

10 Action planning

This section includes a range of activities from which facilitators may select, using them as appropriate to encourage workshop participants to put their learning into action. Ideally, all workshops will include at least one exercise, towards the end, which gets participants to think about ‘what next?’. For the DETOT course in Kosovo, which ran for 19 days over five months, we gave a whole day to action planning (and that was still not enough time!). If time is short, remember that action planning need not end with the workshop: participants can use the exercises as tools outside the workshop, to carry on with the planning and implementation.

10.1 Short and half-day activities

10.1.1 Individual reflection

This is the simplest and quickest method (but not necessarily the best).

Time 30 minutes

Objective For participants to reflect upon and share ideas for implementing their learning.

Process Ask participants to spend five minutes quietly reflecting, on their own, about what they have gained from the workshop.

They should then take 5–10 minutes to note down two new things (actions, ways of behaving) that they will start to do, and two things that they will do differently from now on, as a result of the workshop (at work, at home, in the community, etc.).

Encourage people to identify practical, do-able things. It is better to make a personal commitment to something small which will have an impact, than to propose something grand which you will never be able to achieve.

Bring the whole group back together and ask each person to share with the rest of the group one of his or her proposed actions. Remind people of their right to pass if they do not want to share their thoughts.

10.1.2 Objective setting

Time One hour

Objectives To introduce participants to the SMART objectives tool.
For participants to reflect upon, set, and share objectives for action.

Preparation Work out an example to use with the group (see sample below).

Process Introduce the topic: in order to plan and carry out actions successfully, it helps to have a clear idea of what you are trying to achieve – in other words, to define your objectives. The clearer your objectives, the easier it is for everyone to work in a focused way towards them, and to know when they have been met.

Explain that there is a method of setting (describing) realistic objectives, known as SMART objectives. On a flipchart or board, write the letters:

S

M

A

R

T

Then go through them in turn, explaining what each stands for:

Specific: not general and vague, but practical and concrete

Measurable: how many? how much? to what degree?

Achievable: do you have enough people? the resources you need?

Realistic: is it possible to do what is being proposed?

Timebound: within a fixed time limit

Work through an example with the whole group (see the sample in the facilitator's notes below).

Divide participants into groups of four or five. Or, if participants are from various organisations, ask them to work with people from the same organisation as their own.

Ask them to work together to set four objectives for themselves, for putting into practice the things that they have found valuable in the workshop: in their work, their community, their home life, etc. (choose one, depending on the type of workshop).

Set a maximum time limit of three or six months from the date of the workshop, but make it clear that they can set different timescales within that limit for different objectives, depending on how long they think, being realistic, it will take to achieve.

Remind participants to be very specific about their objectives, to think about achievable practical actions, rather than big ideas; go around during the group-work time to find out if they need help with this.

Give out flipchart paper and pens. They have 30 minutes to discuss and write up their objectives.

Bring the whole group back together. Each small group presents its objectives to the rest. Allow time for questions and comments.

Explain that by using a SMART objective as a starting point, you can then plan all the actions needed to reach the objective.

Facilitator's notes

Here is an example to work through. Participants are activists from several rural women's groups, who attended an introductory disability-awareness workshop. An objective such as 'to make disabled women's lives better' is too vague, as is 'to raise awareness of disabled women's issues'. They are not focused on action, and are not SMART. Ask the group to suggest why not, letter by letter if necessary.

A truly SMART objective would be: *Within the next two months, to work with two other group members to identify all the disabled women living in my village, and visit each one to tell her about our group and invite her to meetings.*

Options

Depending on the focus of the workshop, you may wish to omit some of the SMART elements, especially if you are concerned to set objectives that are concerned with putting attitudes into action. For example, not patronising disabled people; not pushing a wheelchair user's chair without asking if that is what s/he wants and where s/he wants to go. These are specific and relevant objectives, but they are not fully SMART.

10.1.3 Eight sunrays of planning

You may want to move on next to the 'Eight sunrays of planning' (described in detail in 8.3.1). Ask participants to return to their small groups, as in the SMART objectives exercise, choose one of the objectives and work out plans to achieve it, using the sunrays as a guide.

10.1.4 ‘Nothing about us without us’

This is a good exercise for action planning with NGOs, intergovernment agencies, and other organisations.

Time One hour

Objective For participants to identify actions that they can take to include disabled people at all stages of programme planning and implementation.

Process Write up on flipchart paper or a board: ‘Nothing about us without us’. Explain that this is the motto of Disabled Peoples’ International. It refers to disabled people’s participation in all aspects of life, and the need for consultation with disabled people on all matters that affect them.

Divide people into groups of three or four (according to the organisation that they represent, if appropriate). Ask them to decide how they will put this motto into effect in their work, and to agree on four actions that they will take (possibly using SMART objectives, if helpful).

After 20–30 minutes, bring everyone back together. Each small group presents its ideas in turn.

Allow time for questions and discussion of any issues of particular interest or concern.

10.1.5 More planning exercises

There are other exercises elsewhere in this manual that might also be used as part of action planning – for example, in order to plan a public event to mark the annual International Day of Disabled People (3 December); or to plan a meeting to lobby international NGOs and agencies to ensure that disabled people are included in their programmes; or to plan a project to identify disabled people among the refugee population and assess their needs. The approach used in exercise 8.3.2 and the ‘Identifying allies’ exercise (9.3.12) could also be used in action planning.

10.2 Half-day or whole-day session on action planning

Facilitator's notes For the DETOT course in Kosovo, which was training disabled and non-disabled rights activists, we divided action planning into two sections. The first explored what participants could do now, in their current situation, using resources that they already had. The second explored what they wanted to start to do, in the short- to medium-term future, which would be totally new: activities which might require more planning, or training, different or more resources, or whatever. Part of the reason for this division was to stress the idea that many things could be done right away without additional resources, despite the grave political and economic problems prevailing in Kosovo at the time.

The activities for these two sections are presented below. They could be combined with one or more of the exercises suggested in the previous section.

10.2.1 Immediate action

Time 45 minutes

Objective For participants to recognise and specify how they can use experiences and learning from the training course in their current situation and activities.

Process Ask participants to spend five minutes thinking individually about all the things they can do to implement their learning now, in their local DPO, community centre, family, etc.; in their rehabilitation work, during outreach visits, etc.

Then ask people to form pairs and discuss their ideas. (20 minutes)

Bring the whole group back together for feedback in the round, one pair at a time.

Write up their ideas on a flipchart or board as they speak.

Allow time for questions and comments, and conclude by noting the wealth of positive changes and ideas that they can put into practice.

10.2.2 Future actions: a competition

Time 30 minutes

Objective To give free expression to participants' aspirations for their disability-rights activism.

Preparation Buy or make small prizes.

Process Divide participants into two groups; give each group flipchart paper and pens.

Explain that they should think about new things that they would like to start doing as disability-rights activists, using what they have gained from the workshop. These activities might need preparation, resources, planning, etc.

They should write down every suggestion made, no matter how impossible it currently seems. They may use symbols instead of words if they prefer.

Tell them that this is a competition, to see which group can produce the greatest number of good ideas.

Bring the whole group back together and review the two lists.

Give prizes to participants in the winning group (and consolation prizes to the other group if you want to).

10.2.3 Future actions exercise: diamond ranking

Time 1 hour 15 minutes

Objectives To set priorities for future actions.
To do this as a consensual group process.
To discuss the relevance of consensus in prioritising (or planning) situations.

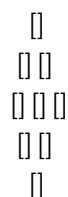
Preparation Make four sets of nine blank index cards (or similar).

Process Ask each of the two groups from the previous exercise to divide in two, making four small groups.

Give out the sets of cards. Explain that as a group they should decide on the nine most important suggestions, taken from either of the two lists compiled in the previous exercise. Stress that decision making should be by consensus, i.e. accepted by all members, not by majority vote. (15 minutes)

Then they should write one suggestion (in words or symbol) on each of the index cards.

Next, they should decide as a group how to rank their nine chosen suggestions in order of importance. They should illustrate their priorities by putting the cards in a diamond shape, where the one at the top is most important, and the one at the bottom is the least important.



Bring everyone back together. Each group has five minutes to show its diamond and explain the priorities.

Discuss the decision-making process that took place: was it hard? easy? Why is it important to reach consensus? Are there times when decision making by consensus is not appropriate? Can they give examples?