



## **Workshop Evaluation Report**

# **Workshop on “Group Facilitation Skills for Participatory Decision-Making”**

**April 22-25, 2008, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

Compiled by Cristina Sette

**November 2008**

Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) Initiative - c/o Bioversity International  
Via dei Tre Denari 472, 00057 Maccarese (Fiumicino), Rome, Italy  
Tel: (39) 0661181, Fax: (39) 0661979661, email: [ilac@cgiar.org](mailto:ilac@cgiar.org), URL: [www.cgiar-ilac.org](http://www.cgiar-ilac.org)

The ILAC initiative fosters learning from experience and use of the lessons learned to improve the design and implementation of agricultural research and development programs. The mission of the ILAC Initiative is to develop, field test and introduce methods and tools that promote organizational learning and institutional change in CGIAR centres and their partners, to expand the contributions of agricultural research to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Citation: ILAC (2008) Evaluation Report on the Group Facilitation Skills for Participatory Decision-Making Workshop held at CIMMYT, April 22-25, 2008, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Rome, Institutional Learning and Change Initiative.

## Summary

The Institutional Learning and Change (ILAC) Initiative and the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT), co-sponsored a training workshop entitled Group Facilitation Skills for Participatory Decision-Making.

The training course was held at the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 22-25 April, 2008. This report presents summary results of a participant evaluation carried out six months after the workshop.



ILAC Facilitation Workshop, April 22-25 2008, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

The objectives of this course were to encourage participants build skills and knowledge that help them:

- Facilitate meetings in ways that increase their effectiveness
- Manage conflict and disagreement
- Build consensus, and
- Promote and encourage virtual teams

The event was attended by twenty professionals from seven CGIAR centers (Bioversity, CIP, CIMMYT, ILRI, CIAT, ICARDA and IFPRI). Participants included Senior and Middle-level Project Managers, and Research Scientists. A complete list of participants is included in the Annex part of this report.

In general, participants indicated that they were very satisfied with the skills and knowledge gained, with the workshop methodology, and with the experienced trainer. They found the workshop very useful and relevant. They expressed their gratitude to ILAC for providing this opportunity. Participants indicated that they require further, on-going opportunities to practice the skills they have now acquired or improved since they attended the workshop.

Dr. Sam Kaner, of Community at Work (San Francisco, California), who delivered the training, is a recognized leader in consensus decision-making and co-author, with Sarah Fisk, Lenny Lind, Catherine Toldi and Duane Berger of *The Facilitator's Guide to Participatory*

*Decision-Making* (2007). Dr. Fisk was assisted by Buffy Balderston from Community at Work.

## Introduction

Facilitation skills are strategically important because professionals are increasingly called upon to manage teams and participatory processes involving people from diverse backgrounds, disciplines, nationalities and cultures. Such processes pose many challenges for effective communication and decision making.

Throughout the four-day training workshop participants are exposed to a variety of techniques to assist the group in working their way through the decision-making process. They also have the opportunity to practice and receive feedback from other participants and from the trainer.

## Evaluation Methodology

Approximately three months after the workshop ended, participants were asked to rate various aspects of the workshop through an online survey. A web-based service, *Survey Monkey*<sup>1</sup>, was used to administer a custom-made survey. Participants were asked to respond to seventeen questions, eight of which required a rating and nine an open ended, essay-type response. A qualitative data analysis program (NVivo<sup>2</sup>) was used to help analyze the responses. Sixteen of the twenty participants completed the survey -- an 80% response rate.

## General Reaction

A summary of the responses is presented here.

### 1. Training objectives:

The overall purpose of this workshop had been to build capacity to facilitate meetings, teams, and group decision-making processes among researchers and project managers. Participants indicated that the workshop had achieved the intended objectives (Figure 1).

Participants' comments included:

*"The training helped me to better manage stakeholder meetings in order to reach a more substantial contribution from the participants and achieve the planned results in an ordered manner."*

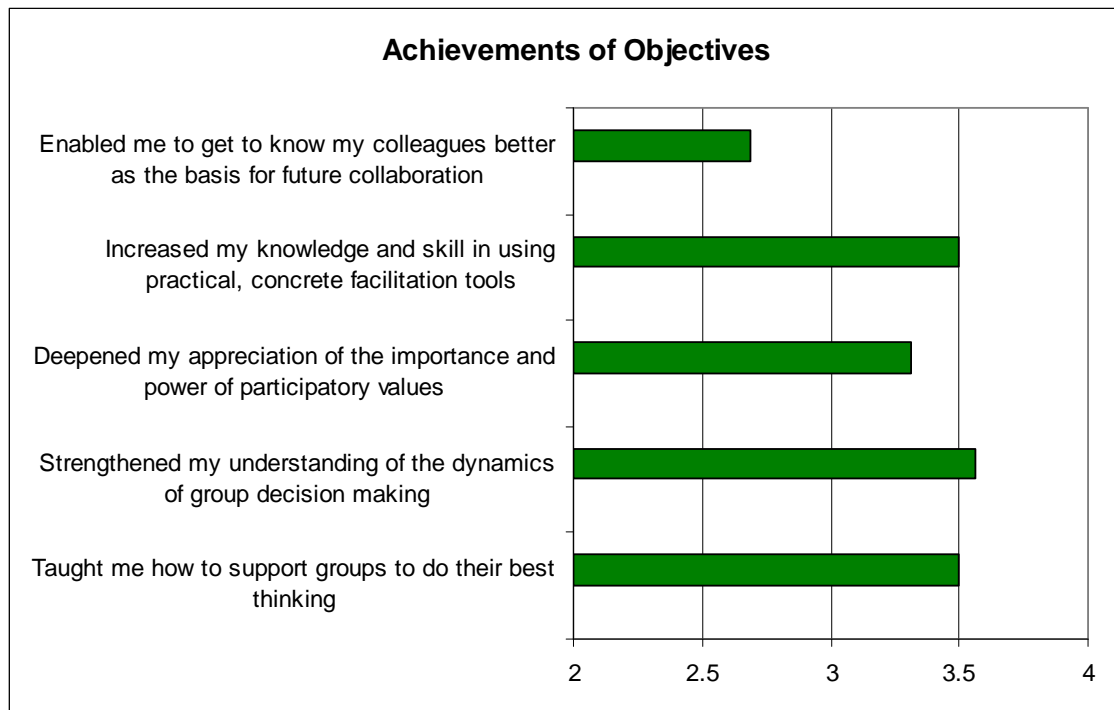
*"Overall it was a great course. I've learned a lot that I can directly apply in my professional and personal life. It was interesting that almost everyone I talked to during break sessions was highly impressed with the course and Sam Kaner. Sam's knowledge of the subject and his professionalism was exemplary."*

---

<sup>1</sup> [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.qsrinternational.com/products\\_nvivo.aspx](http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo.aspx)

**Figure 1. Participants' general assessment of the training (average participant scores on a 4-point scale)**

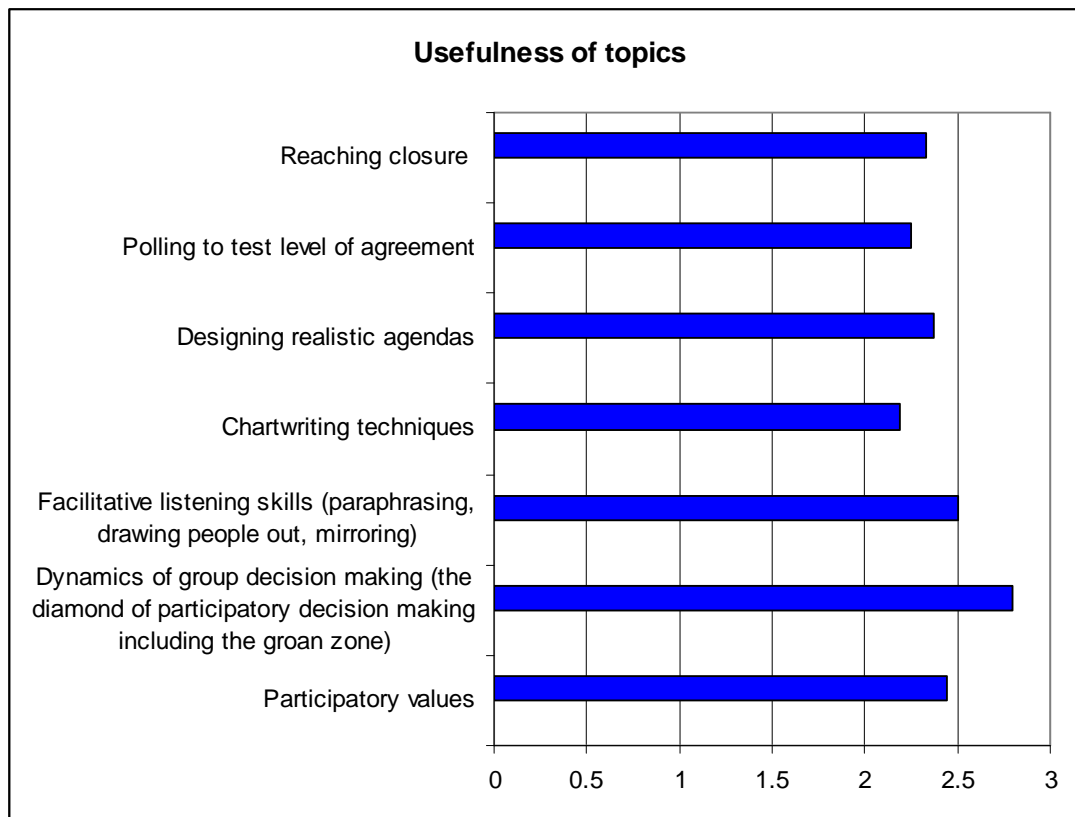


## 2. Assessing the usefulness of the course

Participants felt that the topics presented during the workshop were very useful, had addressed their objectives very well, and provided an opportunity to practice some of the tools learned. Some also suggested that often the course seemed to suggest fixed recipes, which are not practical in many cases. Figure 2 illustrates the responses.

*“I coordinate regional research and development activities, where different partners that have various understandings and motives participate. The skills I acquired from the training will help to handle all this better and also achieve more.”*

**Figure 2. Usefulness of the topics covered (average score on a 3-point scale with 1 being of limited use and 3 being very useful)**



### 3. Comments about how the training addressed participants' personal objectives:

As is normal, participants had come to the workshop with their own expectations and personal objectives. Respondents indicated that the training had added to their already existing experiences on helping people participate during workshops, as well as values and tools learned are useful to their work and personal life. Some participants requested more information on the workshop content prior to the workshop.

Participants' comments included:

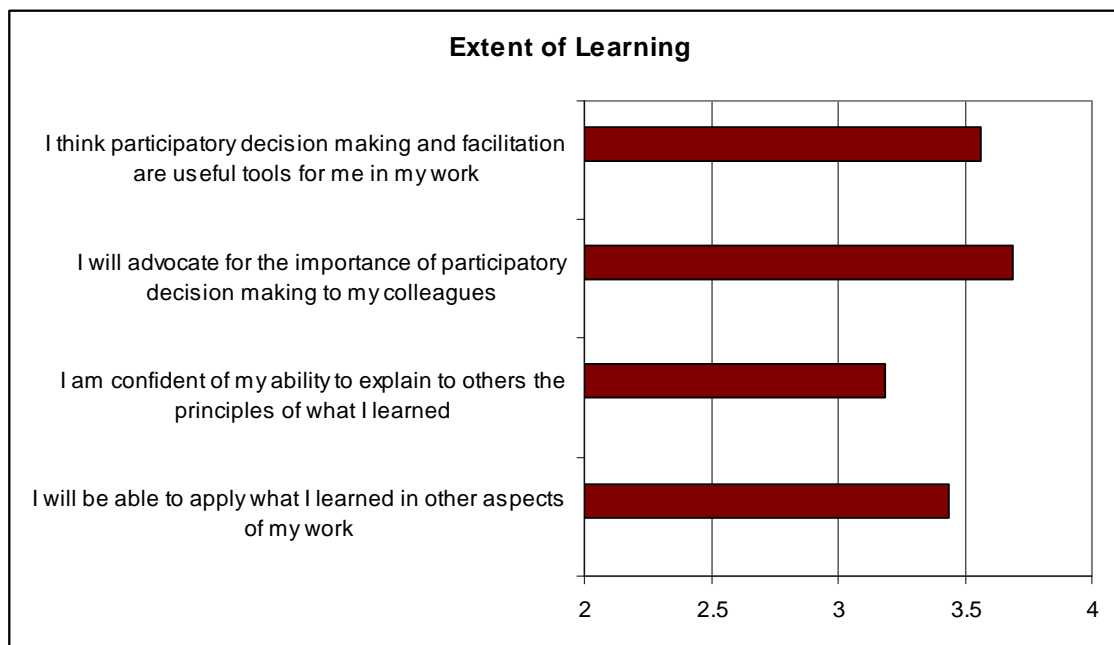
*"The training was an eye opener. Made me realize I had objectives I had never thought about!"*

*"I am involved in group facilitation or leading meetings very often. I needed such type of training. It really addressed my needs."*

*"The nature of my job depends on my ability to help teams to work towards a common objective/output and Sam's course just provided the tools/skills for doing just that."*

In assessing how much participants have learned during the course, the majority of respondents indicated that they are able to advocate for the importance of participatory decision making to their colleagues, as illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3. Extent of learning (participant scores on a 4-point scale. 1 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree)**



#### 4. Comments about current attitude to participatory decision making and facilitation:

The findings indicated that, as a result of the workshop, respondents now felt more confident to apply some of the tools for facilitation of participatory decisions. They also expressed concern on applying these tools when language is a barrier (when using translators), or when time is very contained.

Participants' comments included:

*"I am able to understand the processes that groups go through before reaching consensus"*

*"I am more able to listen and desist giving my opinion that could affect other people's willingness to express their opinions"*

#### 5. Comments on the most useful aspects of the workshop

Frequently mentioned useful aspects of the workshop were related to gaining skills on facilitating group zones, group dynamics, and the practical aspect of the course. Meeting colleagues from other centers and the group atmosphere was also frequently mentioned.

#### 6. Comments on the least useful aspects of the workshop

A few respondents indicated that some exercises or skills had been less useful than others. Chart writing and paraphrasing were the activities that had been found least useful. One respondent indicated that understanding colleagues with a strong accent was very difficult; others suggested that more time should be allocated for this training workshop in the future, as well as more social events.

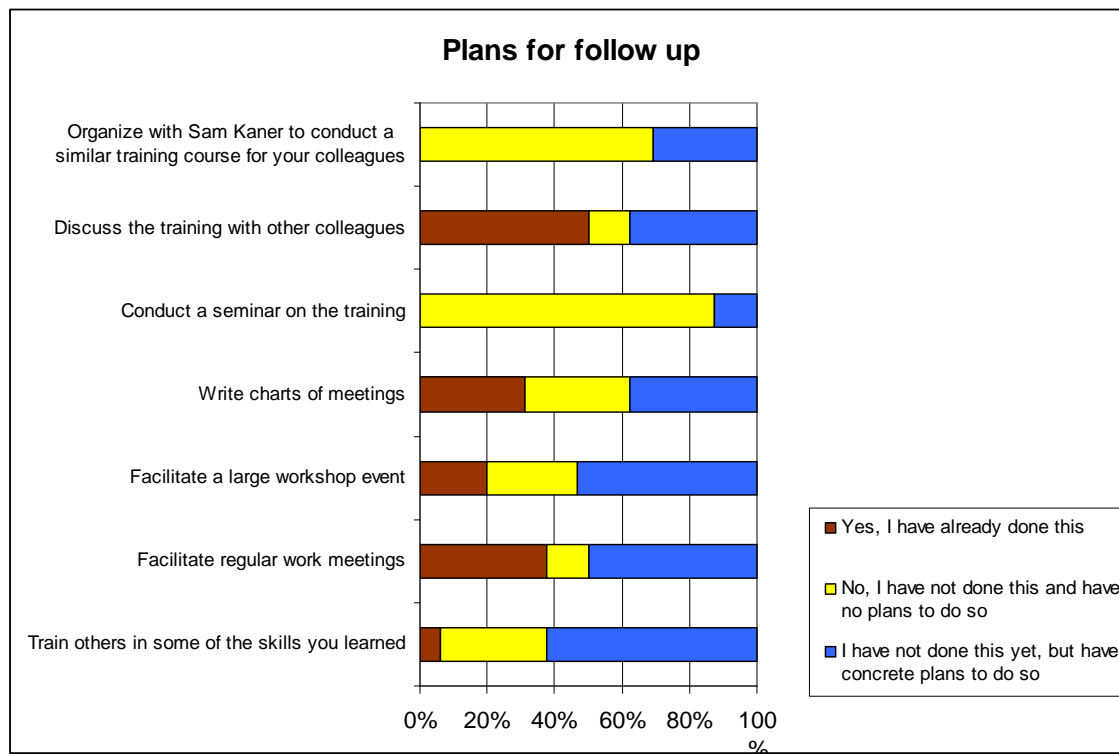
#### 7. Follow-up actions after the workshop

Asked about follow up activities using the skills they had learned, 63% of the respondents indicated that they plan to train others with the skills gained, 56% have already facilitated meetings or large events, and 50% have discussed the training with colleagues (Figure 4). The

majority of follow-up activities engaged in by participants were reported to have been in facilitating training workshops, engaging in field work, managing internal and external meetings, and in their day to day responsibilities.

Asked if they had difficulty in applying what they had learned in the training, one respondent indicated that getting attention from participants on a new subject is very difficult. Specially if the meeting is very long.

**Figure 4. Plans for follow up**



#### 8. Comments on how well the facilitator delivered the training

Participants were very satisfied with the way the training had been conducted by Dr. Sam Kaner and his assistant, Buffy Balderston (Figure 5).

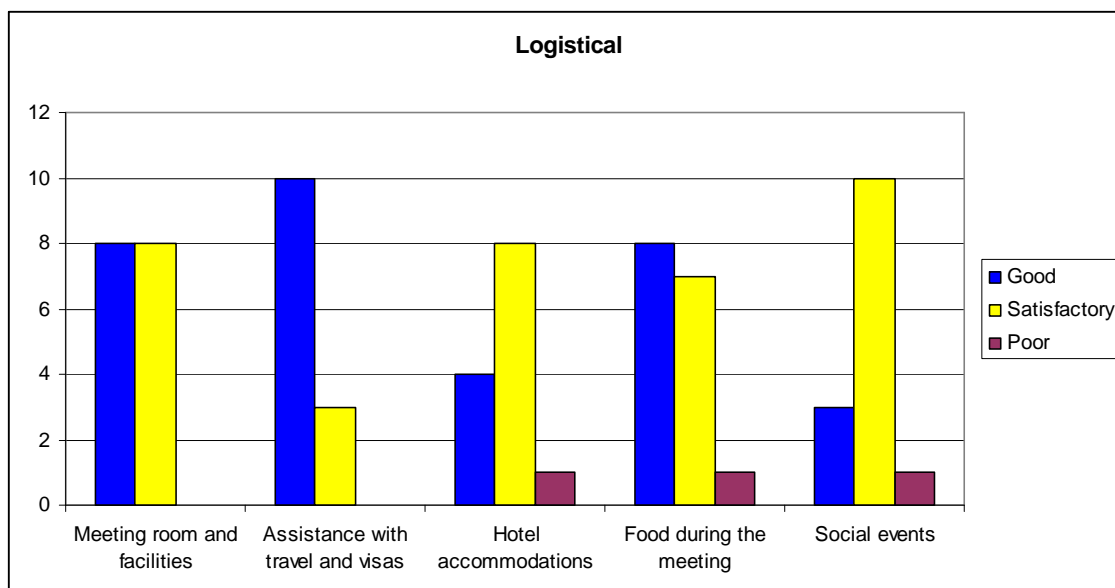
**Figure 5. Evaluation of the training delivery by the facilitators (on a 4 point scale with 1 being strongly disagree and 4 being strongly agree)**



#### 9. Comments on logistic support aspects of the training

In general participants found the logistic support aspects of the training good or satisfactory (Figure 6).

**Figure 6. Logistical aspects of the training**



## Recommendations for Future Facilitation Training

The training delivered during the workshop was highly recommended by those who attended. Asked if they would recommend additional training courses of this kind (facilitating participatory decision making) for CGIAR staff and managers, 100% of the respondents replied in the affirmative.

Participants' comments included:

*The training could be designed for project coordinators and task leaders who develop and execute MTP activities in collaboration with NARS*

*I think that more efforts should be paid by CGIAR to organize such events in CAC inviting local NARS only. This would be also helpful to us to make them more understandable of what we want from them.*

*"Second parts" of this training should be scheduled- both for training trainers and for furthering practice.*

*This capacity is very needed in LA&C- maybe training and guide in Spanish?*

## List of Participants

Augustine Sangson Langyintuo  
Economist  
CIMMYT  
Zimbabwe  
[a.langyintuo@cgiar.org](mailto:a.langyintuo@cgiar.org)

Berhanu Gebremedhin  
Scientist  
ILRI  
Ethiopia  
[b.gebremedhin@cgiar.org](mailto:b.gebremedhin@cgiar.org)

Carlo Carli  
CIP  
Uzbekistan  
[c.carli@cgiar.org](mailto:c.carli@cgiar.org)

Dan Makumbi  
Post-Doctoral Fellow  
CIMMYT  
Kenya  
[d.makumbi@cgiar.org](mailto:d.makumbi@cgiar.org)

Dennis Keith Friesen  
Senior Scientist  
CIMMYT  
Ethiopia  
[d.friesen@cgiar.org](mailto:d.friesen@cgiar.org)

Eldad Karamura  
Regional Coordinator, Eastern and  
Southern Africa  
Bioversity  
Uganda  
[e.karamura@cgiar.org](mailto:e.karamura@cgiar.org)

Ermias Sehai  
Knowledge Management Expert  
ILRI  
Ethiopia  
[e.sehai@cgiar.org](mailto:e.sehai@cgiar.org)

Frederik Atieno  
Associate Scientist  
Bioversity  
Kenya  
[f.atieno@cgiar.org](mailto:f.atieno@cgiar.org)  
Helen Markelova

Senior Research Assistant  
IFPRI  
USA  
[h.markelova@cgiar.org](mailto:h.markelova@cgiar.org)

Hugo de Groote  
Agricultural economist  
CIMMYT  
Kenya  
[h.degroote@cgiar.org](mailto:h.degroote@cgiar.org)

Kamau Kimani  
Project Administrator  
CIMMYT  
Kenya  
[k.kimani@cgiar.org](mailto:k.kimani@cgiar.org)

Kenneth Arthur Street  
Project coordination  
ICARDA  
Syria  
[k.street@cgiar.org](mailto:k.street@cgiar.org)

Patrick C. Wall  
Agronomist, Conservation  
Agriculture Specialist  
CIMMYT  
Zimbabwe  
[p.wall@cgiar.org](mailto:p.wall@cgiar.org)

Pervez H. Zaidi  
Scientist  
CIMMYT  
India  
[phzaidi@cgiar.org](mailto:phzaidi@cgiar.org)

Peter Bezkorowajnyj  
Project Coordinator  
ILRI  
India  
[p.bezkorowajnyj@cgiar.org](mailto:p.bezkorowajnyj@cgiar.org)

Peter Setimela  
Scientist  
CIMMYT  
Zimbabwe  
[PSetimela@cgiar.org](mailto:PSetimela@cgiar.org)

Sophie Alvarez  
Research Assistant- Consultant  
CIAT  
Colombia  
[b.s.alvarez@cgiar.org](mailto:b.s.alvarez@cgiar.org)

Stephen Ngure Mugo  
Senior Scientist  
CIMMYT  
Kenya  
[smugo@cgiar.org](mailto:smugo@cgiar.org)

Strafford Twumasi-Afriyie  
Senior Scientist  
CIMMYT  
Addis Ababa  
[s.twumasi@cgiar.org](mailto:s.twumasi@cgiar.org)

Tereda Berga Lemaga  
Potato Agronomist  
CIP  
Uganda  
[b.lemaga@cgiar.org](mailto:b.lemaga@cgiar.org)

Sam Kaner  
Community at Work  
USA  
[SKANER@aol.com](mailto:SKANER@aol.com)

Buffy Balderston  
Community at Work  
USA  
[buffy@CommunityAtWork.com](mailto:buffy@CommunityAtWork.com)