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SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES MANAGEMENT PROJECT (SFMP)

Hownam Dialogue-Leadership and Conflict Management Training Report, Volta Region



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THE
UNIVERSITY
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GRADUATE SCHOOL
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Cover photo: Group picture of participants at Keta (Credit: SNV)

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ACRONYMS

| | |
|--------|--|
| NAFPTA | National Fish Processors and Traders Association |
| SFMP | Sustainable Fisheries Management Project |
| SNV | Netherlands Development Organization |
| URI | University of Rhode Island |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of SNV's capacity development interventions to strengthen the fishery groups and associations, the primary objective of *Hownam* Dialogue in Year four of the SFMP is to enable build the capacity of fish processor groups in group dynamics, leadership and conflict management. In view of this, a two-day *Hownam* Dialogue (Leadership and conflict management training) was organized for the leaders of the fish processors in the Ketu-South and Keta Municipalities on Monday 27th and Tuesday 28th November, 2017 respectively. Participants were trained in group dynamics, conflict, leadership and conflict management with the help of plenary discussions, role plays etc. Nineteen participants made up of 3 men and 16 women took part in the training in Denu (Ketu-South). In Atorkor (Keta Municipality) a total of 28 participants made up of 26 women and 2 men took part in the training.

The trainees took part in a couple of role plays and they testified that they have learnt a lot of lessons. During the "money bag" task, the trainees stated trust and truthfulness as lessons they have learnt from the role play. During the tug of war task, according to the trainees, conflict is pretty much inevitable when you work with others! This task confirmed the earlier assertion by 89.4 % of the trainees during the pre-training assessment that they have experienced conflict in their various groups. More so, conflict could be dragged from one end to the other if not properly managed. It is imperative that mediators in conflicts must be independent and fair so as to be able to help resolve the conflict.

Trainees (36.1 %) resolved to educate their group members on group dynamics, leadership, conflict and conflict management skills they had acquired, 21.3 % of the trainees said they will trust more, tolerate more, listen more and praise more, 21.3 % said they will revise their way of resolving conflicts in their groups whilst 21.3 % said they will respect the views of others and encourage members to do same.

SECTION 1: BACKGROUND

The *Hownam* Dialogue is a unique training program designed and introduced by SNV in Year two of the SFMP as a channel for women to have informal peer discussions on issues affecting them, including issues of child labor and child trafficking, and to solicit support from each other. The program is to introduce especially women to an informal discussions structure on leadership and to encourage them to take up leadership roles and to improve their involvement in fisheries co-management.

Hownam is a Fante word from Ghana meaning fish smoking. The *Hownam* Dialogue is about learning from group experience rather than teaching. It is about group processes and the individual. Therefore, it aims to provide a unique chance to participants to experience group dynamics and to understand how they as individuals operate within a group, experience leadership, conflict and how to manage conflicts in their various fish processing groups. The understanding and learning from the group process is supposed to lead to the understanding of leadership, power, and authority.

Hence *Hownam* Dialogue in Year four of the SFMP aims to provide unique chance to participants to experience group dynamics and to understand how they as individuals operate within a group, experience unspoken attitudes, personalities, leadership, conflicts and effective ways of dealing with conflicts within a group.

1.1 Workshop Objectives

This training aimed at building the capacity of fish processing groups in the Ketu-South and Keta Municipalities in:

- Group dynamics
- Leadership and
- Conflict management

1.2 Expected Outcomes

Expected outcomes of the workshop included:

- Participants experience group dynamics
- Participants identify causes and importance of group conflicts
- Participants' leadership ability and conflict management skills are developed.

1.3 Training Method

In view of the aim of the *Hownam* Dialogue to provide a unique chance to participants to experience group dynamics and to understand how they as individuals operate within a group, experience unspoken attitudes, personalities, leadership, conflicts and common and effective ways of dealing with conflicts within a group, the training took the form of informal group/plenary discussions, presentations, picture discussions, role plays and group exercises. The dialogue was facilitated by Georgina Atawa Tibu with support from Benedicta Avega, all of SNV Netherlands Development Organization.

1.4 Venue

The training took place at Xedronawofe Meeting place at Denu in the Ketu-South Municipality; and Assemblies of God Chapel, Atorkor in the Keta Municipality.

1.5 Participants

Nineteen participants made up of 3 men and 16 women took part in the training in Denu, Ketu South. In Atorkor, Keta Municipality, a total of 28 participants made up of 26 women and 2 men took part in the training. All the participants were members of the National Fish Processors and Traders Association (NAFPTA).

SECTION 2: GROUP DYNAMICS

This *Hownam* Dialogue training was the first to be carried out in the Volta Region. Benedicta Avega in her introductory speech spoke briefly about SNV Netherland Development Organization and the Sustainable Fisheries Management Project, and the roles SNV plays in the SFMP.

The facilitator started the training by explaining what the *Hownam* Dialogue is all about and what the expected training outcomes will be. She explained that *Hownam* is a *Fante* word which means smoking fish. She translated it to be *Layiyi fe dzedodo* in *Ewe*. Since participants' involvement in the groups they find themselves in is relevant in the training and learning process, the facilitator explained that, *Hownam* Dialogue is about groups and it aims at providing a unique chance to participants to experience group dynamics and to understand how they as individuals operate within a group, experience unspoken attitudes, personalities, leadership, conflicts and conflict management. She further entreated participants to work in groups during role plays and discussions. The participants confirmed that they belong to different fish processor groups in the Ketu-South and Keta Municipalities.

2.1 Previous Knowledge Assessment

A pre-dialogue assessment was carried out to assess participants' previous knowledge on group dynamics, leadership and conflict management skills. Most of the participants at both sessions did not have much previous knowledge but identified with the fact that they have had issues of conflicts in their groups mostly bothering on money and even distribution of resources. Most of them did not understand their roles as members and leaders of the groups. This discussion caught a lot of interest and the participants discussed a number of experiences in their various groups.

2.2 What are Groups?

Participants brainstormed about what groups are. They concluded that groups consist of people who have been interacting with one another, and who are socially attached to each other most likely because they share common goals and they have a shared identity. Some of the fish processor groups that the participants belong to include *Milenorvisi*, *Dzigbordi*, *Dekaworwor*, *Fafali*, *Unity*, *Norvinyo*, *Yayra*, *Tutudo*, *Amenuveve*, *Gameli*, *Sitsofe*, *Seganago*, *Lorloronyo*, *Mawu fe asi le mia dzi*, *Precious*, *Lorloronyo* and *Mawumenyo* groups. The following are reasons they gave for joining the various fish processor groups:

- To achieve a common goal.
- They share ideas and support each other in need.
- Being in a group makes them able to access some opportunities they cannot access alone.
- Groups represent power.
- Affiliation with groups can meet one's social needs.
- They find security in the groups.



Figure 1. Georgina Tibu facilitating the training at Keta

2.3 Group Roles

The facilitator explained that a role is a set of expected behavior patterns attributed to the one who occupies the position, demanded by the social unit. With the help of the facilitator, the trainees were able to categorize the roles individuals play in a group as task, maintenance and hindering roles.

- Task roles.

The facilitator explained that the task roles refer to the actions of individuals that help move the project, decision, or a goal along. The task roles identified were initiating, information or opinion seeking, clarifying, summarizing and consensus testing.

Task role play

To ensure that participants understood the task roles mentioned above, one group staged this short play.

Elikem (initiator) proposes the group buys the Dzidedi oven for processing fish. Tornyeli (information seeker) goes out to find out more about the oven. Emefa (informer) offers facts and her opinion about the oven. Kofi Dada (reality tester) does a critical analysis of the facts. Worlanyo (clarifier) clarifies the facts. Edzenunye (summarizer) concludes that the stove is efficient.

- Maintenance roles.

Maintenance roles refer to the actions of individuals that help preserve the relationships in a group. The maintenance roles discussed were;

1. Encouraging
2. Expressing Group Feelings
3. Standard Setting and Testing
4. Gatekeeping
5. Harmonizing
6. Compromising

- Hindering roles

Hindering roles refer to actions of individuals that hinder the group's process and progress. The hindering roles discussed by the trainees were dominating, withdrawing, degrading, uncooperative, and side conversations. This was very important to the participants and they

identified this role to be very existent in their groups and a problem area for all of them. They were trained on how to manage such people and some of them gave examples of how they managed such issues in their groups. A participant gave an example of the case where their leader asked some members who were involved in side conversation to help facilitate the meeting, thus keeping them busy.

(i) Dominating

Behaviour: Asserting authority or superiority to manipulate the group or certain members; interrupting contributions of others; controlling through use of flattery or patronization.

Solution: With guidance of the facilitator, it was agreed that a consensus, whereby each person contributes one idea to the discussion and then waits until every other group member does the same before contributing again must be established. Also, the dominator must be interrupted by the leader, or the dominator must be asked to summarize his or her point quickly so that others can add their ideas, too. For example;

“Thank you for giving us all those ideas, Eyram. Let’s hear from others in the group now.”

(ii) Withdrawing

Behaviour: Removing self psychologically or physically from the group; not talking; answering questions only briefly.

Solution: The trainees understood that the leader must engage the person withdrawing, after meetings, by asking for his/her opinion on issues discussed at the meeting, to ensure that his/her ideas are seen as important. Also, such people should be given a particular role or function during meetings.

(iii) Degrading

Behaviour: Putting down others’ ideas; deflating others’ status; joking in a sarcastic way

Solution: The trainees came to a consensus that when their group first gets together, the leader will review their contract and ground rules with members, highlighting the rule that all ideas will be accepted; the first time someone criticizes another person, the leader must reinforce this rule. For example;

“You have a point, but we need to solve our problem, but not attack each other’s ideas.”

(iv) Uncooperative

Behaviour: Disagreeing and opposing ideas; resisting stubbornly the group’s wishes for personally oriented reasons; using hidden agenda to thwart group progress.

Solution: The trainees suggested that the person must be encouraged to explain reasons behind his/her objection; refocus his/her participation as recorder or process observer; ask the group to deal with this uncooperative behavior. For example;

“It seems we may be forgetting the ground rules we set up as a group. Should we take a few minutes to revisit them now?”

Esi, that is an interesting view. Could you explain how you came to those conclusions?”

(v) Side Conversations

Behaviour: Whispering, giggling and having private side conversations with another person.

Solution: The participants stated that the leader must set guidelines at the beginning of the meeting, stop the meeting and ask those involved in the side conversation to share what they

are talking about with the group or privately talk with the distracters and discuss their expectations for the meeting's topics. For example, the leader could say;

“It is difficult to focus on the discussion with side conversations going on. Can we agree that we will focus on the main discussion?”



Figure 2. Participants dancing Agbadza traditional dance of the Ewes

2.4 Well-Functioning Groups

With the guidance of the facilitator, the trainees stated that a group is considered effective when it has the following characteristics:

- Members must pay their dues on time and attend meetings regularly.
- Members should be supportive of each other, especially when members have issues or emergencies.
- Members should be forgiving and leaders must always trash out conflicts.
- Leaders must be truthful to members and provide information to members at all times.
- Leaders should have the contacts of their members and show concern.
- Relaxed, comfortable, friendly atmosphere for meetings.
- Task to be executed are well understood and accepted.
- Members listen well and actively participate in given assignments.
- Assignments are made clear and are accepted.
- Group is acquainted with its operations and function.
- People express their feelings and ideas openly.
- Consensus decision-making process is followed.
- Unity among members, togetherness, tolerance, love, helping each other.

SECTION 3: LEADERSHIP

Participants gave their views on what leadership means. Most of them explained that it is the action of leading a group of people or an organization. The ability to do this is leadership. Some of the various leadership roles played in their processor groups include treasurers, organizers, presidents, secretaries etc.

With the help of figure 3, participants differentiated between a leader and a boss. Notable among the characteristics of a leader given by the participants include; a leader shows how it is done, says, “Let’s go”, coaches people and generates enthusiasm. According to the

participants, a boss drives his/her employees, depends on authority, uses employees, knows how it is done and says, “Go”.

The facilitator explained that a leader must

- Trust more.
- Listen more.
- Delegate more.
- Encourage more.
- Talk more.
- Support more.
- Smile more.
- Praise more.



Figure 3. The characteristics of a boss and a leader

One of the groups in Keta gave an example of an issue that happened in their group. She said a politician gave their group 10 pans, whereas the members were far more than 10. Sharing the pans became a major issue. Finally, the leaders called for a meeting and formally informed the members of the gift they received and they asked the members to decide on how the pans should be shared. The members agreed that the leaders should have the pans, so when next they received such gifts, another group of members will benefit.

SECTION 4: GROUP CONFLICT AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

In any situation involving more than one person (group), conflict can arise. Differences are inevitable in a local group having members with different experiences, attitudes, and expectations. The causes of conflict range from philosophical differences and divergent goals to power imbalances.

Participants stated that conflicts can result in loss of trust, productivity and destruction of the group. However, participants did not understand why conflicts could be beneficial to any group or organization.

The trainees discussed what Figures 4 and 5 depict. They observed that there is conflict between groups of people. They however, did not support the way the conflict was being resolved, in figure 4.

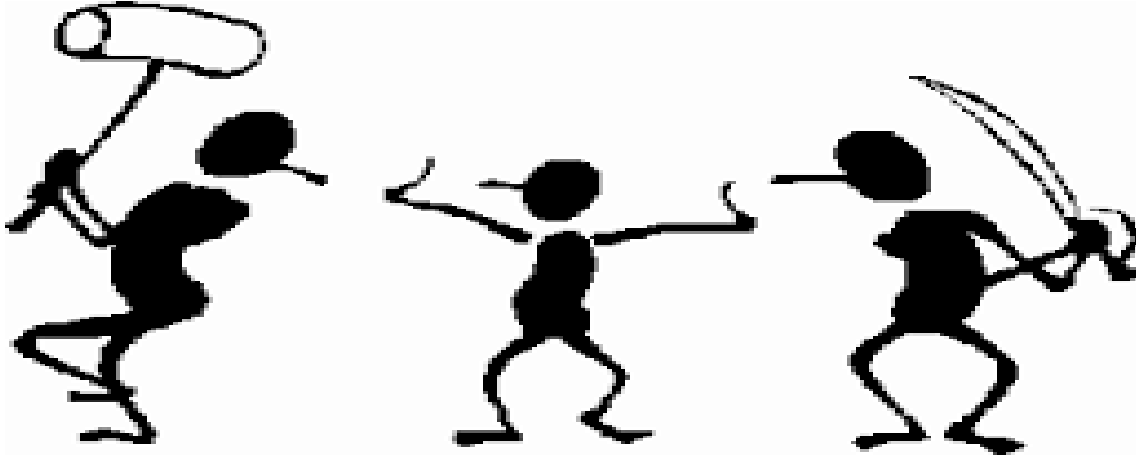


Figure 4. Shows conflict between two people and a mediator



Figure 5. Two men in a boat, navigating the boat in opposite directions

4.1 Conflict role play (Money bag)

The participants were divided into two groups. The participants from individual groups put an undisclosed amount of money into an envelope. All the money was put together by the group leaders and shared amongst participants exactly as they contributed.



Figure 6. Participants performing “money bag” task

Aim:

1. To understand how trust and honesty is important within a group
2. To check how payments are made correctly to everyone by the group leaders as the money contributed was undisclosed and if any conflict arises in the process of sharing and how it is managed
3. Discuss lessons learnt from the task.

4.1.1 Lessons learnt

The trainees stated trust and truthfulness as lessons they have learnt from the role play.

4.2 Role Play-Tug of war

Participants were grouped into three and given a three angled rope to pull. A handkerchief was tied in the middle of the three ropes. A circle was drawn on the ground and the center of the circle was clearly demarcated. The middle of the rope (handkerchief) was placed on top of the middle of the circle. Any group that pulled the tied handkerchief out of the circle first was declared the winner and this group was determined by the groups.

Aim:

1. To highlight conflict within groups, the tussle for power and contest for supremacy,
2. To help participants develop personal and group problem solving skills.

4.2.1 Lessons learnt

According to the trainees, conflict is pretty much inevitable when you work with others! More so, conflict could be dragged from one end to the other if not properly managed. It is imperative that mediators in conflicts must be independent and fair so as to be able to help resolve the conflict.

4.3 Conflict Resolution Tools Box

In dealing with conflicts in their various groups, trainees stated competing, avoiding, collaborating, compromising and accommodating as the tools to use.

SECTION 5: EVALUATIONS

All the forty-seven participants answered both the pre-training and post-training questions.

5.1 Pre-Training Assessment

Forty-seven participants answered the pre-training questions.

The respondents were asked the following questions:

Table 1. What is your understanding of group conflict and conflict management?

| Answer | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| Misunderstanding between group members and how they are resolved | 31 | 66.0 % |
| Other problems found in groups and how they are dealt with | 16 | 34.0 % |
| Total | 47 | 100 % |

66.0 % of the respondents explained conflict and conflict management as the misunderstanding between group members and how they are resolved, whilst 34.0 % said group conflict and conflict management are other problems found in groups and how they are dealt with as shown in the table above.

Table 2. Have you had any experience of conflict within your group?

| Answer | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Yes | 42 | 89.4 % |
| No | 5 | 10.6 % |
| Total | 47 | 100 % |

It is obvious from the responses that groups are prone to conflicts. 89.4 % of the respondents confirmed that they have had conflicts in their groups, whilst 10.6 % have not had any experience of conflict within their groups as shown in the table above.

Table 3. What was the conflict about?

| Answer | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|
| Sharing of benefits/materials | 25 | 53.2 % |
| Misinformation | 5 | 10.6 % |
| Payment of dues and levies | 10 | 21.3 % |
| Lack of transparency and non-accountability | 7 | 14.9 % |
| Total | 47 | 100 % |

Conflicts can be as an outcome of a lot of issues. 53.2 % of the trainees said sharing of benefits or materials could result in conflicts, 21.3 % said payment of dues and levies could also result in conflicts, 14.9 % stated lack of transparency and non-accountability whilst 10.6 % said misinformation could bring about group conflicts as shown in the table above.

Table 4. How was it resolved?

| Answer | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|
| Pending | 5 | 10.6 % |
| Conflicting parties were called to voice out their grievances | 20 | 42.6 % |
| Offending party apologized | 10 | 21.3 % |
| Leadership stepped in to resolve the issue | 12 | 25.5 % |
| Total | 47 | 100 % |

In resolving conflicts in their groups, 42.6 % of the trainees said they called the disputing parties to voice out their grievances, 25.5 % of the trainees said their leadership stepped in to resolve the issue, whilst 10.6 % of the trainees said the conflicts were not resolved and the issues are pending as shown in the table above.

Table 5. What role did you play in resolving or managing the conflict?

| Answer | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|
| I spoke with the disputing parties one-on-one to forgive each other | 10 | 21.2 % |
| I reported the issue to the leaders and invited them to intervene | 20 | 42.6 % |
| I admonished both parties to respect the views of each other | 17 | 36.2 % |
| Total | 47 | 100 % |

Concerning the roles trainees played in managing a previous conflict in their group, 42.6 % (representing the majority) said they reported the issue to the leaders and invited them to intervene, 36.2 % said they admonished both parties to respect the views of each other, whilst 21.2 % said they spoke with the disputing parties one-on-one to forgive each other.

5.2 Post-training Assessment

Forty-seven participants answered the post-training questions.

The trainees responded to the following questions.

Table 6. Has your understanding of a group conflict management changed?

| Answer | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Yes | 47 | 100 % |
| No | 0 | 0 % |
| Total | 47 | 100 % |

All (100 %) the trainees testified that their understanding of a group conflict management has changed as a result of the training as shown in the table above.

Table 7. How has the training influenced this change?

| Answer | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|
| It has developed my capacity to manage conflicts | 24 | 51.1 % |
| It has changed my perception about conflicts and how to manage them | 10 | 21.2 % |
| It has exposed my strengths and weaknesses as a leader | 13 | 27.7 % |
| Total | 47 | 100 % |

51.1 % of the trainees said the training has helped them to develop their capacity to manage conflicts, 21.2 % said the training has changed their perception about conflicts and how to manage them when they arise, and 27.7 % confirmed that the training has exposed their strengths and weaknesses as a leader, as shown in the table above.

Table 8. Do you still think you are the kind of leader you thought you were before the training?

| Answer | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Yes | 10 | 21.2 % |
| No | 37 | 78.7 % |
| Total | 47 | 100 % |

When trainees were asked whether they still think they are the kind of leader they thought they were before the training, 78.7 % said no whilst 21.2 % said yes as shown in the table above.

Table 9. What things are you going to do differently as a result of this training?

| Answer | Number of respondents | Percentage |
|---|-----------------------|--------------|
| I will educate my group members on the new skills I have acquired | 17 | 36.1 % |
| I will trust more, tolerate more, listen more and praise more | 10 | 21.3 % |
| I will revise my way of resolving conflicts in my group | 10 | 21.3 % |
| I will respect the views of others and encourage members to do same | 10 | 21.3 % |
| Total | 47 | 100 % |

On what things trainees are going to do differently as a result of this training, 36.1 % said they will educate their group members on the new group dynamics, leadership, conflict and conflict management skills they have acquired, 21.3 % of the trainees said they will trust more, tolerate more, listen more and praise more, 21.3 % said they will revise their way of resolving conflicts in their groups whilst 21.3 % said they will respect the views of others and encourage members to do same.

5.3 Group Reflections

Some of the participants recounted how they used to handle members who play hindering roles in their groups and resolved to be more accommodating and also tolerate them since the training on group dynamics has equipped them well enough.

SECTION 6: CONCLUSIONS

In any situation involving more than one person (i.e. group), conflict can arise. Differences are inevitable in a local group having members with different experiences, attitudes, and expectations. The causes of conflict range from philosophical differences and divergent goals to power imbalances. Even though conflicts can result in loss of trust, lack of productivity and consequently the death of the group, they can support organizational goals, and too little conflict may lead to apathy, lack of creativity and indecision. More so, clashes of ideas about tasks also help in choosing better tasks and projects if the clashes are well managed.

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APPENDIX 1 ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Pre-training Assessment

- What is your understanding of group conflict and conflict management?
- Have you had any experience of conflict within your group?
- What was the conflict about?
- How was it resolved?
- What role did you play in resolving or managing the conflict?

Post-training Assessment

- How has the training influenced this change?
- Has your understanding of a group conflict management changed?
- Do you still think you are the kind of leader you thought you were before the training?
- What things are you going to do differently as a result of this training?