Participatory Development: The Case for Substantive Facilitation [1]

Afghanistan's Citizens' Charter program is national in scope, which means that the core model of facilitation must be able to adapt to a tremendously broad range of socioeconomic environments. This is particularly important as the program was designed with the explicit goal of pro-poor targeting and socially inclusive planning. This brief unpacks the black box of "community," illustrates why facilitators matter and the implications of poor facilitation and lays out the substance of facilitation in the Citizens' Charter and the follow up that is needed.

RECOGNIZING THE COMPLEXITIES OF "COMMUNITY"

Scholars and practitioners have repeatedly noted the importance of being more critical of the concept of "community."[2] This is because residents of communities do not form a homogenous group; they are divided along class, ethnic, and gender lines. In some communities, economic differentiation is large, with a small number of households owning large landholdings. In others, the difference between the richest and poorest is much less pronounced.

There is also considerable variation in terms of leadership. In some communities, public authorities and elites are influential as local leaders of large kin groups or tribes. They can also be members of important district and governance bodies, with connections to local, regional, even national networks that provide them with access to knowledge, resources, and services. In other communities, elites might be largely concerned with maintaining and accumulating wealth.

Finally, in some communities, public authorities have little influence beyond their immediate locality or community. Meanwhile, in others government leaders hold dominant positions of power and influence. In other words, the basis of elite power — landholdings, kin group, tribe, access to networks —

About ISE's Development Practice Notes

- **What Determines Public Finance Quality?**
- **Team-Based Performance Management**
- **Who Cares About Development Risk?**
- **Consequences of Donor- Induced Fragmentation**
- **The Blight of Auction-Based Budgeting**
- **Community Driven Development Series**
- **Budget Reforms in Afghanistan—A Practioner's Perspective**
- **Performance and Policy-Based Budgeting: How to Spot the Fakes**

References:

1. By Brigitta Bode, social and participatory development consultant, August 2018.

2. Watts, M. The Sinister Political Life of Community. Berkeley CA: Institute of International Studies, University of California, 2004.

varies from community to community. These dynamics have important ramifications for development work in terms of equitable and inclusive resource allocation, for marginalized people's voice and their ability to press for their interests, and the opportunity for successfully promoting participatory local development governance, as well as other types of social action.

Gender relations also vary from community to community, and from region to region. Women have greater freedom of movement and the ability to participate in the public sphere in some communities and areas, but much less so in others. To complicate matters further, socioeconomics, tribe or ethnicity, and gender intersect. For example, women from better-off households may have considerably different gender experiences to those of their poorer counterparts. The former are likely to practice more restrictive forms of purdah (limitations on their movements and interactions with males who are non-kin), but have better access to services and live healthier lives; the latter are more likely to sell labor in agriculture, collect fuel wood, or work in others' homes, and face months of household food shortages.

Despite this variance, development tends to see communities as spaces of participation, self-organization, and pluralism – and to view women as a homogenous group whose interests naturally converge. Ignoring these class and social relations and failing to incorporate leadership dynamics into program design and implementation run the risk of elite capture, inequitable allocation of resources, entrenching unequal power relations, eroding the possibility of trust between state and communities, and further disempowering poor and very poor women.

If one half of the community "challenge" is to understand local political dynamics, the other half is to find ways to turn those diagnostics into operational programs. For community development operations, a key measure to turn a diagnostic understanding of community heterogeneity into an operational program for collective action has been through the deployment of community facilitators.

While the specific role of facilitators varies, they nearly always share three functional characteristics. First, because community-driven development (CDD) programs are government projects, they function to explain the rules of how the program works. Second, facilitators use a variety of participatory planning tools to help communities identify common priorities, negotiate agreements and responsibilities, and build up local mechanisms for oversight and accountability. And third, facilitators provide an independent channel for reporting to higher-level authorities problems that might not otherwise reach their attention.

This brief will use the experience of Afghanistan's National Solidarity Program (NSP) and the Citizens' Charter to argue that, while facilitators are a core feature of CDC programs, there is plenty of scope to improve the quality of facilitation. This is particularly true of long-running government programs that must deal with highly complex political economies and administrative systems that in general will not be familiar with the techniques of participatory planning.[3]

Learning from the experiences of the NSP and Citizens' Charter's experiences with facilitation is particularly useful to the wider CDD community for several reasons. First, NSP lasted for almost 13 years, thereby providing a sufficiently large body of measured experience and internal discussion to sift out things that are more likely to do with individual personalities or experiences from those structural lessons. Second, the NSP at full development covered the entire country, meaning a careful review can assess how the program dealt with the challenges of social, geographical, and conflict diversity as described earlier in this brief. Third, continuity between the core NSP and Citizens' Charter design teams has meant that the limitations of NSP could be addressed in a less defensive and more constructive way than is often the case with external evaluations. For the purposes of this brief, the benefit of this reflexive approach is that it can show how the lessons from NSP were used to improve the design of the follow-on Citizens' Charter program.

References:

3. NSP ran from 2003-2015. Eventually reaching 35,000 rural communities, the program provided block grants to elected Community Development Councils (CDCs) that spent them against locally developed community development plans. The Citizens' Charter took the basic NSP concept of community planning and management, but brings in minimum services standards in health, education, drinking water, irrigation, and energy. For a fuller description of the Citizens' Charter and its relationship to NSP, see www.ccnpp.org/Page.aspx?PageID=15.

FACILITATORS MATTER

Social organizers are the frontline staff in the Citizens' Charter who facilitate community development work throughout the program cycle. Their job is to:

- Explain the program, its rules, objectives, and processes.

- Facilitate community planning sessions.

- Encourage collective action and participation from a broad spectrum of the village.

- Help to find solutions.

- Collate the findings from community profiling and the gap analysis and provide them to the districts for data entry.

- Guide the CDCs and Cluster CDCs and their sub-committees.

- Convey any problems to the authorities through their line managers.

As with NSP, the first goal of the Citizens' Charter is to strengthen the Community Development Councils (CDCs) and their subcommittees. These CDCs are meant to become the country's long-term means for representative, participatory, development planning at the community and, eventually, subdistrict levels. Citizens' Charter does this by ensuring that the CDCs have a popular mandate provided through a bottom-up electoral process, and by training CDCs in a variety of simple managerial and fiduciary skills.

The Citizens' Charter works with numerous facilitating partners, which are, basically, outsourced national and international development non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These facilitating partners work under the government's policies and monitoring but function autonomously, and not as part of the civil service or government program staff. Some of these organizations come to the program with a rights-based approach, while others continue to work through needs-based approaches. Some have emphasized facilitation and capacity-building of their facilitators and trainers, while others have focused more on monitoring capacity or on livelihood's approaches. The point is, because of the nature of the program, the Citizens' Charter management team is confronted with a range of capacities in terms of trainers and facilitators. The

government is also careful about ensuring that facilitators focus on catalyzing community processes, not substituting for them, by thinking through what a long-term sustainability strategy for facilitators will look like. For this reason, the program has made three significant changes from NSP:

1. **Residential training.** The initial "training of trainers" is residential and hands-on, covers basic facilitation skills, tools and processes, and context.

2. **Clarifying tasks and outputs.** Each visit by the social organizer team to a community is clearly outlined in terms of what work has to be done: objective, activities, outcome.

3. **Sequenced increases in intensity.** Contingent upon advances in community capacity, each pair of social organizers works in ten communities in the first year, 20 communities in the second, and will have to cover 30 communities in the third.

Because of the pro-poor focus of the Citizens' Charter, the training of trainers and social organizers has repeatedly emphasized poverty dynamics, the implications of seasonal hunger for current and future generations, and the importance of inclusive and transparent governance in terms of managing natural and public resources. The intention is that by giving these issues prominence in basic training, this will help facilitators adopt a more participatory, pro-poor, and inclusive work ethos.

Community-level facilitators must be sensitive to the manifestations and dynamics of marginalization and exclusion. They need to be able to gauge the types of resistance that equitable and inclusive development might engender. For facilitators to successfully bring poor people and groups into the development process, they must facilitate participatory activities in such a manner that those who are "disadvantaged," "marginalized," and "excluded" trust them. This requires a focus on facilitators and their capacity as well as the participatory processes and activities that are to engage community groups in development work.

THE IMPLICATIONS OF BAD FACILITATION

Robert Chambers was one of the first to discuss the "facilitator," highlighting the importance of their values, knowledge, attitude, and behavior as critical to enabling or impeding participatory processes[4]. His observations of participatory practices in different contexts highlighted that facilitators tended to be biased, at times feeling superior, that they failed to respect people's views and knowledge, rushed the engagement, and were extractive. He called for a "new professional" with shared assumptions, beliefs, and values, with the understanding that reality is socially constructed, that people are first (women before men) instead of things, and that local people's knowledge is valuable.

The most obvious example of bad facilitation is when it results in some form of elite capture[5]. In such cases, the process of development is hijacked by powerful actors who influence discussions and decisions in favor of their own agendas. Often, they will attempt to ensure that development funds are allocated within their residential vicinity, regardless of need[6]. To a limited extent, this happened under the NSP; community maps showed cases of skewed resource allocation, with some communities exhibiting a correlation of power (elites' neighborhoods) and the investment of public resources.

Bad facilitation practices can also lead to the exclusion of groups that are poor, marginalized, or unable to assert their interests. For instance, a facilitator who spends more time with powerful actors or elites[7] and is insensitive to existing power relations in the community may unwittingly create a situation where people choose to self-exclude[8] because they view the process as captured and therefore see no benefit in participating. In Afghanistan, where poor households' livelihood portfolios are not sufficiently diversified to increase peoples' bargaining power vis-à-vis the landed, dependencies on powerful actors or elites are often a common feature of life. Facilitators who organize meetings in the compounds of elites have already pre-empted open discussion and analysis of issues that will inevitably point to exploitation and discrimination.[9]

It is also important for facilitators to question key practices or instructions by elites. For instance, the location of women's meetings is often a function of men from the village (usually elites) offering their houses. This seems perfectly reasonable at first glance, given that women do not meet in public as men do and given the limited space available. But the ramifications are almost always that there is insufficient space for women to work productively, with dozens of women sitting in rooms that can comfortably only hold 15-20 people. This makes it difficult to form groups, discuss issues, and present their ideas, views, and plans. There is also the issue of privacy: meetings in private houses are often monitored by the hosts' male relatives (husbands, brothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, etc.), making it impossible to discuss sensitive or personal issues such as women's reproductive health issues, for example.

The issue of meeting in private homes speaks to the problem of facilitators not recognizing community or household power relations. Even in the Citizens' Charter village immersion training, it was observed that women were meeting under impossible conditions (100+ people in one small room), while for their meetings, men were using the large mosque. The facilitator in question therefore approached the CDC chair, who agreed that the women too could meet in the mosque. This example illustrates a key issue: that it is important to increase facilitators' confidence and their ability to imagine different ways of doing things,

References:

4. See Chambers, R. Challenging the Professions: Frontiers in Rural Development. London, Intermediate Technology Publications, 1993. Also see Pretty, J. "Participatory Learning for Development" in World Development 23(8): 1247-1263, 1995.

5. This is not to say that all forms of elite capture are because of poor facilitation, nor does it say that all forms of elite capture can be avoided through facilitation alone. However, the chances of elite capture increase when front-line staff fail to consider socioeconomic dynamics and power relations in how they approach their work. Or worse, they leave the mobilization of people and the decision-making processes to elites themselves.

6. Not all powerful actors and elites are engaged in predatory or greedy practices. In fact, it is important for frontline staff to recognize elites who can be potential allies, those that are positively minded towards development, known to be helpful to poor groups, those who have access to networks, knowledge, and information, and who can provide advice and support to the community development process.

advocate for the disadvantaged, and to arrive at workable alternatives (women can also meet in school rooms or community centers).[10]

Good facilitation is, in short, critical to the success of the Citizens' Charter. Good facilitation prevents elite capture, broadens participation, can manage and defuse polarization, and can channel discussion towards constructive solutions without controlling them. While both facilitator selection and follow-up monitoring and coaching play key roles in building a good facilitator corps, the remainder of this brief will focus on how high-quality training can introduce the skills and culture that enable facilitators to carry out these functions successfully.

FACILITATION TRAINING: FOCUS ON TECHNIQUES AND PRACTICES

Given this background, any initial training workshop with a new group of trainers is best designed with the assumption that people will have to unlearn many bad habits.[11] Such habits include making the wrong first contact in the community (e.g. meeting with elders and Maliks, instead of including the CDC office bearers), a lack of attention to location and spatial arrangements of meetings (e.g. holding the community meeting on an influential person's property or in a room of insufficient size), no clarity on the basics of facilitating meetings (e.g. welcome, ensuring that people have time and are comfortably seated, insisting that all neighborhoods are represented, explaining clearly the objective of the meeting, etc.), and feedback on treating people with respect and kindness. In other words, all the basics should be covered.

Because the NSP experience so often showed that even facilitators with good on-paper qualifications often had no significant training in core, high-quality, hands-on facilitation, the initial Citizens' Charter Training of Trainers workshop are practical and residential. The training approach assumes that, for a trainer to train, they must know how to facilitate each activity in the community. Allowing sufficient time for the initial training is crucial – and is too often overlooked in other CDD programs. For Citizens' Charter, the residential training workshop lasts a minimum of three weeks, with frequent field visits to allow the participants to immerse fully, limit distractions, and practice and learn through real-life examples. In addition to field visits, mini-lectures, discussions, games, and collective exercises are key. The use of video during the participatory sessions in the communities is a powerful means to illustrate the "dos and don'ts" of facilitation. It is most likely that sufficient equipment for all groups (cameras and video operators) will not be available but this can be solved easily by sending one or two camerapersons to one or two villages, and others obtain feedback via their peers.

Most communities have already experienced some form of local planning. But in many cases, pro forma consultations that have little impact on what happens next have made them cynical about "participation." The more that exercises identify, define, and tease out the local characteristics of poverty and marginalization, and increase the involvement of people from all neighborhoods, class backgrounds,

References:

7. Facilitators often come from middle- or better-off households and are likely more comfortable interacting with their "economic" peers. As a result, they find it easier to work with those in the community that are literate, have more time on their hands, can host the "facilitator for lunch", are connected, can address problems, and so on.

8. Hirschman, A.O. Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1970.

9. Not all powerful actors and elites are engaged in predatory or greedy practices. In fact, it is important for frontline staff to recognize elites who can be potential allies, those that are positively minded towards development, known to be helpful to poor groups, those who have access to networks, knowledge, and information, and who can provide advice and support to the community development process.

10. Facilitators often come from middle- or better-off households and are likely more comfortable interacting with their "economic" peers. As a result, they find it easier to work with those in the community that are literate, have more time on their hands, can host the "facilitator for lunch", are connected, can address problems, and so on.

11. Hirschman, A.O. Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1970.

gender, ethnicity, and length of residence, the stronger the signal to the community that this is not "business as usual". The communities' reactions to this approach have been remarkable, engendering enthusiasm and a drive to work and transform their conditions.

THE SUBSTANCE OF FACILITATION IN THE CITIZENS' CHARTER

Socializing and visualizing

Most sectoral facilitation focuses almost entirely on explaining how one or another development project "works" – that is, the steps that must be followed before funds get released or things get built. The Citizens' Charter takes a very different tack. The first purpose of socialization is to help community members build their own diagnostic of what constitutes poverty. The objective is to engage the community in spatial and socioeconomic analysis, encourage dialogue and debates about how existing realities can be transformed, and encourage the joint planning for collective actions to realize change. The key tools for this process are visual. The process works through the collective creation of maps, matrices, diagrams, and calendars that visually illustrate:

- Existing resources and their relation to residential patterns (including past CDC members and marginal groups, (e.g. in-migrants).

- Well-being profile that defines income and social poverty and points to the number of households that are better off, middle, poor and very poor and the extent of landlessness.

- The seasonality of work, the number of days available in the locality, and the wages earned by the landless and land poor, who constitute anywhere from 30 percent to 60 percent of the rural population.

- Debt relations, including hidden forms of interest.

- Socially necessary expenditures (bride price, wedding

expenses, wakes) that lead to prolonged economic, social and mental hardships.

- Women's mobility and their work opportunities and wages.

In the hands-on training, each Citizens' Charter facilitating team works in one village. Each exercise must be given sufficient time to be completed, discussed, shared and revised by participants, who then finalize their analysis and eventually present it in the form of a large poster. This poster (usually 3x5 feet) is provided to the CDC leadership with the understanding that it represents the community's development profile. It may be used to obtain additional funds from other organizations (NGOs), to monitor progress and note changes, or to make presentations to other government ministries or the district governor.

The visuals created are powerful: they illustrate social and economic difference, social (in)justice, and unveil dominant attitudes and social contradictions – for example, a proclaimed commitment to compassion and kindness, but actual disregard or indifference to poverty and its consequences. The patterns revealed vary. In some communities, the work draws attention to striking inequities, such as resource concentration and capture, institutional domination by key actors, and unfair labor relations; or usurious lending practices. In other cases, class differentiation exists, but wealth is less concentrated and public investment more equitable. In many communities, these class relations are intersected by ethnicity and tribe; in others, by the periodic presence of nomads and semi-nomads in or near the community; or by the arrival of returnees from Pakistan, internally displaced people and economic migrants.

Gender relations also vary. In some communities, women sell labor in agriculture, work in groups and move through and beyond the village. In others, women may work, but they must remain in compounds processing various crops. In some communities, women's meaningful participation

References:

12. Not all powerful actors and elites are engaged in predatory or greedy practices. In fact, it is important for frontline staff to recognize elites who can be potential allies, those that are positively minded towards development, known to be helpful to poor groups, those who have access to networks, knowledge, and information, and who can provide advice and support to the community development process.

13. Facilitators often come from middle- or better-off households and are likely more comfortable interacting with their "economic" peers. As a result, they find it easier to work with those in the community that are literate, have more time on their hands, can host the "facilitator for lunch", are connected, can address problems, and so on.

in CDCs is slowly taking hold and facilitators must be attuned to the sensitivities around such a transition. In other communities, there is no such shift.[12]

Disrupting the status quo

The reactions to the work that has been generated differs. In some communities, the exercises spark discussions immediately and provoke heated debates – debates that are likely to continue after the facilitators leave. In other communities, the discussion and debates only begin once the facilitators have left. Still, in others, there is no (public) discussion at all; everyone may have understood what has happened, but no one speaks ¬— at least not yet. In these cases, the work with communities is such that they will consider and respond to the findings and process on their own terms and at their own pace.

The participatory diagnostic is usually unsettling to villagers. Some communities will mobilize to address key issues that they think are unacceptable or should not be perpetuated – for instance, high bride-prices that lead to indebtedness, or the severe food shortages of the very poor. Others require more time to garner support. Other communities may not take much action at all, except perhaps using the work to create development plans and allocate infrastructure – a requirement for all communities.

The work is intended to be disquieting. This is because in some cases, powerful actors are the gatekeepers of norms and traditions that create social and economic setbacks. Changing their minds requires "insider" strategies, which will likely include mobilizing support of progressive elders, mullahs (religious leaders), and other influential persons. Similarly, forms of extreme poverty, epitomized by hunger, that are exposed through this work are not only an outcome of the lack of economic opportunities (employment), but also a loss of social entitlements (support in time of crisis from relatives, friends, and neighbors) and political entitlements (influence and voice in decision-making of public infrastructure).[13]

Strategies for different types of actors are developed throughout the training workshop as different character types are encountered during the work. Reactions and the ensuing debates (or lack of) reflect the dynamic that exists in a community. They provide the observant and thoughtful facilitator with a sense of the existing relations between different groups. Facilitators must be reminded that they should be sensitive to local power relations if they are to maneuver them to ensure a pro-poor, inclusive, and participatory development approach. By now the facilitator should know the attitudes and behavior of key actors, who are likely to include the office bearers and members of the new CDC, the office bearers of the old CDC, the Malik (who may or may not be a CDC office bearer), elders, mullahs, etc.[14]Handling powerful actors in large and small meetings is a topic covered in the training.

Community Development Planning workshops

The analysis culminates in the Community Development Planning (CDP) workshop (a full day). During these workshops, important decisions are made about the community's vision and how the Citizens' Charter funds will be allocated in relation to this, and the newly elected CDC and the community will make commitments to achieving the vision through their own efforts. The choice of project is made carefully. Facilitators remain in the room, but they ask people to come in one by one to cast their votes for one of the possible three possible areas of work – transport, energy, or irrigation.

This CDP workshop requires skillful facilitation that takes into account existing power relations and is prepared to handle gatekeepers. The community (more than half of all households should be present) reviews all posters and the findings they set out, which provides the basis for the creation of a vision for the next 3-5 years.[15] This vision is then broken down into milestones and activities. Key actors are defined in terms of resource provision (the government through Citizens' Charter or other programs; the community; external donors). The milestones are later taken up by

References:

14. Hirschman, A.O. Exit, Voice and Loyalty: Responses to Decline in Firms, Organizations, and States. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1970.

15. The Community Development Planning workshop takes into account all of the analysis work: the public resources maps, the well-being analysis, the seasonal calendar, the "leaking pot" (diagraming wasted resources), and the women's mobility map.

thematic subcommittees that focus on completing the milestone that relates to their work (e.g. all children of the village attend school regularly).

Sustaining quality through continued follow-up and learning

The Ministry of Rural Reconstruction and Development's Management is fully committed to the approach outlined in this brief and has ensured sufficient high-quality government staffing to monitor and support the district facilitating partner frontline teams.

Each of the six regions has a Senior Training Coordinator, each of the 34 provinces has a Provincial Trainer, and each district has two social organizers (one man and one woman per district). These government staff attend all trainings provided to the Training of Trainers, including the initial 21-day, hands-on facilitation training that is described in this brief, and the 15-day institution-building training that is conducted four months later when the program has progressed on the ground.[16] Follow-up through field visits to observe the work of the frontline facilitators and review of their outputs (the exercises) is crucial during the program's early phases.

After the first year of the Citizens' Charter program, all facilitating partners are evaluated. Here, consideration is given to their contract performance (outputs, staffing, etc.), as well as the quality of their work in the communities. The evaluation includes assessments of facilitating skills, process, and outcomes (that is, pro-poor collective action).

Once the program is well under way, "learning circle" workshops will be held so that front-line facilitators can reflect on their field experience and discuss methodologies to solve new problems. Typical questions concern how well the facilitator's tools are received, the levels of participation, the challenges in applying them, the ease or difficulty to discuss income disparities, access to resources, forms of exploitation, and so on. The workshops include sessions in which staff share, discuss, compare, and contrast the results:

- Village- or neighborhood-level analyses to discuss differences in terms of resources and resource access, as well as patterns of development in these villages.

- Well-being analyses – the difference between richest and poorest, number of poor households, definitions of poverty, etc.

- Seasonality of work and food security, existing cropping patterns, etc.

- How to deal with elite intervention and efforts at capture.

- Key issues that arise (given the different types of villages and contexts) and what opportunities emerge.

The comparative analysis allows social organizers to consider the relationship between context and strategy and discuss their thinking and potential course of action for mobilization with a larger group.

CDC members from highly regarded Community Development Councils are invited to these workshops to share their work, approaches, lessons, and how they addressed challenges. Finally, the Learning Circle Workshops are also opportunities to identify promising emerging leaders who can drive the process in their own communities and those nearby. These are usually the people who are the first to volunteer and tend to drive the process – going door to door to collect people, showing others how to do it, and encouraging everyone. In addition to CDC members, these are the people who spend more time than the larger collective to get the work done. Their motivations can come from a strong desire to change existing conditions or the recognition that the work presents an opportunity to apply one's skills to make changes. Such people, women and men, can come from any socioeconomic grouping. However, experience shows that these people are often some of the poorest and most vulnerable, who, when presented with a possibility of change and participation to bring such change about, will grasp the opportunity.

CONCLUSION

A nationwide community-driven development program must have consistency in terms of facilitation quality, and

References:

16. The 15-day institution-building training focuses on CDCs and their subcommittees (formation, planning and action), community participatory monitoring (including social audits and grievances mechanisms), CDC and subcommittee self-assessment through the Instructional Maturity Index, clustering and establishing Cluster Community Development Councils (at the subdistrict level).

this brief has discussed in detail the level of planning and management that goes into high-quality facilitation. In Afghanistan, the NSP's experience had already convinced government policymakers that well-trained, outsourced facilitation was a good use of project finance. The challenge put by the government to the Citizens' Charter design team was not, as has often been the case elsewhere, whether facilitation was needed or best performed by civil servants but was how to build on and improve the quality of facilitation.

To achieve the required level of consistency, all trainers and facilitators must have a chance to practice the exercises and develop the ability reflect on mistakes and common errors. For this reason, the Citizens' Charter insists on in-depth upfront residential training that includes hands-on practical exercises that simulate situations that facilitators will be encountering in the field. The program makes extensive use of video, performance, and other feedback mechanisms to coach trainees and improve their self-confidence and awareness.

Equally important as the practical technology of facilitation, facilitators must understand poverty dynamics and the local political economies. All the analytical findings – resources maps, well-being analysis, "leaking-pot" exercises, seasonal calendar, women's mobility – and the behavior and attitudes of public authorities – CDCs, Maliks, and elders, – reflect the local power structure. But staff must learn how to interpret the findings and actions of elites and strategize to overcome the challenges that powerful actors might create. Approaching their work in a structured, strategic, and tactical manner enables the social organizers to be more effective, achieve the desired outcomes, and improve the image of the government among its citizens.

Finally, once the facilitators have reached a level of basic competence, follow-up work includes a program of in-context coaching and problem-solving that lets field staff raise specific problems, share innovations, and exchange experiences with other facilitators and community representatives.