Attachment 2.6.B "Instructions for group work".
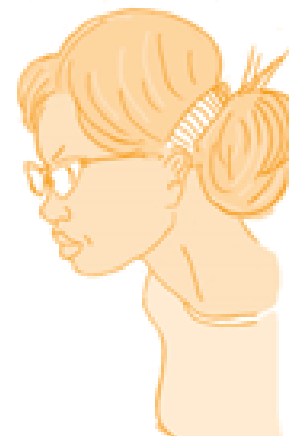
STEPS

1. Briefly explain the theory of conflict issues using Attachment 2.6.A. Explain that most conflicts involve several issues. Usually, more than one problem has to arise before a dispute breaks out. It is important to differentiate these issues for an effective conflict management process.

2. Form groups of four to five people and explain the task of the group work (Attachment 2.6.B).

3. Give the groups 30 minutes to complete the task.

4. After 30 minutes, reconvene the participants. Ask one person from each small group to present and explain its findings to the other groups.

5. Conclude the session by asking the participants to identify commonalities and recurring patterns from looking at all the conflicts presented. What conclusions can be drawn from this comparison? Emphasize the following key learning points.
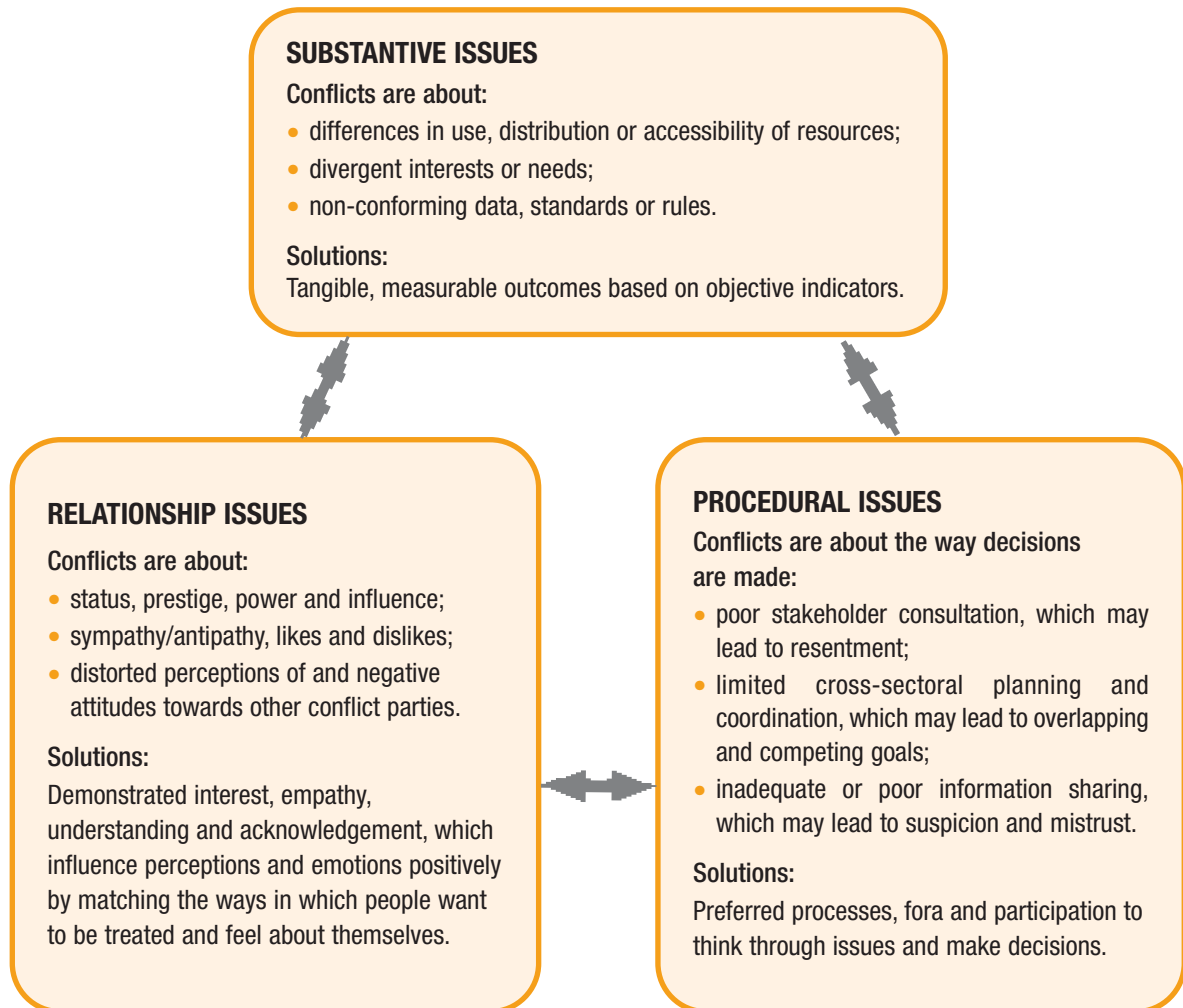
🔑 KEY LEARNING POINTS

- Conflicts cannot be handled effectively if the different issues are not understood. Most conflicts consist of all three types of issue – substantive, relationship and procedural – because the issues are interdependent and often influence or reinforce each other. A conflict about factual issues can lead to strained or spoiled relationships, for example, when critical feedback regarding a decision is seen as a personal attack.

- Many substantive issues are difficult to solve, not because a fair compromise is difficult to find, but because relations among the conflict parties are strained – trust has broken down, feelings are hurt, etc. – or there are no acceptable decision-making processes in place.

- Just as conflicts involve all three types of issue, solutions need to address all three. The inability to find a substantive solution that is perceived as fair by all parties may imply that certain psychological or procedural needs have not yet been satisfied.

- The techniques and procedures for handling factual issues, such as divergent interests, are different from those required for handling relationship issues, such as hurt feelings and mistrust.

Example

- A section head has to mediate in a conflict between two women staff members regarding the distribution of work and use of the computer. At a meeting they agree on a solution that both parties see as fair.

- The next day the two women fight about other issues.

- The section head has addressed only the factual issue. The relationship between the two staff members was not raised as an issue, but the root cause of the conflict might be jealousy, hurt feelings or prejudices about each other. Unless their relationship is improved and mutual respect established, the women will not be able to solve their factual differences themselves, and the intervention of third parties – the section head or others – will have no lasting effect.

Attachment 2.6.A Different conflict issues

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES

Conflicts are about:

- differences in use, distribution or accessibility of resources;
- divergent interests or needs;
- non-conforming data, standards or rules.

Solutions:
Tangible, measurable outcomes based on objective indicators.

RELATIONSHIP ISSUES

Conflicts are about:

- status, prestige, power and influence;
- sympathy/antipathy, likes and dislikes;
- distorted perceptions of and negative attitudes towards other conflict parties.

Solutions:
Demonstrated interest, empathy, understanding and acknowledgement, which influence perceptions and emotions positively by matching the ways in which people want to be treated and feel about themselves.

PROCEDURAL ISSUES

Conflicts are about the way decisions are made:

- poor stakeholder consultation, which may lead to resentment;
- limited cross-sectoral planning and coordination, which may lead to overlapping and competing goals;
- inadequate or poor information sharing, which may lead to suspicion and mistrust.

Solutions:
Preferred processes, fora and participation to think through issues and make decisions.

Attachment 2.6.B Instructions for group work

In your group, identify examples of conflicts that you have experienced in your private or professional life. Discuss theses examples and record your main findings on cards, bearing the following questions in mind:

- What are the factual, procedural and relationship issues?
- How did the conflict start, and how did it spread to include other issues?
- How did the issues influence each other?

SESSION 2.7 PARTISAN PERCEPTIONS

PURPOSE:
- to allow participants to understand others' perceptions and shape their own;
- to improve participants' ways of dealing with different perceptions.

CROSS REFERENCE: Section 2.1.

TIME: one hour.

MATERIALS: flip charts. A notepad and pencil for each participant.

PREPARATION: copy Attachment 2.7.A "Old or young woman?" on to a slide, or as a photocopy, with one copy per participant.

STEPS

1 Do not explain the purpose of the activity. Say that you are inviting participants to an intellectual experience. Show the picture and ask participants to describe what they see. Do they see a woman? How old would they guess she is?

2 Then select two participants with widely differing guesses to describe to each other in more detail what they see. What does the woman look like? What is she wearing? Some people will describe the woman as about 25 years old, very lovely, and rather fashionable with a demure presence. Others will see a woman in her sixties or seventies, who looks sad, and has a huge nose.

3 Explain that this exercise demonstrates that two people can see the same thing, disagree about it and yet both be right. Their perceptions are not logical, they are psychological. This phenomenon is called a "partisan perception". Partisan perceptions about substantive matters can make it difficult to solve disagreements. Understanding each party's perception of a situation is one of the most useful skills in conflict management. It requires continuous calm, respectful and specific communication finally to be able to see the other point of view.

4 Ask participants to think of an interpersonal conflict that they are familiar with. Ask them to produce a "partisan perception chart". In two columns – one for each of the two parties involved in the conflict – they should record the relevant history, events, goals and intentions from the different points of view of the parties. The partisan perceptions should be recorded in a way that makes them plausible and illuminating to opposing parties. Give participants 20 minutes to do this.

5 Reconvene the participants and start a discussion around the following questions:
- What was challenging about this exercise?
- What do you think are the causes for partisan perceptions (see Attachment 2.7.B)?

6 Conclude the session by explaining that selectiveness cannot be overcome, but partisan perceptions can be dealt with. Explain that there are two main ways of improving the way people deal with these differences (see Attachment 2.7.C):
- Focus on understanding the other person's perceptions. When we can view the situation through another person's eyes, two things are likely to happen: first, when that person knows that her/his view has been understood, he/she is more likely to listen to our view; and second, she/he is more likely to try to understand our different perception of the situation.
- Look for data that contradict our own perception. This is particularly difficult when we feel strongly about a perception. In this case, we may need the help of a third party or people from the opposing side to explain aspects that we are currently unaware of.

7 Wrap up the session by emphasizing the following key learning points.

KEY LEARNING POINTS

- Different people see things differently. Perceptions vary according to a person's interests, values and culture.
- People do not understand perceptions. When they interact with others with whom they disagree, they frequently cannot make sense of the others' actions or words. People tend to dismiss opposing perceptions as being incorrect or the result of misunderstanding.
- Perceptions differ. They always will. Dealing skilfully with differences in perceptions is a large part of what conflict management is about.
- There is no single true or objective account of a conflict. Different people interpret or frame the conflict in different ways, depending on their perspectives and interests. Because conflicts are about perceptions and the (different) meanings that people give to events, policies, institutions, etc., they can be managed by changing the way people feel and behave.
- Partisan perceptions about substantive matters can make disagreements difficult to solve. One of the most useful skills in conflict management is understanding the different perceptions that each party has of a situation and dealing with the filter in one's own mind.

HINTS For the partisan perception chart exercise, participants can choose two of the main stakeholders from their conflict pictures (from Session 2.5), as long as they know the perceptions of these stakeholders.

Attachment 2.7.A Old or young woman?

What does the picture show?

_____

_____

_____

Do we agree on what we are seeing?

_____

_____

_____

Attachment 2.7.B Causes of partisan perceptions

- We selectively filter incoming data.
- We revise our memories to fit our preferences.
- We experience and observe different data from each other.
- We are interested in different things from each other.
- We collect evidence to support our own views.
- We ignore or dismiss non-confirming data.

Attachment 2.7.C Ways of dealing with partisan perceptions

Be understanding and make understanding a collaborative effort:
- Assume that partisan perceptions exist, ours as well as theirs.
- Seek to understand and be understanding, before seeking to be understood.
- Consider discussing partisan perceptions early and explicitly.

Search actively for reasoning:
- Be explicit about the data you seek.
- Discuss how each of you interprets the data and reaches conclusions.

Create new perceptions, rather than battle over old ones:
- Seek data that contradict, or at least do not confirm, your own perceptions.
- Tell a new story.