

Preface

What this folder is, and what it is not

This is not intended as a manual, holy book or academic text. It is an international resource pack for practitioners, which pulls together practical ideas and experiences from people using the Reflect approach around the world.

The pack covers different elements of communication. For ease of reference we have divided the resource pages into four simple colour-coded sections: on the written word, the spoken word, numbers and images. Each section has a short introduction, drawing out key power issues and outlining the resource pages in the section. However, rather than focusing on one section, we encourage you to work across the categories, exploring how different forms of communication are inter-connected. There is a fifth section that provides some examples of Reflect in action.

Each resource page is self-contained and follows a simple format. The pages do not give detailed prescriptions, they are designed to give broad ideas and practical examples – but all will require creative adaptation by you to apply to your particular context. There is no strict sequencing so you can flick through as you wish both within a section and across sections, picking and choosing those pages that offer something relevant for you. Some of the ideas and approaches on these resource pages will be well known to you, but others, we hope, are new.

The information in this folder is not designed to tell you everything about Reflect. It is a flavour, a starting point or a partial resource. Much more can be learned by linking to practitioners in your country and neighbouring countries, by seeing Reflect in practice or participating in a training or exchange workshop.

CONTRIBUTE!

This pack does not claim to be comprehensive or exhaustive. There are many other ideas and approaches used by Reflect practitioners that are not yet written up. If you have found these materials of practical value, then please participate in the ongoing process of developing this “open” folder. There are no deadlines. New pages can be added at any time. Write your experiences, or ideas for new resource pages, using the formats that we have used for this first set of pages. Through the web-site and through network meetings around the world there will be a continuing distribution of materials to enrich this folder, ensuring that what is produced in one place can be distributed to practitioners around the world. In this way, Reflect can continue to evolve.

We hope that you enjoy these materials and that they contribute something to your own process of fighting for greater justice and equity in the world.



The Reflect Approach

This section serves as a very brief introduction to the key elements of the Reflect approach. Much more could be written on any one of the topics mentioned. Here we simply outline important elements and principles of Reflect to provoke thought and investigation. The aim is to give an impression rather than an exhaustive analysis. More information is available from other resources, most notably the website: www.reflect-action.org

WHAT IS REFLECT?

Reflect is an approach to learning and social change. Key to the Reflect approach is creating a space where people feel comfortable to meet and discuss issues relevant to them and their lives. Reflect aims to improve the meaningful participation of people in decisions that affect their lives, through strengthening their ability to communicate.

HOW HAS IT EVOLVED?

Reflect was developed through innovative pilot programmes in Uganda, Bangladesh and El Salvador between 1993 and 1995. It started as a fusion of the political philosophy of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire with the practical methodologies developed for Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). Other significant influences were the ideological approach to literacy and gender analysis.

The beginnings

In **El Salvador** the core elements were fused together by a highly politicised NGO led by ex-guerrillas. In **Bangladesh** the approach was adapted to working with women's savings and credit groups in a conservative Islamic area. In a remote multi-lingual area of **Uganda** the pilot programme involved developing a written form of two local languages for the first time. The evaluation of these diverse pilot experiences was published by the UK Department for International Development (DfID), showing the effectiveness of the approach in teaching literacy and linking this to wider local development. Practical learning from these experiences was pulled together in 1996 in the Reflect Mother Manual as "a new approach to adult literacy and social change".

Spread and diversity

Reflect spread and evolved rapidly, through publications and training workshops. Programmes diversified as different organisations adapted the approach to different contexts. Some began to focus on communication rather than literacy. Many became more explicit about power analysis and processes of political transformation. The Global Reflect Survey, conducted in 2000, showed that Reflect was being used by over 350 organisations in 60 countries. It is used by local, national and international NGOs, by social movements, people's organisations, district and regional governments. It is used on a small scale (in single communities) and on a large scale (with thousands of communities). The objectives and focus of Reflect processes are extremely varied, from peace and reconciliation work in Burundi to village level planning in India and local government accountability in El Salvador; from land-rights work in South Africa to capacity building for school management in Mali; from mobilisation around community forestry resources in Nepal to organising tea plantation



workers in Bangladesh; from bilingual and inter-cultural education in Peru to work around cultural identity in the Basque Country. Further details of some of these are in the final section: “Reflect in Action”.

Sharing learning

The key means by which the Reflect approach has spread has been through links between practitioners – through local, national, regional or international networks – by people coming together across institutions to learn from one another and to share experiences. Nothing can replace this direct human contact. By networking we can begin to apply the Reflect approach to ourselves – we can learn it by doing it. For this reason we urge people using these resources to make links with other practitioners (see contact addresses or website for your local contacts).



WHAT ARE THE CORE ELEMENTS?

As mentioned above, Reflect is based on a series of core principles and elements, derived both from the theoretical foundations in Freire and PRA, and from evolution of the approach through practical application and experience.

Power and voice

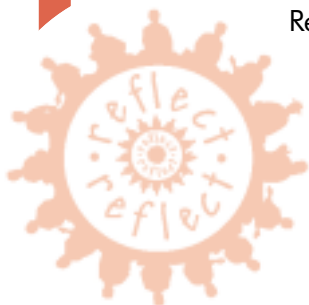
Reflect is a process that aims to strengthen people’s capacity to communicate by whatever means of communication are most relevant or appropriate to them. Although part of the process may be about learning new communication skills, the focus is on using these in a meaningful way. It is through focusing on the practical use that real learning takes place.

A political process

Reflect is premised on the recognition that achieving social change and greater social justice is a fundamentally political process. Reflect is not a neutral approach that seeks to promote a neutral vision of development based only on improving people’s immediate material conditions or providing short-term responses to their basic needs. It seeks to help people in the struggle to assert their rights, challenge injustice and change their position in society and as such requires us to explicitly align ourselves with the poorest and most marginalised. It involves working with people rather than for them.

A democratic space

Reflect involves creating a democratic space – one in which everyone’s voice is given equal weight. This needs to be actively constructed, as it does not naturally exist. As such it is counter-cultural – challenging local culture where the power



relationships and stratification have created inequality. It is never easy and may never be perfectly achieved, but it should be a constant focus.

An intensive and extensive process

Reflect is rarely a short or one-off process. The Global Survey showed that groups usually meet for about two years, and sometimes continue indefinitely. Often they meet three times a week – sometimes up to six times a week and rarely less than once a week. Each meeting may take about two hours. This intensity of contact on an ongoing basis is one of the fundamental ingredients for a process that seeks to achieve serious social or political change.

Grounded in existing knowledge

Reflect begins with respect and value for people's existing knowledge and experience. It is not about importing information or transferring knowledge. However, this does not mean accepting people's existing opinions or prejudices without challenge – especially where these contradict the principle of creating a democratic space. Moreover, there will always be a part of the process in which participants are enabled to access new information and new ideas from new sources. The key is to give people control over that process, and confidence in their own starting point, so that they can be critical and selective.

Linking reflection and action

Reflect involves a continual cycle of reflection and action. It is not about reflection or learning for the sake of it, but rather reflection for the purpose of change. Neither is it about action isolated from reflection as pure activism rapidly loses direction. It is the fusion of these elements, and it can start with either.

Using participatory tools

A wide range of participatory tools is used within a Reflect process to help create an open or democratic environment in which everyone is able to contribute. Visualisation approaches are of particular importance (maps, calendars, diagrams, matrices and other graphic forms developed by PRA practitioners) and can provide a structure for the process. However, many other participatory methods and processes are also used, including theatre, role-play, song, dance, video or photography.

Power awareness

All participatory tools can be distorted, manipulated or used in exploitative ways if they are not linked to an awareness of power relationships. Reflect is a political process in which the multiple dimensions of power and stratification are always the focus of reflection, and actions are oriented towards changing inequitable power relationships whatever their basis. A structural analysis is needed to ensure that issues are not dealt with at a superficial level. Only through such analysis can effective strategic actions be determined.

Coherence and self-organisation

Reflect needs to be used systematically. The same principles and processes that apply to others also apply to ourselves, within our own institutions and even our personal lives. The focus of the process should always be towards self-organisation, so that groups are self-managed, where possible, rather than being facilitated by, or dependent on, outsiders.





Why Communication and Power?

Communication

There are many ways to communicate. For example: reading, writing, speaking, listening, numbers, visual means, technology and the media. In fact, communication is the basis of all our relationships – at home, at work, within any community or group and beyond. We need to be able to communicate so that people can know and understand our experience and perspective. Communication includes all the different ways of ensuring that our voice is heard – by different people, in different languages, contexts and at different times.

Communication is not unidirectional – it is both transmitted and received. It is not only about getting our voice heard, but also hearing and understanding others. People need to be able to deal critically with communication that they receive, and they need to actively develop, reproduce and use alternative forms of communication.

Power

No communication is neutral – the capacity to communicate and be heard is determined by power relationships that need to be analysed. By linking communication and power we are focusing beyond the technical aspects of communication and considering the various factors which influence our ability to get our voice heard. Being unable to communicate is both a cause and effect of inequitable power relationships.

COMMUNICATION AND POWER IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Although there are many different aspects of communication, which we have divided into sections in this resource pack, at any one time it is likely that we will be using more than one form of communication. By strengthening our ability to communicate in one way, at one time, we are likely to increase our confidence in communicating in another. All types of communication are interlinked. Below are some examples of different contexts and the types of communication which we might come across in our lives:

Government power

There is often a complex maze of bureaucracy and procedures involved in dealing with government offices. Understanding how things are supposed to work and how budgets are supposed to be spent can strengthen your position. Being confident to deal with officials in authority (who may speak a different language and are often higher class, educated males) is essential. Knowing how to fill in forms and having all your “papers in order” is necessary if you wish to access your entitlements or assert your rights (those without proper documentation are effectively illegalised and excluded).

Economic power

The links between communication and power are evident in people’s dealings with landowners, money-lenders or banks, traders, companies and employers. Most obviously power is sustained by the ability to manipulate or mystify numbers but this is often linked to complex written documents (such as contracts with lots of



small-print). In a market context it is often the sound or force of voice used which enables people to secure the best bargain, while visual representations are used to illustrate patterns in the economy at national or international level.

Social power

There is a strong correlation between the ability to communicate and social status. The way people are perceived and the level to which their “word” is valued is often linked to literacy. The ritual of giving thumb-prints or signing helps to reinforce this. The image we portray of ourselves, our posture, ability to make eye-contact etc. are all crucially important when considering social interactions. Further, the way we talk (and on what subjects) illustrates how much power we feel we have.

Political power

Oral skills carry a huge weight in political circles. At election time it is often the style of speaking, rather than what is actually said which influences people’s vote. Political campaigning relies on the power of visual tools, with posters often speaking much louder than words. Budgets are the key to whether policies are given priority and can be implemented.

Religious power

Imagery and icons are used to powerful effect by most religions. In text-based religions like Christianity or Islam the written word is presented as the word of God – helping to create the myth that the written word is somehow absolute. Yet equally religions depend on the power of oratory, for example in sermons, and on the power of physical communication through various rituals.

Civic power

The practice of power in community organisations and associations or unions is often strictly ritualized. Having an effective say often requires a lot of confidence and an understanding of procedures, norms and conventions. In largely non-literate communities the secretaries, treasurers and chairs of such organisations are almost invariably the literate and numerate few.

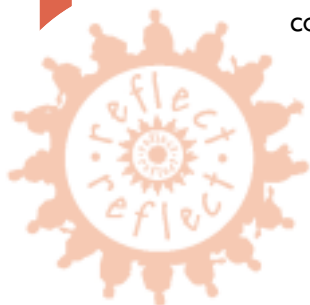
Our own power

As organisations which implement Reflect we are likely to construct an image of ourselves as invisible, neutral facilitators – when in fact we can be powerful social and economic players. This is often evident in the way in which we communicate: the jargon we use; the way we speak to people; write in notebooks; prepare plans and budgets; give out leaflets; use logos; carry briefcases and have pens in our pockets – these aspects make us key agents of the power of communication. How we practice that power will be of critical importance to the wider process.

How can these materials strengthen people’s ability to communicate?

The materials in this pack should be used to:

- Enable people to **assert their right** to communicate (individually and collectively);
- Give people the **space** for **analysis and reflection** so that they can decide what to communicate, to whom and how;
- Develop people’s capacity to **understand** and **critically analyse** the communication they receive;
- Enable people to **actively produce** their own materials and **access** appropriate ‘instruments’ of communication.





Getting Started

This section provides an overview of some of the issues which need to be considered when setting up the structures within which these resource pages can be meaningfully used. As no two contexts are the same, it is impossible to give a clear or absolute guide, but we hope that this gives a sense of the elements involved in getting started with the Reflect approach.

PREPARING THE GROUND:

Understanding ourselves

We cannot start working with others using the Reflect approach until we have spent some time reflecting on our own power, and particularly our relationships with those with whom we work. This process should not lead to a denial of our power, as it does not help at all if we pretend to be neutral or invisible. Rather we need to recognise the nature of our power and work positively to transform it. There may be a need for a sustained process using Reflect within our own institution before we are ready to move forward and use the approach with others.

Understanding the context

It is important to collect basic information concerning the present situation of the potential participants in the Reflect process. This may take many forms, depending on the objectives, the organisation, or the people involved. This information can serve both as a basis for planning and designing the process, and for future monitoring and evaluation. The process of collecting baseline information may be integrated into the early stages of the Reflect process so that participants monitor for themselves.

Identifying entry points

When considering introducing Reflect into a new area, you will need to decide whether to form new groups or work with existing local groups. This will be self-evident or pre-determined in some contexts. Existing groups may be informal (people who gather in one place but are not a clearly constituted group) or formal (with a constitution, established objectives, existing work) or somewhere between the two. In this case you need to introduce the Reflect process to the group, exploring with them the ways in which it will change and enhance their present work. If new groups are to be created, then more attention needs to be paid to initial mobilisation and the naming and framing of the Reflect approach locally (see sheet in *Written Word* section).

BUILDING INTEREST:

Training resource people

An early priority is to seek training for key resource people who will move the process forward. The resource materials here are not sufficient for this. Rather, you should make contact with experienced Reflect practitioners in your area, to develop a training process which will help you adapt the Reflect approach to your own context.



Local orientation

Many people will need to know about Reflect, including local leaders, officials and influential agencies, if they are to help with, rather than hinder, the process. One day or half-day orientation sessions should be sufficient. It is helpful to have a clear sense of what support you might need from different people and what you will do if that is not forthcoming.

Mobilisation

Getting people to join a Reflect group can take many forms. It may be that the demand is already clear, or it may be necessary to hold a public meeting or arrange a theatre show to inform people of the process. By using some form of participatory approach and by breaking some norms and formalities you can give everyone a flavour of what to expect. This initial mobilisation can also be an opportunity to discuss, and agree with local people, the future focus of the process. For example, there may be discussion of: the languages that will be used, the priority issues to be analysed, the skills that may be developed, and the links that could be made with existing processes and organisations.

FACILITATORS:

Recruiting facilitators

Finding good facilitators must be given the highest priority, as facilitators are the single most important factor in making the Reflect process effective. When building on existing groups, the facilitators may already be determined. In other cases people can be encouraged to volunteer as potential facilitators at the initial mobilisation.

Where possible the future participants in the process should have a say in who will be their facilitator. Ideally it should be someone from the same community as participants, sharing their identity and status, respected and respectful. They should have an interest in, and some awareness of, power issues and be open to new ideas. There are, however, no absolutes: some organisations have found that there are advantages to having facilitators from outside the community where they work, as it can be easier for them to raise controversial issues.

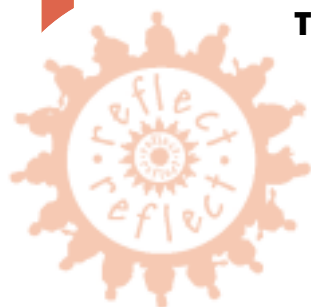
Motivating facilitators

One of the most difficult questions concerns the payment of facilitators. Ideally the prime motivation of facilitators should be commitment to social justice and equity. This may be enough where the organisation using Reflect has a strong local identity or political vision, or where voluntary commitment attracts high social status. However, in most contexts some material incentive may be needed. Too often we find that organisations will pay everyone from managers down to trainers, and then refuse to pay facilitators on the grounds of sustainability, leaving the poorest people with the least reward.

The modest amounts paid to facilitators in these processes will rarely be sufficient to motivate facilitators in the long term and other incentives need to be explored. One option is to look at the ongoing learning of facilitators themselves, access to training in different issues, skills and media, which they can then also use to reinforce the Reflect process locally. Facilitators' forums certainly play a key role in helping facilitators to feel that they are part of something bigger.

Training facilitators

The focus of facilitator training should be on the process rather than the content. Reflect principles and processes should be fully applied, respecting



the existing knowledge and experience of the participants, using participatory processes and engaging in a power analysis of issues arising. The intention should be to achieve a level of internalisation and ownership of the approach. Practical experience should be encouraged and simulation or artificial exercises avoided. One option is to have 'sandwich workshops', with two periods of training either side of a period of practical experience in the participants' own communities. In the training process, facilitators can make new adaptations of Reflect and produce local resource materials to help guide them.

Peer support

It is important for facilitators to receive intensive support in the first weeks of a Reflect process. It can be easy for facilitators to get disillusioned, as things that seemed easy in the training workshop prove more difficult in practice and unexpected problems and obstacles arise. The best support for facilitators will be each other, as they will have a shared experience and will understand each other.

Exchange visits between facilitators to offer practical support should be encouraged, but regular facilitators' forums can be even more effective, meeting regularly with rotating facilitation from within the group. The forums can echo the Reflect circle process, identifying problems and finding practical solutions. They may offer space for facilitators to develop new ideas for participatory tools and other resources that can be of practical use in their circles. The sharing and review of their experiences can also lead to them identifying and discussing common issues arising across local circles. In some cases the forum may decide to do further research on an issue, or develop joint actions.

Ongoing training

It is important to hold refresher training workshops at least once a year, preferably more often. The focus of these refresher workshops might be defined through the facilitators' forum meetings, through ongoing participatory monitoring by participants or through support visits to circles by local coordinators or other resource people.

SETTING THE SCENE:

Naming and framing

The term "Reflect" may be relevant as a means of building a shared identity between practitioners across different institutions, countries or regions, but the local process should be given a locally relevant name. Developing a local name for the Reflect approach can deepen ownership, especially if it is something in a local language that captures elements of local significance. This name will be crucial in framing people's initial expectations of the approach and so must be selected with care. (See resource page on 'Naming and Framing Reflect' in the *Written Word* section).

Layout and group dynamics

The layout of space has very significant power implications. It is vital to ensure that the space where the group meet can be used for two purposes with relative ease. One large area is needed for participatory activities, for example where graphics can be constructed on the ground or on a large surface, with space for participants to move around. Secondly there needs to be an area where the group can sit in a circle, ideally so that each participant can make eye contact reasonably easily with every



other participant. It is helpful to have places where completed graphics can be hung up. In particular, if materials can be kept on display this can help cross-referencing and the building up of a cumulative analysis. It may be good to involve participants in designing, agreeing or arranging the use of space – always reflecting on the power issues involved.

Negotiating ground rules

In the first proper meeting of the group it is important to negotiate some basic rules and norms. Appropriate ways should be found of discussing the importance of the circle being a democratic space, exploring what this means to participants and how it can be put into practice. It may be possible to discuss directly some of the power relationships that are present between participants and how these may affect the atmosphere or dynamic of the group. Visualisation approaches as outlined in these resource pages may be used to structure such reflection. In these discussions the facilitator should be prepared to acknowledge her or his own power as the facilitator. A written or clear visual record should be kept of any of the basic norms or rules agreed.

Initial discussion

In different contexts, different issues will need to be addressed at an early stage. Much depends on the priorities of the organisation using the approach and what has been discussed and agreed in the initial mobilisation and training of facilitators. However, it can be good to open up for discussion even things that appear to be fixed or obvious – as each group will have different priorities and some deeply-held assumptions may be mistaken. One early discussion may concern participants' expectations and aspirations. Each participant should be given an opportunity and means to share their opinions on this. These expectations may be recorded for future reference and used as a basis for ongoing monitoring. In a multi-lingual environment it may also be important to agree which languages the group will use for different activities and whether the learning of a language may form a part of the process. (See resource pages on 'Language and Power' and 'Teaching a Second language' in the *Written Word* section.)

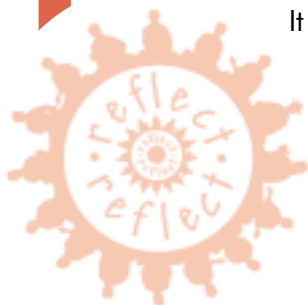
MATERIALS AND RESOURCES:

Developing local resources

Reflect is in a continual process of being adapted to the local context by all those involved. It can be useful to regularly pull together resource materials, which facilitators can refer to. As local circles develop their rhythm of work, facilitators will learn from each other, sharing ideas of what worked in one circle and adapting them for others. Ideally, each facilitator will have a folder in which they can keep materials produced in workshops, their own notes and ideas and relevant materials from other organisations. It may be useful to have some structure to these folders (for example, practical ideas for sessions; notes on actual sessions; wider reading; relevant information etc.), though facilitators should be encouraged to develop their own structure as much as possible.

Basic materials

It is likely that the following range of materials will be needed, though alternatives can be improvised and many additional materials may be used at different moments:



- large sheets of paper, flipchart paper, wallpaper or manila sheets;
- large marker-pens and felt-tips, ideally many of them and with a good range of colours;
- sticky tape or masking tape;
- coloured paper or card which can be cut to make smaller cards as needed;
- a store of locally available or common objects for the flexible construction of graphics (eg bags of different beans or seeds, leaves, stones, pebbles, string, coloured dye).
- A blackboard or white-board, with chalk or pens, is likely to be useful.

In terms of materials that each participant might bring see the resource page on 'Naming and Framing Reflect'. It is important to avoid school-style exercise books and instead use stationery that sends out appropriate social messages.

NETWORKING AROUND REFLECT:

Linking Reflect groups

From the very start it is important to consider the links that can be made between participants in different circles, so that their analysis and actions are not reached in isolation. Circles may be paired or clustered so that they visit each other or have some regular points of contact. There may be 'participant forums' where representatives from each circle in an area come together to identify common threads in their analysis, common obstacles or opportunities for action. Wider assemblies, rallies or festivals might also bring participants together. This helps to ensure that circles feel part of a wider process of change. At key moments they may be able to call on a wider source of support, and benefit from a sense of solidarity. This can also give participants their own base to challenge the institution that is implementing Reflect locally, something that should be encouraged if the agency is genuinely committed to changing power relationships.

Reflect trainers' forums

In the same way that facilitators benefit from regular contact with their peers, trainers and other resource people need to seek ongoing contact with and support from their peers. In a large programme this may be feasible internally but in many cases it will be helpful to make links with other institutions using the Reflect approach. Even where institutions are working in very different contexts or with very different objectives, exchange can be very beneficial. Indeed some of the most creative learning may emerge from people coming together across institutional divides.

These regional or national facilitators' and trainers' forums should be conceived as an integral part of the Reflect process, applying the same principles and approaches to their meetings as are used in local Reflect work. The participants should be given space and time to reflect on and analyse their experiences. They may seek access to new information to help them advance their understanding of a certain issue or define common actions. Meetings may be hosted by different institutions in rotation, with some part of each meeting involving practical exposure to and support for the host agency's work.

Networking

There are inter-institutional national Reflect networks or forums developing in many countries. Some of these are loose, informal groups of people; others are more formal involving many organisations and holding regular meetings. They are spaces for practitioners to share experiences and problems about using Reflect or to apply the Reflect approach to national level issues. These national networks are also part of sub-regional or regional networks, as well as the International Reflect Circle (CIRAC).



CIRAC brings together Reflect practitioners from across Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe, providing a space for the continuing spread of innovation, for critical reflection and analysis and for the development of common resources. If you are not presently in contact with other practitioners we urge you to seek out that contact. The CIRAC website (www.reflect-action.org) offers a list of contacts who can put you in touch with practitioners near you.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION:

Monitoring the process

The role of monitoring the Reflect process should not be seen as the preserve of any one group of people. Certainly participants must be at the centre of monitoring their own progress, proposing their own objectives, indicators and modes of measurement. However, facilitators, trainers and other resource people are also participants in the process and need to establish their own objectives and indicators, to be revisited in the light of their experience and the changing nature and direction of the process.

Ideally, in all contexts, this monitoring should form an integral part of the Reflect process; the cycle of action and reflection leading to new action and new reflection. Documenting and recording the process from different perspectives is not a neutral or detached activity, but one that forms part of the continuing flow of the process.

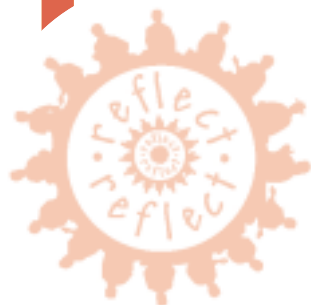
It is important to be aware of the power dynamics involved in monitoring and to include reflection on that as part of the monitoring process.

Evaluation

There are many different reasons for evaluations. Some are required by donors or are part of organisational procedure. Where this is the case, the terms of the evaluation may be determined from outside, but as much as possible the nature of that power relationship should be unveiled as one part of the evaluation process. In other cases, evaluations are for internal learning and can be used as an opportunity to enrich the process, with all participants in the process standing back to gain some perspective and see the larger picture. A review of 13 external evaluations of Reflect programmes published in 2001 by CIRAC highlighted the poor quality of many attempts to do external evaluations and offers some useful recommendations for improving practice (see website).

CONCLUSION:

This has been a lightening tour of how to get started with a Reflect process. Some of the points will not seem appropriate to your own context, but hopefully others will. We can all benefit from a process which strengthens our capacity to communicate, and one of the emerging truths about good communication is that it is better to be concise than exhaustive. These resource materials seek to be concise at all times, not only in this introductory session but also in the practical pages themselves. We hope that you find them of practical value and look forward to your feedback and future contributions.





Written Word

Introduction

The Western model of schooling places literacy on a pedestal. Learning to read and write is regarded as the essence of education, with the spoken word and other ways of communication downgraded or devalued. The Reflect process seeks to redress the balance and looks more closely at how the strengthening of other ways and means of communication can contribute to the process of social and political change.

Yet the power of “literacy” cannot be denied. Enabling people to demystify the written word, access it and use it for their own purposes, can be a key ingredient of a wider struggle for social and economic justice. The practice of literacy is closely linked to the practice of power. Literacy cannot be treated as a technical skill to be taught in a classroom detached from the world. Rather, we need to break with conventional models and introduce new approaches. Real learning will take place through people’s practical engagement with different forms of literacy in their own environment, using it as an integral part of a process of analysis and action.

WRITING AND POWER

There is a profound invisibility of literacy in everyday life in many rural areas, with the local school seeming to be the only place where literacy is used. Even in highly literate urban areas, many people’s daily lives do not revolve around, or depend on, literacy in any significant respect. However, when the written word appears, or is unavoidable, it is often associated with situations where power relations are clearly evident.

The type of literacy required may be different in different contexts, for example: when dealing with **official/government bodies**, where papers and forms mean those without proper documentation are effectively illegalised and excluded; in the **economic sphere** where landowners, money-lenders and traders use documents to justify, cheat and exert their power; **socially** – where being able to sign your name increases your social status; **politically** – where those who hold power can decide whether or not to sign a particular paper; within **community organisations** – through minute taking and within **religion** where often the written word is the word of god. We also need to be aware of our **own power**, and the ways we use literacy – whether we are preparing plans or reports, writing in notebooks, carrying briefcases or have pens in our pockets to reinforce or assert that power.

REFLECT AND LITERACY

The focus of Reflect is to help people deal with the links between the practice of literacy and the practice of power. Once people develop basic literacy skills they will find many other uses for them and Reflect should encourage an environment where literacy can be used in flexible and innovative ways (e.g. pages on libraries, newspapers, creative writing, documenting local knowledge etc.).

Literacy and social justice

Our starting point is to contribute to a wider struggle for justice: to enable people to start to assume the power of literacy and deal effectively and



without intimidation with those situations where literacy impacts on their lives. Even before people have developed significant technical skills they can make big steps forward in dealing with the power relations in situations where the written word appears. This is crucial because understanding a text (what might be seen as the technical part of learning) is only a small part of what needs to be addressed in an effective literacy programme (see 'what is literacy').

Using literacy as a hook

"Literacy" has immense convening power. People will meet for 2/3 hours a day for 3 or even 6 days a week to learn. There is no equivalent level of intensity of group process in any other sphere of development or social action. Participants aims may be to climb the social ladder, to acquire the status of being educated. We must this recognise and can even use it (see 'Naming and Framing'), but we must also challenge it and not let people slip into the comfortable, passive role of being "pupils" – as a passive learner rapidly becomes a bored and frustrated one.

Meaningful literacy

Motivation is sustained when the focus is on using and practicing literacy in meaningful ways. We need to avoid creating the walled mentality of the classroom. Literacy should never be treated in a detached or abstract way – and should always be integrated to the wider process of analysis and action.

Linking to analysis

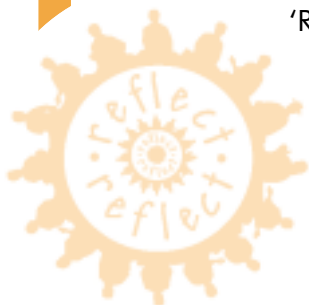
The way written texts are used or produced should always be meaningful to the group, being part of their analysis not a detached process etc. (see 'Building from names', 'Whole texts', 'Letters and Syllables'); literacy can become part of the process of using participatory tools such as visualisations ('From graphics to words') we should use the discussion and visualisations for participants to generate their own texts – but once this has been done we should also bring in external information / thematically relevant texts to extend and enrich analysis.

Linking to action and empowerment

Writing and reading should be used as a form of action – as an integral part of promoting greater justice and equity, of asserting rights and securing entitlements; of enriching identity and voice (see 'Local planning', 'Documenting local knowledge', 'Social audits', 'Report cards'). Increasingly access to information and communication technologies can be an important part of such a process.



Silk screen printing provides an opportunity for participants to share their written words with wider audiences, Uganda





Naming and Framing Reflect

The name and the look of Reflect can significantly influence participants' expectations and perceptions of the process.

WHY?

The image of schooling is powerfully entrenched, even amongst adults who have never been inside a school. When Reflect is being used with literacy as a significant element, it is essential to challenge these images and to construct a different set of expectations for the Reflect process. Otherwise the expectations of schooling are likely to undermine the wider aims of the Reflect process.

WHEN?

This has to be considered at the very start of the process, before any circles have been established. It will affect the way in which initial mobilisation is undertaken and the experience that participants have when they first come to the circle.

HOW?

The image people develop of Reflect will be informed by many things, some out of our control. However, two major elements are the name and the stationery and materials provided.

Reflect is a widely used and flexible approach to adult learning, and while we talk here about Reflect circles and groups, that is not the way that many participants and facilitators around the world refer to the approach. The name used locally must have a local significance, and ideally should be selected by participants themselves so that they have a strong sense of ownership of the process. It may relate to existing or historical processes of organisation or learning, or may be entirely new.

Introducing Reflect

Initial Reflect work, prior to circles being established, will need to be identified by a name, and given the narrow conceptions of 'literacy' most people hold, a broader concept of 'learning' or 'education' may be more appropriate. Some local language variation around the word 'communication' may be powerful as it detaches the process from schooling and resonates as something modern and practical. Other words for concepts like empowerment, organisation, development, dialogue, culture or democracy may help to stimulate positive initial expectations

LOCAL NAMES

List of some local names used for Reflect from the Global Survey:

Shikaya Kendra – 'Education Centre', Bengali language, Bangladesh

Gakuba – 'Identify the needs of the community with the participation of the community', Burundi

Pebbles in the Sand – (a Reflect project for immigrant women), Canada

Gbaara Gunna Saa – 'Let's come together learn and develop', Sissale language, Ghana

Loja Yujana Kendra – 'People's planning centre', Oriya language, India

Jagran – 'Awareness', Hindi language, India

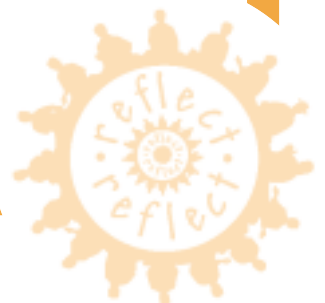
Jekamiri – 'Thinking together', Bamakan language, Mali

Chisa Kruskaisa – 'Gathering for discussion', Chepang language, Nepal

Tugharia Uche – 'Review your thought', Igbo language, Nigeria

Awarisunchis – 'Let's weave together' (symbolising the idea of uniting forces), Quechua language, Peru

Kisumuluzo – 'Key', Lusoga language, Uganda.



and give people a foundation for their own naming process in the first week of the circle. However, the most effective means of communicating the Reflect approach may not be in the words used so much as in showing people what to expect through theatre.

Choosing a local name

The facilitator should outline some of the basic elements of the Reflect approach, encouraging participants to share the impressions and expectations picked up during the initial mobilisation that made them choose to come. Based on this discussion, participants suggest key words or names (ideally in their mother tongue), perhaps using 'word association' to broaden out from the more obvious initial suggestions. All suggestions should be recorded and the participants encouraged to narrow these down to a few favourites. The final selection could be done by voting, helping to emphasise at an early stage the democratic nature of this process.

Choosing materials/stationery

Often the writing materials most easily and cheaply available in local markets will be the same ones used in local schools. If these are used, then the feeling of being in school may distort people's expectations. If, on the other hand, participants are given, for example, a folder with blank pages, then the image is very different. This sort of material tends to be seen only in the hands of the powerful, those involved in business or wealthy organisations. The material chosen, whether clipboards, files or folders, will depend on what is available locally and what carries different status. Some practical factors should be considered - whether they are durable, waterproof, light, easy to store - but we must also consider the social messages.

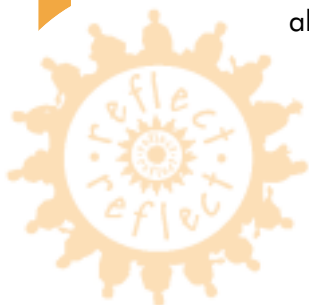


The materials used in a Reflect process can have a big impact on how it is perceived both by participants themselves and the wider community.

If carrying a business-like folder sends out a clear message of social status and importance, it will help participants to present what they are doing as important community business. Rather than creating a feeling of stigma and possible shame (of being a grown adult going to "school") it will give confidence and assurance. This can of course be over-played – but it is important to consider issues of social status, as this is usually a factor for participants. It is also a factor for helping the circle to make links with the wider community when they need to do so. What they produce will be looked at more seriously than it would be if it were seen as just the product of a "lesson".

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Mozambique**, different stationery is used at different moments. For example, all the graphics / materials produced by a circle are copied onto A4 sheets by the facilitator. These are then photocopied every 3 months and given back to each participant.





What is Literacy?

A range of techniques to explore the concepts of literacy.

WHY?

The written word often conveys multiple meanings. In many cases people use writing to show power and status: taking meticulous records of meetings that are never referred to again, or demanding that requests be written when they could be communicated orally. Research on Reflect in Uganda suggested that associations between literacy and status, rather than a desire to learn as such, were the central motivation for participants. It is important for groups to examine their attitudes to literacy in order to establish a firm basis for appropriate learning together.

For many people the concept of literacy has very strong associations with formal education. Unless the term is deconstructed and discussed openly among trainers, facilitators and participants, expectations of the Reflect process will continue to be coloured by their previous experiences of, and attitudes to, schooling. Unless discussion shifts from 'literacy' in the abstract to talking about real, practical uses of literacy in different contexts, we risk teaching people a specific 'classroom literacy' which they will not be able to use to communicate effectively in other contexts.

WHEN?

It is essential to look at the meanings and functions of literacy from the very start of the Reflect process, and to do so throughout the process if literacy is a central concern.

HOW?

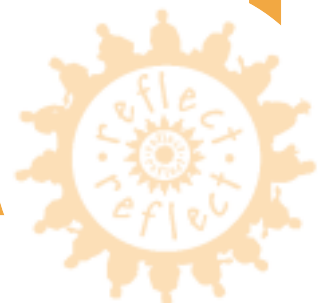
In initial discussions, the facilitator can use questions to explore attitudes to, and the functions of, literacy, such as:

- What is writing? Is it as simple as learning the alphabet?
- What are the alternatives to the written word? Are these other forms of communication valued as much as writing?
- How is literacy linked to power and status? Who gains from this?
- Who uses the written word and what do they use it for?
- Why do you want to learn to read and write? How will you use it?
- How do you feel when others know you can/ cannot read or write?
- What have you done before in situations where literacy is needed?
- Why do people talk about computer literacy or political literacy or emotional literacy? What does this tell us about the word "literacy"?

WHOSE LITERACY?

Literacy is more than just the ability to write words. The Melanesia Critical Literacies Project describe critical literacy as the 'capacity to read nature as a living text and to understand the reasons for events and problems.' This is in contrast to textual literacy, which was introduced by colonisers and has been bestowed great importance.

When working on literacy we need to reflect seriously on our attitudes to, and understanding of, literacy. Are we the new experts from outside, the new colonisers, who, despite our intentions, may be causing more damage than good? Are we fully recognising the richness of people's existing knowledge and skills?



EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

Why learn to read and write?

In **India**, Yakshi decided not to present Reflect to communities as an approach to literacy as there had been negative experiences of this type of programme in the area. Local groups, or Gottis, provide space for sustained dialogue and analysis of local issues. Those participants who wish to learn literacy skills stay on after the discussions - but not all participants have chosen to learn to read and write. As one member observed, *"Palm oil is an important product here and one youth in every five households can climb the trees to tap it... It is not necessary for everybody to have the skill. The same is true of literacy. As long as we have enough literate people in the village we will manage."*

We are all illiterate

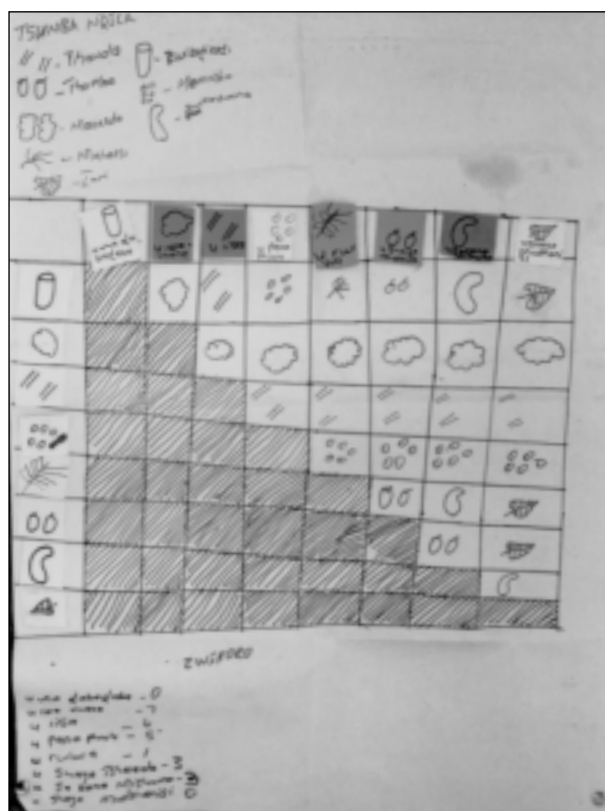
Even the most educated person would find it difficult to write their own name in another alphabet/script. Participants in Reflect training in Bundibugyo, **Uganda** were asked to read the statement "Education and action" in a variety of languages – from English and others using similar letters (e.g. Russian) to those using different scripts (e.g. Hindi), and ideographic languages such as Chinese. Related work involved practice with Egyptian Hieroglyphs. Through this exercise the written word is reduced to its most practical level as a symbolic code, and skills that literate people take for granted are exposed.

Exploring attitudes

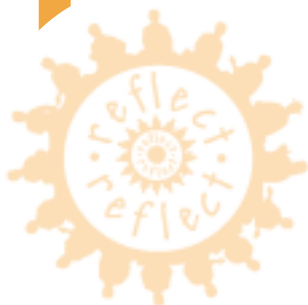
In **Malawi** participants were divided into 3 groups and asked to take on the perspective of "the illiterate", "the semi-literate" and the "educated professionals". Each was asked to explore how they feel about themselves and their attitudes or prejudices about the other two groups. This revealed powerful negative, as well as positive, associations.

Just one more means of communication

In **Pakistan**, participants were asked to analyse different items of communication – written texts and radio and television broadcasts - looking not for the message being conveyed, but the motivations of the authors. Why are they communicating the message in that way? Who are they trying to reach? What impression are they trying to give? This wider analysis demystifies literacy – revealing it as just another medium for someone's intentions.



Matrix showing the causes of illiteracy.





Mapping Literacy

**Analysing the actual uses of literacy
in the environment of the Reflect group.**

WHY?

Literacy has different uses and meanings in different contexts. In order to embed the learning process in people's real needs and existing knowledge, it is important for the group to think about their own experiences of literacy. Defining the real uses of literacy in different spheres of life helps to give a practical focus and clarify abstract definitions. One way of doing this is for people to map out different uses of literacy that they experience, identifying different events or practices in their lives where literacy is used and reflecting on wider power issues involved.

WHEN?

The analysis of power in different means of communication is key to Reflect. It is therefore important both to introduce this at an early stage in Reflect, but also to return to it at different moments throughout the process. (See 'Socio-mathematics' in the *Numbers* section)

HOW?

Various different visualisation techniques can be used to explore the different uses of literacy in a community or organisation. Initial discussion on uses of literacy should be facilitated in order to bring out issues of power. In what situations do you encounter writing? Who writes and who reads that information? Does the use of writing in that situation exclude people? Why do people use writing in this situation? Is there any other way that the information could be communicated?

This type of analysis can then be developed into a matrix (see sheet in *Images* section), showing visually the concentration of different uses of literacy in certain spheres of life, from official to private, commercial and social.

A map could be constructed (see sheet in *Images* section) showing the physical locations where literacy is used in the group's environment – such as the market, the local town, official buildings or people's houses – and followed by discussion of the different relationships involved. For example, in some cases it might be that literacy is used as a barrier to entitlements, whereas in others, people with literacy skills might be seen as a good resource for the group.



Public literacy in the form of graffiti — a powerful medium — used by people in El Salvador during civil war.



By dramatising different situations where literacy is encountered using role play (see sheet in *Spoken Word* section), the group can explore how the use of the written word makes them feel in different situations and the strategies they use, or could use, to overcome these feelings. This can provoke discussion of existing and new strategies for defying the power of the written word.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE:

In **Lesotho**, Reflect practitioners have invented a game to promote reflection on local literacy practices, inspired by similar work in South Africa, as a way of translating a theoretical concept into something directly practical.

A game-board is made with five different symbols or shapes occurring in mixed orders, and five sets of cards correspond to these symbols. The different piles of cards depict different situations in the main areas of life where people may use literacy: the public, work, social or personal domain and the fifth for individual groups to decide according to their experience. Within each set, each card is different and portrays a specific situation, incident or event where literacy is used. Each player has a counter and throws a dice to determine how many steps to move on the board. When someone lands on a symbol, they pick up a card from the relevant pile. Then they must discuss what communication skills they need in that situation, how they feel or how they cope with such a situation.



Participants playing the literacy game in Lesotho.

The game itself develops literacy skills, through matching symbols and decoding images, and the cards could include words as well as pictures to extend this further. A game could be produced for a wider range of communication practices, and the game could be played in many other ways. For example, participants could be asked to focus specifically on power relations within any situation, or it could be played in teams using role-play. Facilitators can also use the game to enhance their own understanding of the different literacy needs of participants.

In rural areas of Cuzco, **Peru**, literacy mapping has been used to explore uses not just of literacy, but of different local languages, exploring which different practices are undertaken in which languages, and how this relates to issues of power and exclusion.





Language and Power

Analysing the relationships between language and power, especially in multilingual contexts, and providing language choices to participants.

WHY?

It is most likely that any Reflect group will be operating in a multilingual environment, and the people most systematically excluded in any context are usually those who do not speak the dominant national language. As Reflect does not rely on pre-printed materials, the prohibitive cost of publishing primers and other materials in local languages disappears and even languages without writing systems can be used for the learning process. One of the most important, and earliest, decisions for the group to make, therefore, is which language(s) they will use.

WHEN?

The decision of which language(s) to work in should be one of the first actions of the group, though analysis of local language use continues.

HOW?

The choice of language depends entirely on the context, and some of the arguments used for different choices are set out below. The challenge is to enable people to make an informed choice for themselves, as this will serve as a foundation for wider work on the links between communication and power. It is always important to explore the assumptions and relationships which shape people's perceptions of the values of different languages. It can be useful to facilitate discussion about historical changes in language use: which languages are dominant now? Which have been in the past? What does this mean? Have the same languages always been associated with the same activities and people? A timeline may be helpful to structure such discussion.

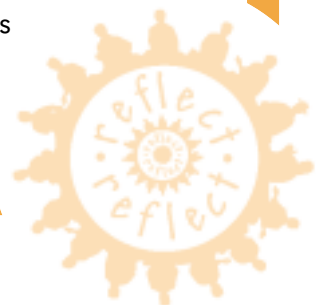


A bilingual road sign in India. Issues around language and power are more complex where different languages have different scripts.

Using mother tongue

There is a lot of evidence that learning, particularly literacy, is easier and more effective in the mother tongue. As existing knowledge forms the basis of new learning, it would be logical to learn in the mother tongue, and indeed, it would be difficult to have a serious dialogue on local issues in any other language.

In some Reflect groups, the mother tongue has been selected by participants as a statement of cultural resistance. The devaluation of local languages and culture is often part of a much wider picture of disempowerment that the



Reflect process seeks to address, and as such the assertion of the mother tongue becomes an integral part of the empowerment process. In some cases, a language advocacy movement has developed alongside the Reflect process to insist that local institutions and agencies work in that language.

Using a dominant language

If there are few materials printed in the language, and the real power of literacy clearly lies in other dominant or official languages, the value of literacy in the mother tongue becomes limited. If people want to meaningfully use literacy to have their voices heard, then access to the language used by official agencies, NGOs, the elite and the media becomes crucial.

Often the whole status of the Reflect process is closely linked to the language used, and low status may hamper efforts to challenge existing power structures. It is not surprising then to find that in many contexts Reflect participants express the desire to learn the ‘language of power’. In cases where people are already orally competent in this language, and where the script is the same as the mother tongue, this is relatively unproblematic. For ideas, see the sheet on ‘Teaching a Second Language’, in the Spoken Word section.



Linguas	Casa	Escola	Mercado	Igreja	Município
Escrita	3	3	2	2	3
Oral	1	2	-	-	-
Escrita	2	1	1	1	1
Oral	2	2	-	-	-
Escrita	1	2	1	2	2
Oral	2	2	3	3	1
Escrita	4	3	2	3	4
Oral	-	-	-	-	-
Escrita	3	2	1	2	3
Oral	1	2	-	-	-

Matrix showing the extent that different languages are used in different forms (written or oral) in different places (e.g. home, school, market, church) Mozambique.

Using both

In many cases participants may decide to learn both in mother tongue and a dominant language. The challenge lies in ensuring the right balance and in transcending the usual “transition model” where the mother tongue is just used as a way into the dominant language and then abandoned. Reflect offers the possibility of sustaining both languages in parallel, although where the script is different this is more complex.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In Bundibugyo, **Uganda**, a language and literacy matrix was used to map language use in different areas of peoples lives. Six local languages were identified and the written and spoken uses of each were marked against different activities, from education to religion and dealings with government. The result was a decision to work in three of the languages, two of which had never previously been written down. This decision was backed up by a campaign to get more agencies and offices to use and publish in these languages - which in turn generated employment opportunities for local people.

In Zambezia, **Mozambique**, education officers participating in a Reflect workshop began to question their own assumptions that Portuguese should be the language of education. They constructed a map showing the languages spoken and the levels of school enrolment for each district. The failures of the present system were visualised clearly and succinctly, opening up space for re-thinking the role of local languages within learning processes.





Building on Names and Identities

Participants can learn to write their own name in a few days—
and from there the group are quickly able to de-code almost any text.

WHY?

The individual identity of each participant is a powerful place to start any process. Signing one's name is an important symbolic and practical act of literacy, strongly associated with social status, creating strong motivation to learn. It is possible to teach someone to write their name very quickly, helping to reinforce manual dexterity and letter recognition skills based on participants' own knowledge.

WHEN?

From the first week! This can be very effective as the first step of a Reflect process.

HOW?

The facilitator can generate discussion and reflection on literacy and power by asking people how it feels when they are required to sign their name or put a thumb-print, and what the power relationships are at these moments. Those who can already write their name should be encouraged to do so, and asked to share with other participants what they know about the relationship between the shapes on the paper and the sounds in their name. The facilitator should then write down everyone's full name and participants can discuss where they see similarities and try to recognise their own name.



*Nepalise woman learning to write her name,
Sindhupalchowk, Nepal.*

Participants then copy their name onto a blank page, if necessary with the help of the facilitator or another participant. Working one-on-one with participants, the facilitator can ensure that they can relate the sounds of their name to the letters on the paper, where necessary writing letters or syllables slightly apart.

Practice

Participants can then practice writing their names and be encouraged to do so at home. It can be interesting to get them to try writing with different materials, pens, pencils, markers, chalk, sticks in the dust etc. With a couple of group sessions to reinforce the learning (ensuring that letters are still being written clearly and that the sound/letter link is recalled), participants are likely to



quickly become good at writing their name and they can then be given other names to practice – of their children, family or friends, neighbourhood or village.

Collective power

The next step is then to display the collective knowledge of the group back to the participants. The full alphabet (in capitals and small letters) can be written on the wall and each time a letter appears in a name it can be ticked on the wall, so that a pattern of regularity of letters emerges. By the end, it is likely in most contexts, and with most alphabets, that between 80% and 100% of the alphabet will have been covered.

From this point onwards almost any text can be collectively decoded by the group. Participants are asked to look out for 'their letters' or 'their syllables' in each text. It may take three or four participants together to work out the sound of just one word – though context can also provide clues. There may be one or two gaps – which the facilitator can identify easily by observing which letters remain unknown to people – but on the whole, any text can be read. It will be slow at first but people will gradually get quicker at recognising letters. If the script is not phonetic, irregularities will have to be explained as they arise, but even in a language as inconsistent as English it can work.

All the approaches identified on other resource pages now become possible, no text will now be alien to participants. This generates huge confidence – and the active detective work of decoding each new text can become a stimulating process, gradually extending each participant's familiarity with all letters, which will develop through practice rather than requiring any further explicit teaching.

One powerful aspect of this is that it reinforces the sense of the power of the group – that as a group of people they possess the collective knowledge to do anything - an image that can be related to many other situations.

Action

Once participants have developed confidence in writing their own names they should be encouraged to actively seek out those situations where not being able to sign their name previously humiliated or disempowered them. Discussing these situations within the group and identifying key ones where action will be taken can be very empowering.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In Orissa, **India**, participants started by learning not only their own names but also the name of their village, district, state and country – their full address. This builds further on the sense of identity – of everyone having multiple levels of identity. It is also valuable in that, for many people, the capacity to write their address is second only to the capacity to write their name. When forms need to be filled in or official documents signed then an address is often requested.

EXAMPLE

The text below, in English (a very irregular language) could be decoded by the following five people even if they were completely unable to read and write – if they were just each taught the links between sounds and letters in their own name.

Maria Delgado

Anthea Santos

Cary Fortuna

Prikasha Jones

William Yates

"There is a serious shortage of water for irrigation"





From Graphics to Words

This page offers some ideas around how to use maps, diagrams and other visual communication techniques to develop practical literacy work.

WHY?

PRA visualisation tools are a powerful way of structuring discussion and dialogue, but can also be used for generating a wide range of direct literacy work, both at basic and more advanced levels.

WHEN?

At any stage.

HOW?

Visualisation techniques can be used to generate a wide range of words linked to analysis around a particular theme. Different graphics like maps, matrices, calendars and diagrams can be used in different ways for literacy work. For example, a calendar could be constructed using purely words, whereas a map may need lines and symbols also.



Map showing various words and symbols for different styles of houses, Orissa, India.

From image to word

A common way of working with visualisations is to produce them initially on a large scale using movable objects. These objects are then labelled with simple pictures/symbols drawn by the participants and the pictures are used to transfer the visualisation onto a large sheet of paper. This transfer from 3 to 2 dimensions is the essence of literacy as the group develops its own code to represent real objects. Practice with drawing pictures also helps participants with the manual dexterity skills needed for writing.

The written word can then be placed next to or underneath each picture. In contexts where two languages are being used the word can be written in both languages using different colour pens. In this way participants produce a visual dictionary on the theme being discussed. These words can then be copied onto word cards or used as the basis for participants to form short phrases summarising key points of their discussion.

Starting with words

Written words can also be used in the actual construction of graphics from a relatively early stage. For example, in doing a land use map, instead of using objects or pictures, cards with the words "corn", "wheat" or "cotton" could be placed in the places where these crops are grown. Or the titles of rows and columns in a matrix analysing health issues could be written out as words. So long as these cards can be contested and re-arranged, this can be a good way to integrate literacy practice with dialogue. Difficulty in reading words will rarely act as a block to dialogue as the graphic is constructed piece by piece and participants rapidly develop skills for word recognition. The process



of making multiple cards helps to provide practice in writing and the participants are encouraged to seek visual clues in the shapes of letters and words.

Additional written materials

As well as introducing written words to the process of constructing graphics, written materials from other sources which relate to the theme of the discussion can be brought in and used. Depending on their level of experience, participants might want to read the texts, or pick out certain words (see 'Building from whole texts'). Participants could also ask themselves who produced the particular text, and why? This could lead to a discussion of the power issues involved in producing written material.

Copying graphics

By reproducing graphics produced in the circle in their own books, participants can practice writing as well as ensuring they have a permanent copy of their own, or a personalised variation. It can also be useful for facilitators to make good quality copies of all graphics and related texts agreed by the circle and then photocopy them for all participants, where this is possible. This can help to ensure that the debates and conclusions are shared within households and the wider community and that a permanent record is made. In some cases it may even be possible for each participant to compile their own book through the Reflect process, with the different visualisations acting as a backbone for the book, alongside short texts written by the participant about each graphic. Where "adult stationery" (see page on 'Naming and Framing') is used this could be very powerful

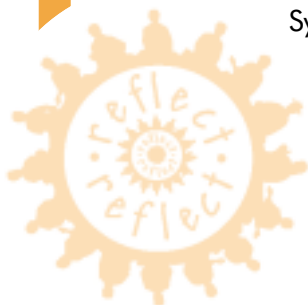
When discussing a graphic and considering literacy it would also be interesting to consider what situations related to this graphic require literacy usage. For example, if considering a matrix of land tenancy, participants might look at land title documents or the forms that people need to fill in to secure land tenure. Participants could look at who has power in the situations where these documents are used and discuss whether there are any actions they could take to reduce literacy usage and change the power relations.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Mozambique**, Reflect facilitators have gone one step further, copying the different graphics onto A4 paper, photocopying them and presenting them back to all participants. The different visualisations have acted as the basic material for the book. But each participant has written a short text alongside each graphic which captures their understanding of the discussion which took place during the graphic production. This reinforces ownership of the discussion while giving each participant a permanent record of what took place which can be shared with others.

Links to further work

The use of visualisation to generate discussion and thereby link to communication and action is the basis of Reflect. The techniques described on this page have links to most other practices described in this pack. In relation to literacy, it is the basis of work on 'Letters, Syllables and Words', 'Using Whole Texts', and many other of the techniques described in this resource pack.





Letters, Syllables and Words

A range of ideas for developing practical work with smaller units of language – words, syllables and letters.

WHY?

A common problem with traditional literacy programmes has been that writing is taught in isolation from meaning, starting with the alphabet and moving on to syllables and words. This makes literacy a purely technical process, paying no attention to the purpose of communication and failing to capitalise on people's motivations to learn. However, within a broader focus on communication and power, some basic decoding skills can be developed very quickly by paying attention to these small units of written language.

WHEN?

Integrated into any work on literacy, at various stages throughout the process.

HOW?

There are many different units of writing, from the letter and syllable, to sentences and whole complex texts. In order to retain relevance, work on smaller units, such as syllables, must be derived from words generated during meaningful activity.

The alphabet

The learning of letters is often a very passive activity after the dynamic process of constructing a graphic. The shift from vigorous debate into literacy work is often marked by a shift from physical movement to passive sitting with a book and a pen. Keeping people active and moving when focusing on literacy can help to maintain interest.

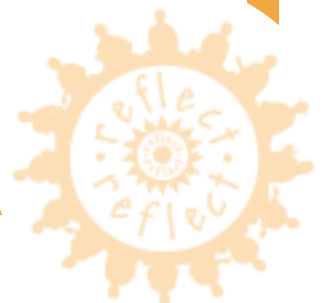
One of the simplest things to do is write the alphabet on the wall (in capitals and small letters where appropriate). This has sometimes been avoided in Reflect circles as it reinforces an image of primary schooling. However, in many cases it can be useful to show people the extent of the challenge that faces them in terms of letter recognition. When combined with other approaches such as using names or learning from whole texts, this can be particularly effective, as participants realise that they are making rapid progress and the task is not as infinite or intimidating as they may previously have thought.

Syllable cards

Freire's 'Generative Word' method takes a word which is evocative to participants and relates it to key local issues, using pictures or other codes.



Women in a Reflect circle in Uganda making new words from syllables.



In Reflect, generative words can be chosen by participants or facilitators based on their discussions or drawn out from texts they have collectively written. The chosen word is then broken down into syllables and each syllable is placed with each possible vowel to make a “syllabic family” (e.g. cotton: cat, cet, cit, cot, cut). These are then used to build new words. An effective approach is to make a set of “syllable cards” which participants can move around to physically construct new words, making the process much more interactive. However, the method should not be overused, as too much attention to syllables and letters makes literacy into an abstract or technical thing, deprived of any meaning and detached from practical use.

Whole words

Any graphics produced by the group, whether maps, calendars or matrices, will generate a wide vocabulary on the theme being discussed. If every item on the graphic is labelled, linking the images to words, this vocabulary can then be used to construct new written sentences.

Word cards can be a very powerful way for participants to construct sentences – revealing, for example, how small changes in words or sequencing can make big changes to meaning. The availability of cards and marker pens in Reflect circles makes the development of word cards a logical addition to other techniques. Clearly, the words should be on issues that arise from graphics and debates and have relevance to the group. Playing around with the sequencing of these can be a dynamic and creative activity, and new word cards can be added through suggestions from participants.



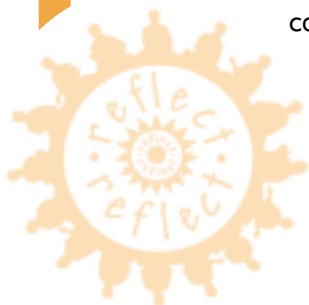
Using various materials to spell the word ‘patti’ meaning cotton in Telegu, East Godavari, India.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

Yakshi, in **India**, encourage participants to act out the shape of letters, forming their bodies into the shapes, and then moving around to form different words. Others work on making letters out of locally available materials, such as straw or clay.

In **El Salvador** a Reflect circle constructed a calendar to look at agricultural work in different seasons. This generated the words “plant”, “weed”, “harvest”, “store”, “fertilise”, “sell”, as well as the words for different crops “tobacco”, “cotton”, “maize”, “yucca”, “beans”. Cards were made for each of these words to label the calendar. The cards were then removed from the calendar and shuffled, and participants took turns trying to recognise the words. Subsequent graphics included a matrix to analyse each crop. This generated new word cards for “profit”, “loss”, “diseased”, “nutritious”, “reliable”, “hard work”, “pests”, “debt”, “money-lender”. The facilitator compiled all these cards and made some additional cards for small linking words (such as “we”, “is”, “a”, “make”, “grow”, “but”, “it” etc.).

Participants then took it in turns to construct sentences by sequencing these word cards, making new word cards whenever they needed a new word. Key sentences were adjusted and corrected until everyone agreed with them. These were then recorded on flipcharts before the cards were re-shuffled and new sentences were started.





Using Whole Texts

Ways to begin work on literacy from whole, meaningful texts rather than single words.

WHY?

Literacy is not a purely technical skill; it is a means of communication. Therefore, for literacy to have relevance for people, it must be taught using texts that communicate a genuine and relevant meaning. Adults already use complex forms of oral communication, and if literacy is to reinforce these existing skills, then the texts used to teach it must be complex, not simple units of language.

WHEN?

From day one of any Reflect programme, even with people who have no previous experience of reading and writing.

HOW?

The basic idea is to start by generating a whole, meaningful text or document, then to look at the words and syllables within that text, before returning to the whole text again at the end. The focus is on the full richness of the meaning of the text, rather than the 'micro-language' of letters. The emphasis is on the whole rather than the parts; the end rather than the means.



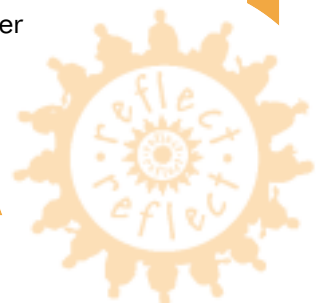
*Developing our own materials:
Word recognition exercises within a
whole story, India – Himalayan Reflect
Circle – Pithoragarh.*

Generating texts from discussion

The Reflect process depends not on materials brought from outside, but on texts and graphics developed by participants themselves. Even when learners do not know how to write a single word they can construct texts orally with the facilitator acting as a scribe. Texts can be generated from discussions that have been stimulated and structured using any participatory method. These may be based on the conclusions of the group; on key points raised in discussion; or on stories or incidents that have been mentioned. This technique may be used throughout the Reflect process, so it is important that the facilitator guides participants to develop different types of texts to fit different purposes: letters, stories, poems, songs or even short plays.

Writing with purpose

In some cases the texts used may simply be a record of discussions, but in other cases participants may decide that they wish to communicate their observations to others, whether neighbours, children, local authorities,



landowners or NGOs. Again, the facilitator should offer to act as a scribe, writing down the things that participants wish to say. A first step might be to write notes, or a list of key points to be made, which can be organised and linked together through further discussion to provide a structure for the text.

Refining the text

The facilitator should repeatedly read the text back to participants (and encourage them to help) so that the group can make changes, choosing the right words and phrases to get the message across, and reviewing the overall coherence of the text. Will it make sense to the target audience? Is it the right tone for them? Is the message strong enough? The group also need to decide how the text will be shared with the intended audience. For example, will it be the basis of a speech or a meeting or will it be delivered in its written form? Throughout this process the facilitator should write clearly on a large, visible piece of paper and keep reading sections aloud, encouraging participants to find ways of recognising and remembering and refining the text. Re-reading and re-writing is an integral part of the process, as the main focus is on the organisation and representation of ideas. Once a text has been written and agreed, in some contexts it might be appropriate to use the text as the basis of work to pick out key words and look at their component parts (see 'Letters, Syllables and Words' sheet).

Bringing in other texts

Facilitators should supplement texts produced by the group with a variety of texts from external sources for critical analysis. These should always be real texts, such as books, pamphlets or leaflets rather than textbooks, on topics that participants have already been dealing with. The group can then use their experience to critically read and challenge such texts, or to seek specific information or perspectives on issues that have been left unresolved. Where necessary the facilitator can read the texts aloud, asking questions to promote discussion and analysis, such as: Who wrote this? With what intention? Who is the audience? Is it well written? Can we learn anything from it to improve our own text?

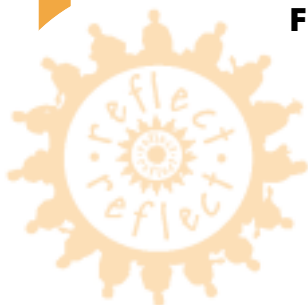
EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Nicaragua**, Reflect circles run by Handicap International have generated texts that have been transformed into pamphlets on; alternative ways to make a living, nutrition; and alternative health.

USING EXISTING TEXTS:
In Brazil, Espiritu Santu have worked both with self-generated and prepared texts. "When working with prepared texts we transcribe them onto flipchart paper. The facilitator reads clearly, pointing to each word but always ensuring that the sense of the sentence comes through. Participants can pick out certain words, copy them down, talk about meaning and create new phrases. They even try re-writing their own version. It is good to re-write! On every text we discuss continuity, clarity of meaning, ways of making things clearer and better written."

Further information

For more reading on this subject, look at, *"Teaching Booklets: Literacy, Language"* 1999 CLEBA /IDEA and *"Un decálogo para enseñar a escribir"* Pasquier y Dolz, Cultura y Educación 1996, 2.





Planning for Local Development

How the Reflect process can be used to develop systematic local plans for development and challenge those of the government and NGOs.

WRITTEN WORD

WHY?

As part of their learning process, Reflect participants undertake a detailed analysis of their local area, touching on health, agriculture, education, livelihoods, environment, politics, social relations and cultural practices. It is often the first opportunity for people to do such a systematic analysis over an extended time period. What this analysis may lack in technical expertise is more than made up for by the local specificity and the often unexpected connections and insights that emerge, things which no formal studies are likely to have picked up on.

The information generated through the Reflect process forms a powerful basis for micro-level development plans, articulating local priorities for the use of government and NGO resources, and creating that crucial bridge between analysis and action. Working in this way people can assume the real power of literacy rather than just learning techniques of reading and writing.

WHEN?

The development of local plans may be an integral part of the vision of Reflect groups from the start or may emerge later in the process as a way of pulling together the accumulated analysis.



Map of the local community, in Sunarijore village, Bolangir, Orissa, India – showing how caste structures the layout of the village.

HOW?

Once a group has generated sufficient material covering the range of local issues they have identified, this needs to be consolidated into a single document or file. This process of consolidation will involve discussion, or use of new graphics, in order to establish priorities and highlight recommendations for action. The final document may include copies of different maps, calendars, matrices and diagrams, as well as key texts written by the group and conclusions from discussions.

Challenging existing plans

A key associated step is to map out those planning documents that exist in different institutions that directly affect the community. This should specifically include planning documents of local government, specialist government agencies, development organisations and private sector companies that have a potential impact on the community. Documents that name the community as targets of a particular project, programme, initiative or scheme are clearly of particular



importance. The organisation implementing Reflect should be willing to set an example of transparency by sharing its own key planning documents.

The facilitator should then encourage critical examination of both the content of these external plans and the process used to arrive at them, particularly in relation to the priorities identified by the group. Ideally the real documents will be used with key sections highlighted and transcribed onto a flipchart by the facilitator. Key issues that may arise include:

- What are the interests of the agencies concerned?
- Do they have a right to plan for our community?
- Has there been consultation?
- Do these plans help us access our basic rights?
- How do the priorities/strategies in these plans relate to our own analysis?
- How could these documents be challenged, changed or re-written?

This can provide a very powerful basis for linking the practice of literacy to a concrete change process.

Asserting a new model

In the light of this critique the group can plan how to influence the agencies concerned and get action on their own plans and priorities. Different strategies may emerge for dealing with different institutions. In some cases clear facts, statistics and new information will provide the basis for challenging existing plans. In other cases the collective power of a united community or group will have a bigger impact. Sometimes it may be necessary to use the rhetoric of an institution (such as consultation) against it, or to use the power of the ballot box against elected officials.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

Villages across Bolangir District in Orissa, **India**, have been involved in local planning linked to Reflect. Initially a plan is developed with support from the whole community, using constitutional powers to assert this as the authentic local development plan. Then, the most vulnerable groups are organised into Reflect circles to develop action plans from their perspective – challenging the plans, correcting them and demanding their implementation. The results have been dramatic. As the leader of Sunarijore village commented:

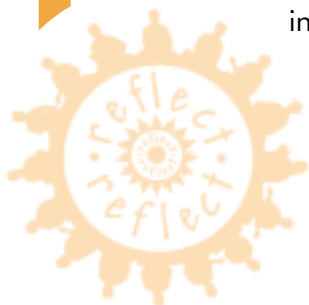
"In earlier government development plans we were always left out because we were not organised and we were not in the planning process. Now we have changed this and have addressed so many issues, including housing for the poorest, drinking water provision, irrigation, accessing government schemes and much more. The key has been sustained dialogue."

(see www.reflect-action.org for full report).

In Cusco, **Peru**, CADEP use Reflect for developing local plans with the indigenous Quechua population. The process is very positive, beginning by looking at what is working well, and drawing lessons from these experiences to apply to future work.

ENSURING LOCAL CAPACITY FOR DEVELOPMENT

CIAZO in El Salvador are aware that the first challenge for Reflect circles is to share their analysis and plan with their wider community. In their plans they always include a critical look at their own capacity and identify their own training needs – even making an outline curriculum for themselves covering topics such as planning, management, negotiation, legal literacy, leadership and the environment.





Documenting Local Knowledge

Ideas and examples of how to link the Reflect process to systematic documentation of local knowledge as a means to reclaim or assert local culture.

WHY?

Fundamental to the Reflect process is a respect for people's existing knowledge and experience. Rather than depending on external texts, the core learning material is generated by participants themselves. It is logical to take this a step further and link the process explicitly to an assertion of that knowledge, particularly where the traditional knowledge base is being lost or marginalised.

WHEN?

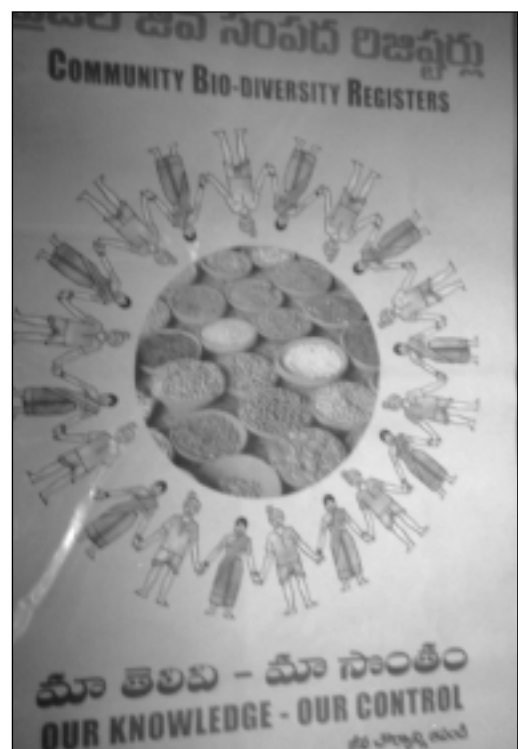
This is likely to be an integral part of the Reflect process throughout, though there may be particular moments of consolidation and action.

HOW?

People know what they know, but often they don't have confidence in the value of their knowledge, especially when confronted with the domination of other, foreign, practices and products. In some cases, the assertion of local knowledge may be seen as a stand against imperialism, in others it may be that ways of doing things that have been developed through a long-standing relationship with the local environment are more effective. Furthermore, in an era of global trade and the patenting of intellectual property, it may be necessary in many cases for communities to document their knowledge and declare it as their 'property' as an act of local resistance or survival.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

Yakshi and Girijan Deepika work with tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh, **India**. They have been linking Reflect to a programme of systematic documentation of traditional knowledge: from medicinal plants to local seed diversity and agricultural practice. On top of this, they have carefully documented and written down hundreds of oral histories, proverbs and local songs. Participants in Reflect circles themselves play a key role in compiling this material, both from their own knowledge and through interviewing others. In Bolangir, India, a range of PRA tools were used to document and revive traditional agricultural and forest production practices. These documents were then circulated in different villages where these practices were becoming extinct.



Poster showing local bio-diversity, campaigning against biopiracy, Bolangir, Orissa, India.



Documenting history and culture

The Museum of the Word and Image is described by Santiago, the founder, as “a museum without walls”. The museum is actually a mobile exhibition and website (www.museo.com.sv) aimed at Salvadorians abroad, documenting the people’s history and culture of **El Salvador**. The first exhibition was set up in an international consumer fair organised by the American Embassy in San Salvador, and showed traditional dances and rituals, arts and crafts and oral histories next to stalls with the latest technology and consumer goods.

Santiago comments: *“By being a mobile museum we can go to places where no cultural activities normally take place. We also encourage people to document their own local histories, to construct a real, rather than distorted memory, and a sense of identity and belonging – a sense of self and of society which is not blinded by attempts to ape the US... It is based on a firm belief that if you lose your memory you lose your social vision.”*

Asserting intellectual property

The “hoodia” cactus plant has been used by generations of San people in the Kalahari desert in Southern Africa to stave off hunger and thirst. But recently Pfizer, the US drug group sought to patent the plant as a means to cure obesity in the North. There was no consultation with the San people who had effectively discovered the plant’s properties as an appetite suppressant. One company executive even commented that “the people who discovered the plant have disappeared”. It took over a year of campaigning to get a deal whereby the San will now benefit from the huge profits likely to be made by the Pfizer.

Links to further work

The assertion of local knowledge will take different forms depending on the intention. It may be that the group wants to keep written records, photographic evidence or taped oral histories – to enhance a sense of cultural identity, or ensure that practical knowledge is not lost. Or participants, with the help of the facilitator, might identify particular audiences to whom they wish to relate their knowledge. This may be in order to counter potentially harmful or inappropriate planning and programmes by external ‘experts’, to claim property rights, provide insights and advice, or to raise the visibility and legitimacy of their identity, history and culture. Depending on the purpose and audience, different means of communication can be used, and it may be useful to link this in to work using video, theatre, the Internet, and other public media where possible.



Guitar player, playing songs about the local community that he has written, El Salvador.





Using Newspapers

Newspapers can be a valuable source of relevant local text, as well as an effective means of communicating messages.

WHY?

Newspapers are one of the best sources of locally relevant material. They are cheap, contain a wide variety of material, and are usually easily obtained, even in remote areas. The critical reading of newspapers – especially on political, economic or social issues – can sharpen the skills and analysis of Reflect participants and place local issues in wider national or international contexts. Furthermore, newspapers can be one of the most effective means for a group to translate analysis into action.

WHEN?

In some cases, Reflect circles have established regular sessions for reading newspapers, once a week or month, helping to build a habit of reading. In other cases newspaper articles are introduced within routine sessions, particularly where articles are found which address themes arising from recent group discussions.

HOW?

Where newspapers are available in the language of the group, there are many uses for them. It may be necessary to negotiate with newspaper distributors to extend their circulation to the area, or older newspapers can be obtained

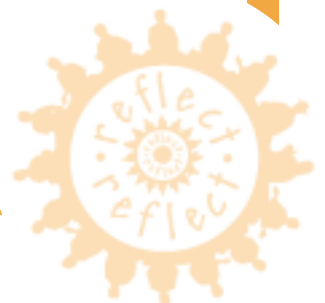
on a regular basis from the nearest town. Facilitators might consider building up a library of articles for future use, as well as immediately using current material.

Regular discussion of newspapers will encourage critical reading. It can be useful to show how various papers select different news or give a different emphasis on the same stories. One way to do this is to get different papers for the same day and to review the priority they give to certain stories – what makes the front page? How many lines are written on each? Whose perspective is included or ignored? Such a process may lead to participants doing a mock-up of their own paper for that day. Through such work participants can begin to question what is written, and challenge the power of the written word.

Reflect circles should also see newspapers and magazines as a logical means to enabling them to assert their voice, and reach above local elites and powerbrokers. Writing letters to local or national newspapers can be a



Father and son reading the 'Daily Pakistan' newspaper in Bahawalnagar, Pakistan. Structured discussion of newspaper articles in Reflect circles can stimulate regular reading and a critical approach.



good way of bringing local issues to the attention of policy makers, and strong allies can be made by inviting sympathetic journalists to expose local scandals. There is little that petty bureaucrats fear more than being ridiculed or exposed in print. The interest of the journalist may not naturally be on the side of participants, but a good story is often irresistible to them. It is important, however, that participants and facilitators remain aware of the motivations of the journalist, to ensure that they are not manipulated.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Uganda**, participants of the Reflect Circles in Mityana study the local newspaper published in the Lugandan language. One group, Tumbu, chose to study a column called 'Aunt', which highlights different cultural issues and dilemmas. Each week a different participant prepares for the session by reading the section, and facilitates discussion with all participants on the highlighted issue. This has proved a very popular session in which participants take the lead role and has led to some letters to the newspaper on issues raised.

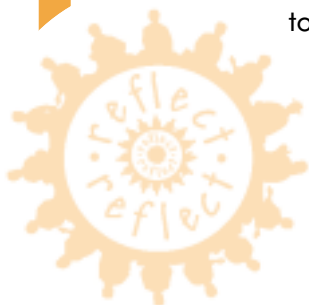
Other circles in Mityana use other sections of the newspaper, for example, a section called "Straight Talk" which deals with issues of HIV/AIDS and youth sexuality. Another circle focuses on a column that highlights modern agriculture practices. Maria Nandago, the national Reflect coordinator, notes that *"even with newspapers, participants can focus on the areas that interest them and which are relevant to their context"*.

Reading local and national newspapers is a regular task for the Reflect circle participants in Bhawalpur, **Pakistan**. Where participants themselves cannot read, the facilitator reads items aloud, selected according to the interests of the participants, to promote discussion. The gender column of the provincial newspaper is particularly popular, and sometimes raises issues that have not yet been discussed. Gradually the participants read more newspaper items by themselves. This link between discussion and practical reading experience is a great motivation to participants.



*Two men reading a newspaper in Bomet town, Kenya.
Distribution of newspapers in rural areas remains a
major challenge in many countries.*

During the 1980s, the Sandinista government in **Nicaragua** used newspapers to aid literacy programmes, publishing special sections targeted at newly literate readers using large print and accessible language. They dealt with topical issues with open sections for contributions and letters from people learning literacy.





Reports Cards

Report cards can be a very effective technique for Reflect participants to pass judgement on the quality of public services.

WRITTEN WORD

WHY?

Report cards give Reflect participants a means of expressing their concerns about public services in a concise and media-friendly format, enabling them to demand better quality services and galvanise wider support for change.

WHEN?

Report cards might be developed when the Reflect process has brought up serious inadequacies in the provision of public services, when facilitators from different circles have identified common problems with a particular service, or at the end of accumulated analysis by circles, to provide a more comprehensive commentary on the state of government services as a whole.

HOW?

A report card is basically a way for people to systematically express their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the services provided for them, or which they have a right to receive. These are usually government services, but the idea can be adapted by any development organisations working in an area, or even of the very organisation which is supporting the Reflect process, as an innovative form of evaluation. The following are indicative steps in developing a report card:

HOLDING GOVERNMENTS TO ACCOUNT

In 2001 the Global Campaign for Education called a global week of action on education in which national campaigns in different countries produced a report card. These focused on their government's performance in relation to the international Education For All goals.

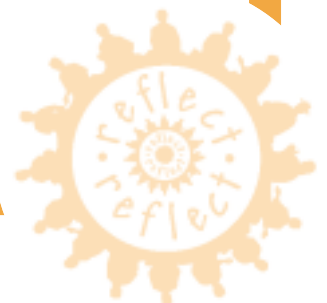
Determine the focus

Whether the cards report on a particular service or a cross-section will depend largely on the discussion and analysis from which the decision to use cards has emerged. Working on a range of services (e.g. health, education, electricity, water, policing) can add weight to the relative judgements made, giving positive reinforcement to those services that are performing well and emphasising the failures of those that are not. However, evaluation of a single type of service can target attention or reinforce an existing campaign, and comparisons can be made across communities.

Agree the criteria

A report card contains several different criteria by which each service will be judged, allowing comparisons to be made across services or areas. Specific examples should also be encouraged to enrich the findings. The types of criterion should be decided by the group, and many will have arisen from the initial analysis of the issues. They might include:

- reliability of the service
- quality of service
- difficulties encountered in dealing with the agency





Creating a Literate Environment

Ways of linking with wider institutions of literacy to ensure that progress and change is sustainable.

WRITTEN WORD

WHY?

It is often the case that the lives of Reflect participants in rural areas do not involve much routine exposure to the written word. There may indeed be little or nothing to read or write in the wider environment. The Reflect approach aims to link learning with action – and where it is linked to literacy skills, it is logical for the group to act systematically to create a more literate environment, through developing links with publishing and library services.

WHEN?

Action is needed before and during the learning process.

HOW?

There are many ways of creating a more literate environment, full of materials for use within the Reflect process, or for literate people to use and enjoy. Below are just a few of the options to explore:

Developing existing resources

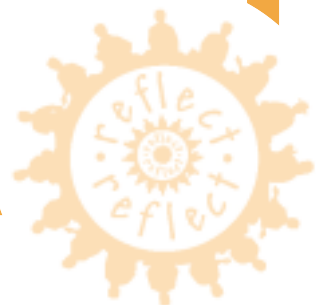
Rural or mobile libraries where they exist are obvious starting points for developing local written resources. However, these are often unimaginatively stocked, and some advocacy work may be needed to ensure that they provide information relevant to the local community. Through discussion, the Reflect group could identify the types of materials they would like to have available to present to the library service providers, whether information about basic rights, planning documents and legal materials or good stories, poems and songs in local languages.

Local development organisations and government agencies are often the principal producers of new written material. The Reflect group might analyse the type of output of these agencies to encourage them to improve their quality and relevance. What do they produce? Is it relevant to people? Is it readable? Is it in the right languages? How is it distributed?

Publishing companies in the region or country could also be approached to make them aware of the needs of local people. For example, discussions may lead to a recognition that materials need to be easier to read or published in other languages. Where it can be shown that there is a realistic demand for materials, publishers can often be persuaded to respond.

SUPPORT LOCAL PUBLISHING!

In many African countries, national publishing industries are in crisis. One cause is that foreign aid for producing text books is tied to the use of publishers with links to the donor country. Textbooks are often the mainstay of a publisher's business, subsidising other less sales-worthy areas. With textbook production given to foreign companies, local publishers struggle to survive, and the production of political and cultural literature suffers.



Creating new resources, and new practices

Any resources available locally to produce and publish information generated through the Reflect process should be utilised, whether these are low cost silk-screen printers, photocopiers, or computers. When participants see their own work in print this can be very motivating and help them demystify other publications.

Competitions in story-telling, essay writing and so on can stimulate creative writing and contribute to the revitalisation of local culture.

Newsletters, notice boards and posters can also contribute to the level and quality of the written environment. The Reflect group, or a local network of groups, may decide to produce regular newsletters on local issues, with news and opinions written by different local correspondents. This could be tied in with the methods for 'Recording Oral Testimony', in the Spoken Word section, to link the literate and non-literate cultures. See the sheet on 'Notice Boards' and 'Newsletters' for more ideas.



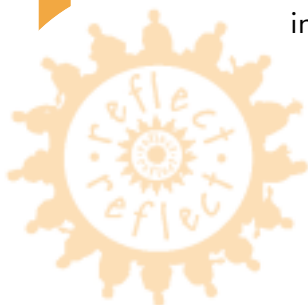
Silk-screen printing to create a newsletter, Uganda. A printer like this can be made for less than \$10 — so every Reflect circle can have one.

Letter writing is another practice which can contribute to the creation of a literate environment. Correspondence could be stimulated by arranging some mass mailings, distributing letters to all households with basic information about government services, or publicising an event organised by the Reflect group for example. Writing letters to newspapers or policy-makers is also often an appropriate action arising from analysis of an issue in a Reflect circle.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

Kyentulege Reflect circle in **Uganda** has developed an effective box library. They were originally given an empty metal box and then asked what they would like to include in it. They suggested a range of material on agriculture and health and a selection of stories. The box is kept by a designated person chosen by the group and participants are free to borrow materials when they wish. There are regular opportunities for participants to discuss what they have read, and a record book is used to monitor the use of the material. A key step has been in getting participants to 'own' the box by removing it from the control of the facilitator.

Fundación Hablascribe in Cali, **Colombia** develop local publishing centres to produce locally relevant materials. They train local secondary students on skills involved in printing, allowing local people to create their own images, stories, songs and poems. Collectively these people became known as the "inky people".





Notice Boards and Newsletters

Ideas for developing local media of communication, generated and coordinated by Reflect participants themselves.

WHY?

Newsletters and notice boards can be very effective and popular methods of communicating local news and views, while generating a more literate local environment.

WHEN?

Once participants have developed basic written or visual communication skills.

HOW?

The decision to produce a local newsletter, or set up a notice board, must arise from a real desire or need to communicate, rather than being a merely practical exercise in literacy. Broad participation in production and management is necessary to ensure wide relevance, impact and ownership. A wide variety of people should be encouraged to contribute, and it might be a good idea to get different community groups to make regular contributions. Decisions about content, audience, objectives and dissemination should be agreed by the group through the Reflect process, and some of the following are points to consider.

Content

A huge diversity of material can be included in newsletters and on notice boards, ensuring interest and relevance to a wide audience. A typical publication might include local news and opinion; updates from different community organisations, schemes and projects; conclusions from Reflect circle analysis; weather forecasts, market prices, local sports results and forthcoming events; poems, stories and pictures; and small adverts. The balance of contents will depend on the intended audience, the issues that the group feels it is important to express and the available contributors. The group needs to think about what will be interesting and relevant to the target audience, and what they want to achieve through the newsletter or notice board.



Community poster produced by a Reflect Circle following an analysis of domestic violence – translation: “Other women should not suffer what I have been through”.



Media

The choice of media will depend on the availability of materials and the expectations and habits of the intended audience. A notice board in a central location where people congregate might be considered the best way to reach the wider community, and also provides the broadest opportunity for contributions, as people can pin up their own news, adverts and so on. A printed newsletter might be more appropriate for communication across several communities, perhaps in collaboration with other Reflect groups in the area. This might either be printed in the form of a poster or as a small newspaper to be distributed to individual readers.

Distribution

The group will need to identify central points in the community where the newsletter can be easily distributed or the notice board well used. This will depend on the target audience: if the news is intended for local officials and decision makers, then a wider and more targeted distribution will be necessary. Asking people to pay for a newsletter helps to give it status and increases the chances of people reading it, but may reduce initial spread. Free distribution of a first issue may help establish a market.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

Ejo is a monthly newsletter publishing news, stories and letters about peace building activities in the Ruyigi province of **Burundi**. Contributions come from local people, and the publication is linked in to local Reflect processes and groups. The strongest themes of most contributions concern stories of forgiveness and the need to challenge prejudice and hatred. It has become a medium for people to “give accurate, frank accounts of their efforts to rebuild life after conflict and the challenges they are now facing”, acting as a powerful counterbalance to the misinformation and unaccountable media that contribute to the continuation of conflict and mistrust.

In **Sri Lanka** participants have established a system of signs and notices to alert community members when fields have been recently sprayed with chemicals which could be a health risk.

In Managua, **Nicaragua**, wall murals are used to communicate the conclusions of Reflect circle discussions to the wider neighbourhood. The mural is a form of communication that flourished in Nicaragua in the 1980s under the Sandinista government, and the use of this medium in itself has a powerful effect locally, challenging the present government.

In **Bolivia**, participants were initially nervous about making their own village wall newspapers, as it was such a public display of their feelings and opinions. However, after positive feedback they rapidly gained confidence and various circles came together during the municipal elections to set up a vivid wall paper in the central market of the nearest town clearly setting out their agenda for local development.



Young boy in Ruyigi, Burundi reading Ejo — the most influential community newsletter in the country, which takes grassroots voices right into the corridors of power.





Style and Genre

**Various ways of critically analysing
and using different writing styles.**

WRITTEN WORD

WHY?

The basic skills of literacy are not always sufficient to interpret and understand any written text. There are very different skills involved in the production and interpretation of different styles and genres of writing. The analysis and practice of different styles and genres should be seen as an integral part of any literacy process.

WHEN?

This can happen from a very early stage. Even people who have never learnt to read and write can discuss and analyse the form and purpose of different texts. It is part of demystifying literacy and enabling people to focus on the intentions behind communication.

HOW?

Whilst Reflect processes emphasise the generation of texts by participants themselves, it is also important that a wide variety of external material is available for critical analysis and information. A diverse collection of texts that have some influence on, or particular significance for, the community will provide the basis for work on style and genre. This may be established by the facilitator at the beginning of the process, but should be added to throughout the life of the Reflect group. Through access to a wide variety of texts, participants can practice reading and writing in different genres. However, the central concern should be to introduce meaningful texts at moments which can offer a new insight or perspective to an issue under analysis.

Styles or genres of text can be classified in different ways and there are no absolute right or wrong categories. Neither is there inherent value to different genres, none is better than any other, but all have their purpose. Over the page is an example of a classification used, which might help the group to think through the categories relevant to them and the texts they come across. However, rather than directly using such pre-existing categories, participants can develop their own classifications over time, through exposure to different types of text. This can start very simply, for example, defining only fact and fiction, and develop through discussion and analysis, as indicated over the page.



*Reflect participant reading
a report on the local community, India.*



GENRE	PURPOSE	EXAMPLES
Narrative	To entertain, inform or teach	Stories, fiction, biography
Poetical	To evoke or generate emotions	Poetry, stories with rich images
Recount	To tell what happened, news	Diary, newspaper, historical account
Instruction	To tell how to do something	Rules, recipes, manuals, directions
Report	To organise, document and store factual information	Documents that classify or examine
Explanation	To account for how or why something happens	Scientific studies and reports
Argument	To take a position and justify it	Manifestos, polemical writing, editorial

When a new text is introduced to the group, or becomes relevant to the discussion or analysis, the group can develop another dimension of analysis, looking at the style or genre using the following types of questions:

- What type of person or institution produced this text?
- What type of person or institution is the text written for?
- What are the objectives of the communication?
- What type of genre is being used? Why? What are the key features?
- Is the text clear and effective in achieving its objectives?
- Do we agree with this text?
- Can we improve on this text, adapt it, or use it for our own purposes?

Once participants have had exposure to different types of texts it is important to encourage them to experiment with these for themselves. Depending on their level of literacy this might be done individually, in small groups or collectively, with the facilitator acting as a scribe. When an issue has provoked particularly intense discussion, participants can be asked to capture their insights or conclusions using different genres – for example, writing a report, writing an argument / polemic or writing something poetic and evocative. The diverse outputs may be useful for reaching different audiences.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

CLEBA in **Colombia** have done important work focusing on texts that are collected or developed by facilitators in their training workshops, with emphasis given to the production of new texts around oral history, traditional knowledge, myths and legends.

Additional Information

Antonio Faundez has been in the forefront of work in this area, supporting an approach called “Pedagogy of the Text” which seeks to build a process around the analysis of different texts. (IDEA Geneva)



Demonstration on International Women’s Day, East Godavari, Andra Pradesh, India– local people fighting for their rights to land/crops traditional farming methods. The slogans used for a demonstration are of a particular genre.





Creative Writing

A range of ideas for how to facilitate creative expression using different writing styles.

WHY?

Enabling people to experiment with different creative forms of expression is clearly linked to strengthening their capacity to communicate. However well developed the literacy skills of participants, the role of the facilitator in blending written and oral communication can show up and overcome the artificial gulf between literacy and literary work. Creative writing is also an important way of celebrating language and expression.

WHEN?

At any time. Although some of these approaches depend on a level of literacy, all can be used even where basic skills are limited.

HOW?

There are a great variety of approaches used in creative writing workshops that can be adapted for work in Reflect processes. This is just a small selection to give some ideas.



Story written and illustrated by a Reflect participant in Bangladesh.

Spontaneous poems

The collective creation of poetry is a fun and effective way to demystify the creative process. One method is 'word association', where members of the group call out words or phrases that they associate with a particular central word and these are written down to form a type of poem. The group may wish to reorganise the words and phrases to create a more powerful or beautiful final piece.

Personal memories

One of the first impulses for people wishing to write is to capture their own experiences, to tell their own story. A good starting point can be to ask participants to draw their own river of life (see 'Using Rivers' in the *Images* section) and select key moments or memories to dramatise. People often write powerfully about their own childhood, a lost way of life or different times.

Using objects or props

The facilitator can bring in a collection of unusual or random objects and ask participants to devise a story in which some or all are used in a key role. Bringing in everyday objects from past times (which are now rarely seen) can powerfully evoke memory work.



Opening sentences

One of the simplest ways to get people to tell a story, whether true or fictional, is to give an opening line as a prompt. For example, *my happiest memory is ... The forest is special to me because once I ... The time when I felt most (or least) powerful was when ...*

Character development

Whilst personal stories are powerful it can also be liberating to write about others, to construct characters who are completely different and look at the world through their eyes. The development of characters is central to much creative writing and can enable people to explore issues, experiences and emotions in new ways. One way to start is to ask one person to sit in the middle of a circle and pretend to be someone different, a created character. The rest of the group ask questions, which the person in the middle must answer "in character", both from their viewpoint and in their voice. Different questions force them to embellish the character in unexpected ways.



*Reflect participant reading a story
he has written to the rest of
the community, Uganda.*

Story-telling

Given support everyone can develop skills to make up and narrate a good story. Developing such skills can be a powerful way of enabling people to see alternative worlds, make new connections and think about things in a new way. One way to stimulate this in a group is to set up two circles of the same number of people, one inside the other, facing each other. The people of the inner circle each start telling a story to the person opposite. The circles then move round, so that new partnerships are formed, and the people in the outer circle then re-tell the story to the person opposite adding a new detail. This is repeated until the original partnerships are reformed, and the stories return to their original tellers, at which point they can be recorded.

Exploring sub-text

Some of the most powerful writing captures what is going on beneath the surface of normal interaction. One way to capture this is to ask people to imagine a situation and its characters, and to write a short dialogue on a flipchart with big spaces between each line. Two other people then look at what is written and write in a different colour beneath each line what they believe the people are thinking, what they are not saying or what they really mean to say.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Honduras**, CNTC used rivers to facilitate communication between generations. Older people were encouraged to identify points from their life stories to share with the younger generation, creating community cohesion and ensuring that lessons are not forgotten.

A writing workshop for women prisoners in Winchester Prison, **UK**, used a map of the world to stimulate stories based on where people came from or where they had been. Women spoke of their most vivid memories of the places they came from and then about their dreams of returning, creating the basis for written stories.





Institutional Literacy

**Ways for institutions which promote literacy
to evaluate their own practices and power.**

WHY?

Institutions are not neutral, detached from the processes they facilitate or promote. Organisations promoting literacy or social change are often blind to their own practice of literacy and how it is linked to their retention of power. There are many ways in which we can change the way that we use literacy in organisations in order to change power relationships more broadly. We should look at, and make transparent, our own organisation's practice of literacy as an integral part of any literacy process.

WHEN?

It is advisable that any organisation wishing to implement a Reflect programme should undertake analysis of their own literacy practices from the very beginning.

HOW?

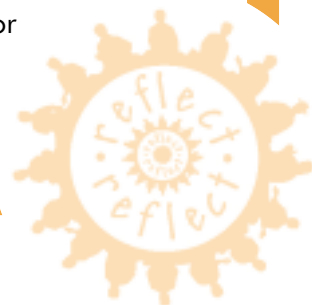
As Reflect implementing or promoting organisations we should be asking ourselves searching questions about our own practice of literacy and power. If a fundamental part of the Reflect process is to shift the balance of power towards participants, then we need to ensure that we are part of the process rather than a hindrance to it.

Recognising that we, as agencies implementing Reflect, are often part of the problem is never easy. *"Development agencies are not neutral or invisible ... in many cases we are an integral part of the problem ... especially in the way we use our power of literacy. It is the written documents of institutions that mediate power. We talk of democracy but do not practice it. We generate endless paper but very little learning. Very few agencies are working in a truly transparent way – with the communities having real control of the resources."* David Archer, Adult Education & Development, 1999.

A good starting point is to look at the range of ways in which our own organisation uses the written word, the types of materials and their functions, and examine how this empowers and disempowers, includes and excludes, different stakeholders from the perspective of gender, ethnicity, literacy, hierarchy and so on. Overleaf is a sample analysis of the types of materials used by an organisation, (adapted from Dixon/Tuladhar 'Whole language Action Learning Manual' 1997). However, the organisation will need to develop its own matrix, based on its actual communication practices.

Once the types of written communication have been explored, it is important to consider: how each excludes and includes different people, how specialised or complex technical language and formats are used, and how they might be avoided? How can we communicate in a more responsive, transparent way and ensure that we share our power or use it most positively?

BEWARE THE JARGON!
Every profession develops its own discourse and every institution further overlays its own. The following makes complete sense to some people:
"The LTP of DA2 accurately reflects the CSP which itself echoes the priorities in FPT – but delays in case history collection and problems with MiniSAS mean a shortfall in FY02."



Functions	Literacy Materials
Communication	Letters, memos, notes
Information	Leaflets, posters, books, manuals, maps, web-sites
Planning	Strategic/annual plans, calendars, agendas, workplans
Documentation	Reports, evaluations, log-books, record books, diaries
Finance	Receipts, accounts, budgets, bankbooks
Organising	Filing systems, directories, organisational charts
Analysing	Reports, diagrams, charts
Regulation	Legal/ official documents, stamps/seals.

It may be helpful to identify specific documents that are central to power within the organisation (e.g. key plans and budgets) and to explore ways in which they can be simplified / opened up – perhaps, for example, through using other media (audio / video).

More generally the Reflect process, as a whole, over time, should be used to shift the focus of planning and budgeting, with Reflect circles taking on a central role.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In 2001, ActionAid convened a Participatory Methodologies Forum with senior managers from across the organisation. This meeting focused on the contradictions between the organisation’s own practice of power and its objective of empowering poor and marginalised people. It became very clear that the institutional systems and policies were a fundamental part of the problem, perpetuating a centralisation of power. The fact that documents were only available in English, and key processes were only conducted in English, limited the power of many people within the organisation. Some positive ways forward were identified, to shift power and give space for people to shape priorities from the bottom up.

In **El Salvador** CIAZO produced annual calendars of their institution and matched these to the typical agricultural workloads of people in communities where they work. This simple step laid out clearly that key moments of institutional planning coincided with the time when local people had least time to participate. A similar process was done with weekly and daily timetables, again showing that the time that staff visited communities rarely coincided with times when people were available. This reflection led to radical changes!



Participants at the Participatory Methodologies Forum – monitoring power and its links to various literacy practices in ActionAid, Bangladesh, 2001.

Further information

David Archer, ‘Adult Education & Development’, 1999, Dixon/Tuladhar, ‘Whole Language Action Learning Manual’, 1997.





Social Audit

How to make local development organisations and agencies increasingly transparent and accountable to local people.

WHY?

Most development agencies, whether government or NGOs, plan for people rather than with them, designing and executing their budgets with little or no input from the people they intend to benefit. Social audit is one way to turn the tables and give people an opportunity to directly hold agencies accountable, enabling them to ask questions even of powerful institutions and officials, strengthening grassroots democracy.

WHEN?

Social audit is likely to be an approach used once the group has developed confidence in their analytical skills and reached a deep level of analysis on local needs and issues.

HOW?

A good way to introduce the concept and process of social audit to a Reflect group can be to undertake one on the Reflect implementing organisation itself. While an important and valuable exercise in itself (and the organisation must be willing to act on any insights and recommendations that emerge), it is also a way to build the confidence and skills of the participants to partake in this type of process. By creating a culture of openness in the organisation, we enable participants to expect and demand the same from other agencies, including government. Outlined below are some of the key moments involved in a social audit process.



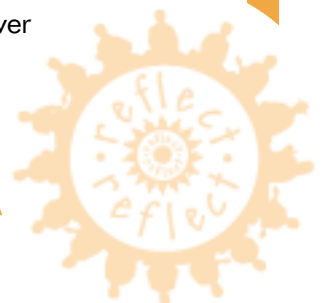
Describing a community map – Social Audit in process in Bolangir, Orissa, India 2001.

Identify a programme

The group need to identify the programme or project which they wish to evaluate, of which they are key stakeholders and yet have had little chance to make meaningful input. Projects which are in a process of change, reflection and evaluation, or have been recently completed a certain phase, are more likely to be able to incorporate any insights and recommendations into their future work. Once the agency has been selected, they must be informed, and invited to participate on a specific day. Few organisations can refuse to present themselves openly for public scrutiny if public pressure is put on them.

Gather information

All relevant plans, reports and accounts relating to the project in question should be collected in preparation for the audit. In some cases agencies may resist giving over internal documents, and it is useful to be aware of any legal requirements or information laws which can be applied. The processes of gathering



documentation can take a month or two. Throughout the process, it is important to pull out key pieces of evidence and data to avoid the amount of information becoming unmanageable. This can be done through discussions, collective reading and visualisation exercises in the Reflect group.

Documentation and dissemination

The key information should be displayed for at least a week before the meeting, in whichever format is most appropriate to enable a wide group of people to understand it. This might be dates, numbers of people, names, sums of money, objectives of the project and anything else which can help people prepare to question and challenge the official reports and accounts of the implementing agency.

Presentation

This can be organised in various ways. One option is to set it up like a court case, with a jury of local people sitting in judgement, a prosecutor to present the case, witnesses to testify, key evidence and defendants. In other cases a less formal arena for discussion might be appropriate. Whatever the scenario, there needs to be space for a clear presentation of what was planned and what has been officially reported and accounted for, followed by the presentation of any evidence or testimonies which challenge the official version. There needs also to be some means by which people can pass a final judgement or make recommendations.



Roll of graphics which form part of the social audit – Bolangir, Orissa, India 2001.

Follow-up

This sort of audit should never be a one off event as it will take time for people to build the confidence to challenge powerful agencies. It is particularly effective if the same agency can be persuaded to open up to a social audit several times during the life of a particular project or programme.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In October 2001 ActionAid and Collective Action for Drought Mitigation in Bolangir, **India**, organised a social audit in 9 villages of Jharnipalli. The process started in advance with a street play to inform people about their right to information concerning government services. Political support for the process from the District Collector forced government officials to open up their files, including full details of work orders and accounts. A team of volunteers reviewed these and then visited villages to verify whether reported work had taken place and whether local people had any evidence/suspicion of corruption. It was important to encourage villagers to participate without fear of recriminations. Key information was collected on clear charts and a sequence of presentations was agreed. On the day itself over 2,500 people gathered. For the first time local people were able to challenge government officials directly, exposing corruption and collusion. This led to the suspension of and criminal proceedings against the secretary of the local council. (See Mohammed Asif, PLA Notes, Feb 02)





Numbers

Introduction

WHAT IS NUMERICAL COMMUNICATION?

Numeracy is sidelined in many traditional learning processes, and when it is introduced it is usually in the abstract, reduced to basic arithmetic. However, in a Reflect process, numeracy is understood more broadly: it is about solving problems, analysing issues and expressing information clearly and concisely, and it is usually a mixture of written, oral and mental methods. The idea of graphic construction and visual representation, so central to Reflect, is intrinsically mathematical. In fact many of the graphics, such as matrices, pie charts, bar charts and calendars use mathematics explicitly for analysis.

WHY NUMERICAL COMMUNICATION?

Mathematics is crucially important in strengthening people's capacity to communicate and has a critical role to play in challenging power inequities. Numbers affect everyone. The most obvious and powerful use of numbers is in relation to money, which affects every individual both directly (for instance, in relation to the price that we secure for our labour or produce, or the price of basic goods and services we rely on) and indirectly (for example, through budgetary decision making at international, national and local levels). Moreover, numbers, in the form of statistics used by different agencies for planning, also have a huge, but often unrecognised, influence on people's lives.

FOCUS OF NUMERICAL COMMUNICATION

Work around numerical communication in Reflect includes a critical reading of existing 'texts' and the active construction of alternatives. Thus, many of the sheets give ideas for highlighting and strengthening the mathematical skills that participants already have, and challenging traditional understandings of mathematics. Others focus more explicitly on using these skills within a process of analysis, challenging the power of written mathematical texts and constructing alternatives.

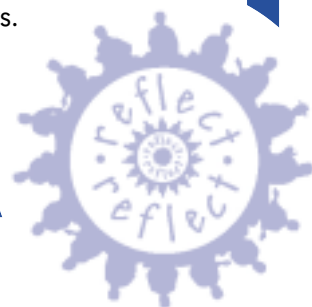
KEY PRINCIPLES

The starting point for numerical communication must be to demystify mathematics and analyse the links between the uses of numeracy and the practice of power.

Maths in context: Numeracy must only be introduced in context. It should not be taught mechanically, but focus on real use. Work with numbers should only take place if it is relevant to the particular topic being discussed. Calculations should be used to solve real problems and contribute to a process of analysis (see 'Using Visuals').

Previous knowledge: Participants should be supported in discovering, using and strengthening the mathematical skills that they already possess. This implies working with oral and mental mathematical processes. Problems encountered by adults joining a learning process are often due to formal written processes clashing with the mental way of calculating. Conversely, using participants' prior skills helps to build confidence as participants recognise their own power and knowledge, while simultaneously enhancing their skills and understanding (see 'Building on Existing Knowledge').

Written mathematics: This does not mean that mathematics should never be written down, it is crucially important for participants to be able to read and write numbers. But it is important to analyse and challenge the power of written mathematics. It is only through taking part in this analysis that participants will be able to make



informed decisions about what mathematical knowledge they need. When written down, mental processes look cumbersome. However, if participants have a record of their workings, and can see the complexity of what they are doing, it is likely to increase their self-confidence. Moreover, the written process can be used to show how the same mathematical processes are employed in different contexts – this is crucial if people are to use mathematics to expand their opportunities (see ‘Oral mathematics’ or ‘Using drama’)

Calculators: Where appropriate, Reflect practitioners are encouraged to use calculators. This can be used to simplify the mathematical process, so that participants can focus on the underlying issues at hand. They are also useful to check mental calculations, and illustrate how the same process can be used in different situations (see ‘Using Calculators’).

Micro-macro links: A common problem with participatory tools is that they can lock people into a local, micro-level analysis, isolated from the wider context and missing the links between the local, national and international situations. Many of the suggestions in this section aim to provide a bridge, enabling people to place their reality in a wider context (see ‘Analysing Budgets’, or ‘Prices’).

External information: Further information is often necessary to make the micro-macro links. This gives rise to two issues: *Firstly*, who decides when it is appropriate to introduce external documents and how can this be done without corrupting a process which is controlled by the learners themselves? *Secondly*, how and where is this information best accessed? There are no simple answers to either of these points, though it is suggested that participants take part in these discussions. To ease problems of access, the implementing organisation will need to play a role in linking with other organisations, libraries and Internet centres. They may also play a role in presenting the information in a user-friendly format (see, ‘Understanding statistics’).

SEQUENCING

Although there is no particular sequence to these sheets, it will be difficult to work directly with externally produced texts if there has been no prior work on the participants’ mathematical skills. If participants have had any exposure to the type of mathematics taught in school it is likely that they will have certain expectations about maths. It will be important to ‘unlearn’ this, challenging the power of the western models of calculations so that participants will be able to appreciate their own abilities and build on these.

Although work with numeracy will have different aims and focuses at different times, one way to sequence the work might be:

- Participants **develop a graphic** as part of existing analysis, using numeracy, either in the construction or analysis;
- An **external text** with a numeracy element on the same theme is critically read;
- Participants place their previous local analysis in this **wider context**;
- Participants **identify ways** in which numerical communication may contribute to wider action to advance their interests.

LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

It is assumed that all participants have some level of interaction with a market economy, and that the national currency is based on a decimal system. In addition, we suppose that the participants will have devised their own mathematical systems for working within this market economy, and that there exists a developed counting system in their local language. If you have ideas for working in situations with different counting systems or currencies with different number bases we would welcome your contributions.





First Steps

Introducing written numbers and arithmetic operations, focusing specifically on the sorts of numbers which will be relevant to people's daily lives.

WHY?

Number recognition is crucial if participants are to produce their own mathematical texts, or critically analyse and challenge those of others.

WHEN?

Very early on. It could be the first piece of work done with numbers, or it could be combined with work on oral mathematics or a socio-mathematical survey (see separate sheets).

HOW?

Various techniques can be used. It is important that the numbers used are relevant to participants, so they could begin by learning to write their date of birth, their house number or something else that is meaningful to them. This will strengthen recognition of the symbols and their meanings.

Writing numbers

Learning numbers is like learning to write letters – if people have not had much experience holding a pen they will probably struggle to form the shapes of numbers, and a lot of time may need to be spent practising this.

To introduce numbers, the facilitator could write the ages of all the Reflect participants on the board. Participants could then write their age, first in the air, to practice the shapes, and then onto a blank page – if necessary with the help of the facilitator or another participant. They could then practice rewriting it with different pens or with chalk, sticks in the dust, stones or twigs. They could also try to write the ages of other members of their family.

Other categories such as house numbers or number of children can be used. The advantage of using age is that it introduces the idea of place value (see box), due to the use of bigger numbers, and will frequently be useful when participants are required to write their ages on forms.

Simple addition

Participants do not need to be taught addition, as they will already be able to do it mentally (see separate sheet on 'Oral Mathematics'). However, simple addition can be used to illustrate the concept of place value. For example, participants could work out the total age of their family members, or of all participants in the group. As the combined ages move into triple figures participants will be able to see how place value works.

Identity cards or telephone numbers could also be used to introduce a wide range of numbers with which participants will be very familiar – it is likely that

PLACE VALUE
A crucial element of understanding and using numbers, and one which people often struggle with, is 'place value'. This describes the fact that the same numeric symbol can represent a different value depending on where it is placed in the number. For example, the symbol 1 can signify one, ten or one hundred, depending where it is placed.

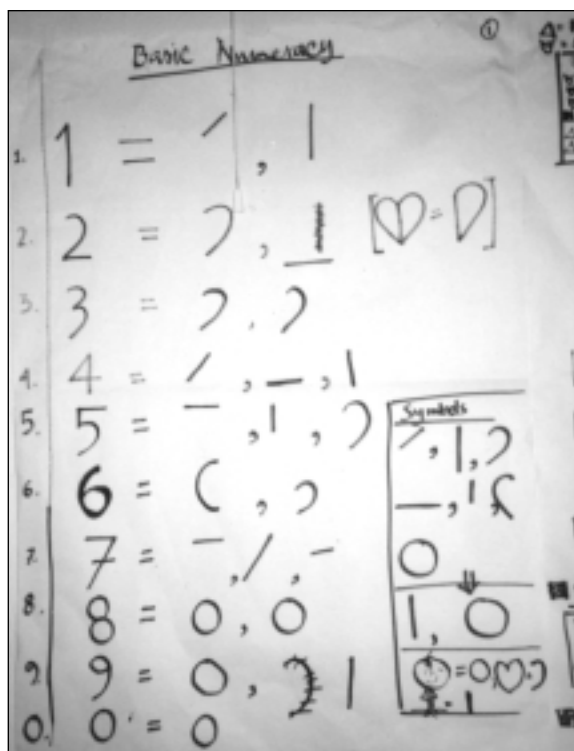


most participants will remember these numbers by heart. However, it is important to emphasise that these are not generally read using place value rules.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Bangladesh** the Reflect group looked for shapes from their village and used a mixture of different objects to create numbers. Building the numbers step by step in this way meant that participants associated the numbers with familiar objects, thus enhancing participants' ability to remember the different numbers.

In a numeracy workshop in **Bolivia** one participant demonstrated how she used her hands to work out her 6 to 10 times tables by numbering her fingers on both hands between 6 and 10. The little fingers were both worth six, up to the thumbs, which were worth ten. Marian showed how by touching two fingers together she could work out any multiplication. For example if asked what is 7×8 she would touch together the forth finger of one hand (7) and the middle finger of the other (8). All the fingers below, and the fingers touching were given the value of 10 each. The fingers above were multiplied together - and added to the total. For 7×8 , there are five fingers below (including the ones touching) and on one hand there are three above, while on the other only two.



Numbers can be built from shapes found in the community, Bangladesh.

$$3 \times 2 = 6 + (10 + 10 + 10 + 10 + 10 = 50) = 56.$$

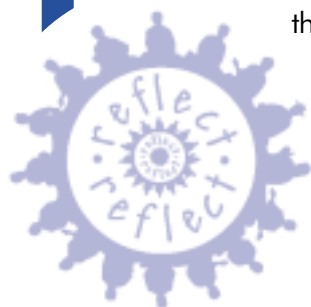
By drawing hands, and labelling the fingers, these numbers could be learnt in context. Further, the basic arithmetic signs + and x can be introduced. By using this traditional way of calculating to introduce a new concept not only will number recognition be reinforced, but the method of multiplication is valued, thus strengthening Marian's belief in her own ability.

Additional Information

Work with written numbers should link with work on oral mathematics and socio-mathematics. In this way, participants can recognise that written numbers and calculations link to concepts they already know and use.

It is important for participants to become familiar with large numbers rapidly as these will be the most relevant for their lives. This might be made easier by doing some work with calculators (see sheet). At this stage it might be interesting to look at issues around numbers and power, for example asking participants to consider how they feel about written numbers and why they are important to them.

See the sheet on 'Working with Money' for more ideas as to how to introduce basic numeracy concepts.





Working with Money

Using money to introduce written numbers and basic arithmetic operations to participants.

WHY?

Almost everyone comes into contact with money in their daily lives, and using money enables people to discover the mathematical skills they already possess. Mathematics becomes a real and integrated part of people's lives.

The fact that numbers are written on most notes and coins means that money provides a basis for recognition of numbers. Moreover, when using money people often combine several mathematical operations at once — thus linking addition to subtraction, multiplication and division.

WHEN?

Very early on. It could be the first piece of work done with numbers.

HOW?

When working with money it is a good idea to either work with the notes and coins themselves or good imitations. If copies are used they should be coloured and sized appropriately to encourage recognition. As a first step participants should be asked to examine the money - state its value and explain how they identify the particular note or coin, commenting on any markings they notice on the money. The majority of notes and coins will have the amount written in letters, however, the focus of this exercise is learning the symbols for different numbers.



The majority of people come into contact with money in their daily lives.

Number recognition

The facilitator could write numbers on the board – sticking the note or coin next to each number to reinforce participants' recognition of the numbers. Participants can then copy these numbers, again drawing alongside a copy of the money or another visual prompt, such as the colour of the note or size or shape of the coin, to strengthen the link (see 'First Steps' for ideas as to how to practice writing numbers). There will be some numbers that do not appear on the money. For example, few currencies have denominations of 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 or 9. These numbers can either be introduced through basic arithmetic with money (see overleaf), or by using ideas from 'First Steps' in this section.

Depending on the currency participants will learn a wide range of numbers – and begin to capture the concept of place value (that a number takes a different value according to where it is placed). For example, in Mozambique, due to the value of metacais, participants may be familiar with numbers up to 100,000, while in neighbouring South Africa most people only use denominations up to the value of 50 or 100



Rand. It is important that participants feel comfortable with numbers up to 100 as this will give them a basis for understanding any numbers which emerge during Reflect discussions.

Writing bigger numbers

Using combinations of notes and coins, bigger numbers can be introduced. The money should be used in the move from physical notes to written numbers. For example: 236 may be made up of two 100 notes, three 10s and coins worth 6.

Equivalences

Money is also a useful tool to introduce the idea that different sums can have the same answer. Participants could try to write down all the different combinations of notes and coins to arrive at a set amount. For example, you can make 100 with one note of 100, or two of 50, five 20s, or five 10s + six 5s + twenty 1s etc. This will also strengthen participants' understanding of place value.

Arithmetic

Simple arithmetic functions can be explored using money. For example working out the cost of several items involves addition, and calculating change uses subtraction. Multiplication can be used to work out the cost of more than one of any item, and division could be introduced through an exercise whereby money is shared out equally.



A monthly budget of a Reflect participant – showing how much is spent on various items.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In a Reflect group in **Bolivia**, participants worked with the monthly budget of one member's family – looking at both income and expenditure. Using copies of money participants represented the exact joint monthly income of the family. Using a mixture of money and mental arithmetic participants first calculated the total family income and then moved on to look at expenditure.

A variety of mathematical operations were required to work out the monthly expenditure. For example, when examining the amount spent on food the group first had to agree on what time of year they were discussing (prices vary according to crop availability) and the quantity of food bought at any one time (prices decrease if food is bought in bulk). Some foodstuffs were bought daily or weekly, others fortnightly or monthly, or even every other month. Thus, multiplication and division were used to calculate expenditure on different items. Once the individual items were calculated, participants used addition to find the total expenditure on food. They did this by counting out the money spent on each item, and then counting the entire amount.

To complete the budget participants had to use subtraction to find the balance (although many participants used addition, from the expenditure - to the income, to work out the balance). This exercise demonstrates how many different types of calculations can be introduced at once - which is how people use mathematics in their daily lives.

Additional Information

Once participants have worked with money to calculate their own budget they could use the same techniques (i.e. using money to calculate) to look at other budgets – for example, local governments. See sheet on 'Analysing budgets'.





Socio-Mathematics

Enabling participants to recognise how numeracy is part of everyday life, and value their own numeracy skills and experience.

WHY?

Through conducting a socio-mathematical survey and gaining confidence in their own numeracy skills, participants can question what is meant by numeracy and challenge the power of formal mathematics. Participants build up a picture of the numeracy skills they have already, reflect on where they encounter mathematics in their lives and why they feel the need to learn further mathematics. The survey also illustrates the diversity of mathematical interests, experience and strategies within a group.

WHEN?

Early on. If participants say they want to learn mathematics, these ideas can be used to explore why, and uncover local perceptions of mathematics.

HOW?

In many cases socio-mathematical analysis can be done of graphics originally produced by the Reflect group for a completely different purpose, thus integrating numeracy, into the Reflect process.

For example, a group might construct a calendar showing the different workloads of women, men, girls and boys to stimulate discussion around gender, power and age. The chart could then become the basis of a socio-mathematical survey, asking participants to identify points in the day when they are likely to encounter numbers or use mathematics (see box). Whatever graphic is used, socio-mathematical analysis should focus on mathematics and power. Suggested questions include:

- ? **What** do you think mathematics is?
- ? **When and where** do you use mathematics?
- ? **Why** is mathematics important to you?
- ? **How do you feel** when you use mathematics?
- ? Are there times when you have had **problems**/felt disempowered because of mathematics?
- ? What **tools** do people use locally to help with calculations?
- ? What **words** are used for different functions/processes?
- ? What **documents** do people come across with numbers on?
- ? What **traditional** and modern systems are used for **measurements** – do people know the equivalences?

STIMULATING DISCUSSION

In many situations an activity may be so routine that the participant does not see that they are using mathematics. The facilitator could therefore use various examples to stimulate debate, asking people to identify moments where:

- money is used,
- weights or quantities are calculated, or
- times or distances are estimated.

This is important as it enables people to focus on real-life uses of numeracy, and reframe their expectations.



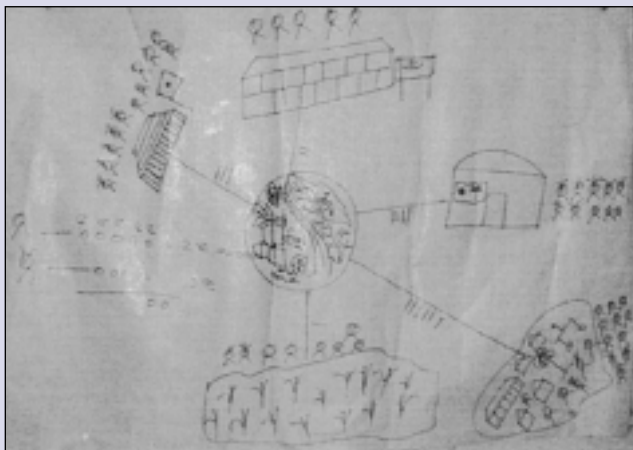
In a numeracy workshop in **South Africa** participants constructed a map of the country, with each person constructing the part which represented their home area. Participants illustrated various aspects of the area, including two places where they used mathematics. This not only enabled participants to discuss the different uses of maths in their daily lives, but also to draw out similarities between situations where maths is important.

Further discussion focused on what was actually being understood as mathematics. For example, while there was general agreement that mathematics plays a role in market trading, it was less obvious to some that cooking or time management could be considered as mathematical activities. This led to a debate about different types of maths that are used everyday and how skills are developed to deal with the different situations we all come across in our daily lives.

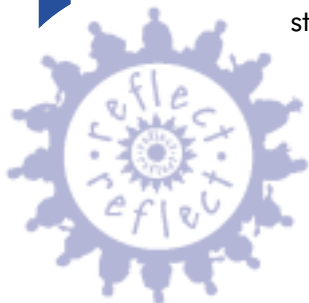
Following analysis of the map, participants compiled the examples of mathematics usage from the map into a prioritisation matrix. By placing the same categories along both axes, they were able to compare each situation and discuss where mathematics played the largest role or was most crucial to enable them to have control in each situation. They added other situations where mathematics was considered important. They then compared the various situations in order to analyse why they felt it was important to learn mathematics.

Following this they used the matrix to look at the types of mathematical processes involved in routine activities and analysed the power issues at play. This technique could be used at community level to see why the group felt it was important to strengthen their own mathematical ability.

By using calendars, charts and tables to represent their daily use of mathematics, participants gain experience in producing their own graphs. This is important as it will strengthen their ability to understand and interpret external texts (for example, statistics are frequently expressed in graphical form). This work links well with 'Oral mathematics' (see sheet).



A map focusing on where numeracy skills are used in the community could be overlaid on an existing community map. It might be useful to pinpoint those situations where the use of numbers is linked to power (For example, Government or NGO budgets, market traders, moneylenders etc.) Participants could identify where they feel confident to deal with a situation, how they deal with it, and where they encounter problems due to their perceived lack of number skills.





Oral Mathematics

Participants talk through the various stages they go through in making calculations, verbalising their mental processes.

WHY?

To build people's confidence in their own mathematical skills and ability and to challenge the power of formal mathematics through showing that there are many legitimate ways to do the same calculation.

WHEN?

Oral mathematics should form a natural part of any discussion where calculations are made. In early discussions about mathematics, the technique could be used to illustrate alternatives to formal mathematical processes and challenge the idea of expert knowledge. Or the technique might become necessary during the construction of a graphic, or within a song or role-play.

HOW?

Taking a specific calculation, participants reflect alone on how they would work out the answer. The calculation should be rooted in a concrete situation. Then in pairs, participants discuss the stages they would go through in making the calculation.

Each pair reports back to the group outlining the processes involved at each stage. If the group have had some exposure to written numbers, and the technique is being used to strengthen participants' belief in their own skills, recording the methods used could be a powerful way of illustrating the complexity and value of individual knowledge.

When the pairs have all reported back, the group discuss and comment on the techniques used. It is likely that within a group different mental processes are followed to arrive at the same answer. Discussion could focus on how reliable each method was and whether it would work in other situations. In this way, participants either gain confidence in their own methods or learn and adopt new methods more suitable to them. If the whole group has used the same technique, discussion may boost people's confidence in their own method as they realise that it is commonly shared.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

Participants of a Reflect circle in **El Salvador**, having identified a bridge as their most pressing need, were working out what the cost of the bridge would be. They collected various objects to represent the materials necessary for building the bridge and discussed how much they would need of each material. There was substantial input from members of the group with experience in building work.

How much change do you get from 100 Peso note after paying for six people's lunch at 14 Peso each?

14 Peso each, 6 people

$$10 \times 6 = 60$$

$$\rightarrow 4 \times 6 = 24$$

$$\underline{84}$$

$$84 + 6 = 90 \quad + 10 = 100$$

$$\rightarrow 6 + 10 = 16$$

Change = 16 Peso

or: $15 \times 6 = 90$

$$- 6 = 84$$

$$100 - 80 = 20$$

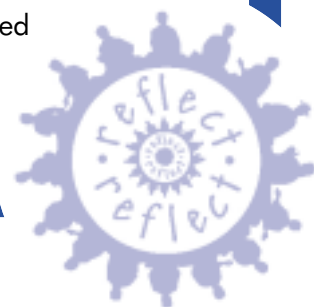
$$20 - 4 = 16$$

Change = 16 Peso

or: $14 \times 5 = 70 \quad + 14 = 84$

$$84 + 16 = 100$$

Change = 16 Peso



Records of the necessary amounts for each material and their estimated cost were kept using units of measurement that participants felt appropriate, such as sacks, quintals and metres. Then participants worked in pairs, without writing anything down, to calculate the total estimated cost for each material (e.g. 25 bags of cement at 36 colones a bag). Each pair informed the rest of the group of the steps that they had taken to reach their answer. Each time they compared the different ways of reaching the answer, and questioned whether one way was better than another.

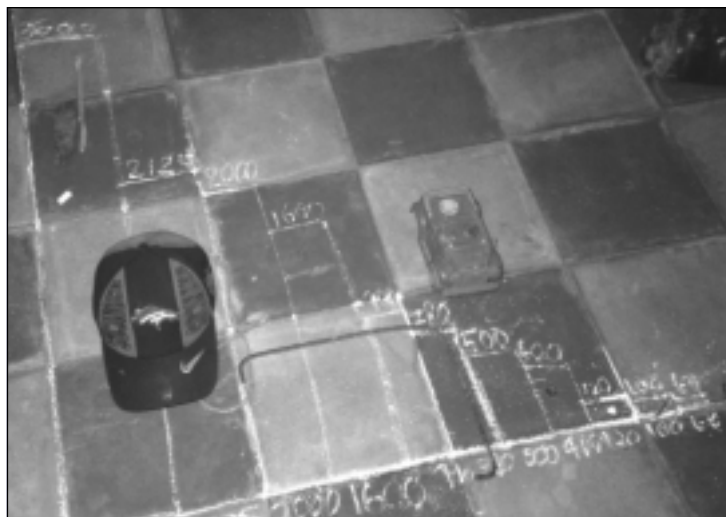
Through doing this, the participants' confidence in their own abilities grew and they also began to recognise why it was not necessary for them to learn formal mathematics. By emphasising the fact that, although various different methods were used, the same answer was reached – the participants realised that there are many ways to perform the same calculation and there is no reason why one way is more valid than another.

When the group had calculated the total amount of money needed for each material (including transport and labour costs) they drew a bar chart. This was an effective way to compare the different costs involved in building a bridge, while also reinforcing people's understanding of bar charts themselves, which are used a lot in official statistics (see sheet on 'Understanding Statistics').

In a Reflect circle in **Lesotho** participants discussed the different ways they use mathematics. Ntata Pitso Mafa commented that he had no formal literacy or numeracy experience. However, he can make clothes to very precise measurements (even without reading the numbers on a tape measure). He simply measures different parts of people (e.g. waists) with a string, marks it to size, and then lays the string on cloth. He calculates the amount of extra material necessary for stitching and good fit. Likewise a participant observed that he can only count to 20 but that this is not a problem – he simply counts his goats in batches of 20, dividing them into groups.

Follow up work

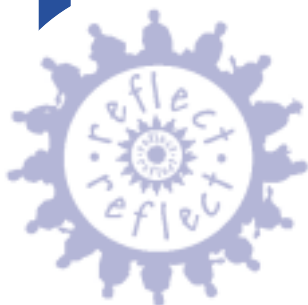
This work could take various directions. If participants begin to challenge the importance of formal mathematics and the idea of expert knowledge, they might go on to challenge mathematics in other situations, such as questioning why official documents present things in the way that they do. Or they might gain confidence to critically discuss what they need to learn and why, redefining their own agendas.



Graph showing the relative costs of the different elements needed to build a bridge, El Salvador.

Reference Material

For more information about writing down people's oral mathematics processes contact Kate Newman, knewman@actionaid.org.uk





Using Visuals

Using PRA visualisations to practice mathematical operations and to extend mathematical understanding and analysis.

WHY?

Though numeracy skills are central to many key areas of analysis, they are often taught in a very abstract way. By using participatory visuals, concepts can be introduced in context, using real numbers in concrete situations. This can help simplify more complex ideas such as proportions and fractions.

Furthermore, the construction of many PRA graphics is in itself mathematical. By drawing links between familiar graphics such as calendars, matrices or pie charts, and the way data and statistics are presented, participants will be more able to critically analyse such diagrams.

WHEN?

At any time.

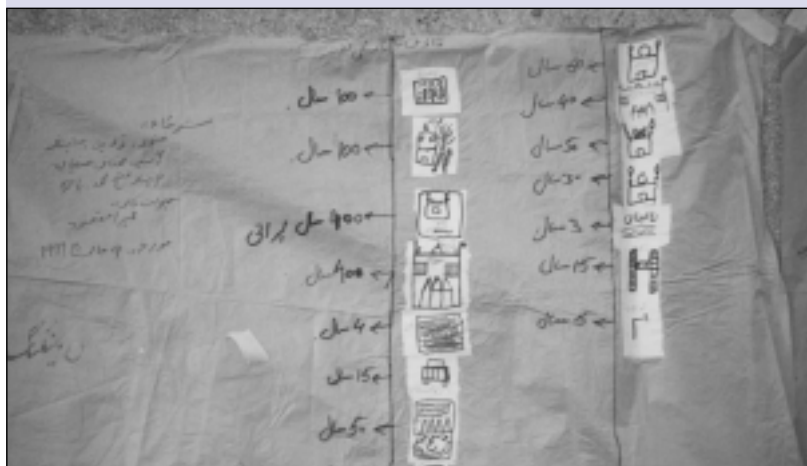
HOW?

Visuals should never be used purely to generate numbers as this can quickly lead to the numbers becoming abstract and meaningless. Rather, mathematical learning, or understanding, must be integrated into the process of constructing visuals. Many graphics used in Reflect draw on mathematical principles, and all graphics contain information that can be expressed mathematically. Here we have used the example of constructing a community map to illustrate how mathematical operations can be part of the process of constructing and analysing a graphic.

Writing numbers

The move from creating a graphic on the ground to copying this onto flip-chart paper and into exercise books provides a useful opportunity for learning or practising different numerical symbols. For example, when working with a

EXAMPLE OF MATHEMATICS IN PRA GRAPHICS



A map relies on some sort of understanding of scale, as might a **time-line**. These two graphics also require participants to estimate either distance or time.

The structure of **calendars** and **matrices** is mathematical - an area is divided into squares containing information relating to a particular row in relation to a particular column. Further, calendars require fractions/percentages as participants compare the incidence of each 'category' each month. Matrices call for basic arithmetic as columns and rows are added.

To construct **pie charts** and **chapati diagrams** an understanding of proportion is needed, as the size of the different elements of the graphic are compared.



map, stones might be used to represent the number of people in each household. These stones should be drawn when the map is copied onto flip chart paper. Only at this stage should the drawing of the stones be replaced by the symbol for their total number. This will reinforce number recognition as it is placed in context.

Using mental arithmetic

While constructing a map it is also likely that a lot of mental arithmetic will take place - for example when calculating the number of people who live in the village. Further, the move from verbal to visual mathematics will occur as people debate how to represent different house or land sizes and as such reach agreement on a scale for the map.

Drawing links

A further way of strengthening mathematical skills while analysing graphics would be for the facilitator to draw attention to how the same mathematical principles are applicable in diverse situations. For example, the methods used to calculate crop yield, or to set prices for produce may be the same. By recording the mathematical processes used in constructing graphics, similarities in the steps used could be exposed.



Preference matrix showing different problems faced by the community of El Quebracho, El Salvador.

Using numeracy for analysis

Numbers will also be an integral part of the discussion generated by the graphic. For example, a community map might show that children have to travel particularly far to reach school, or that the water point is in the opposite direction from where participants collect firewood. This could lead to an analysis of the relationship between time and distance. Participants could also discuss the different measurements they use and look at the relationship between traditional and modern measures.

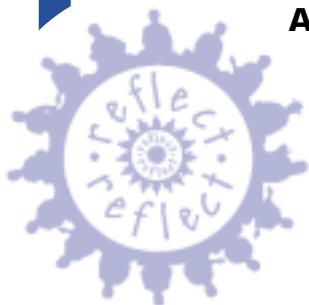
Representing conclusions

Key elements of the graphic can be further analysed by drawing on different mathematical tools. For example, size of land-holdings could be expressed using a bar chart. This could be used to promote discussion of the different aspects that affect land ownership and relative power.

Such a discussion links well to the exercises looking at statistics. The implementing organisation could find statistics of land ownership in other areas - and use a similar bar chart to present the information. This would enable participants to place their situation in the wider context – thus promoting in-depth analysis.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Producing alternative statistics builds on the ideas expressed in this sheet, and is a slightly different way of using the graphics.





Building on Existing Knowledge

Tapping into participants' existing numeracy skills to expand their ability to use mathematics in different contexts.

WHY?

Even where people have strong numeracy skills these may have been developed in a specific context, and may need to be 'generalised' in order to be able to apply them to new situations.

WHEN?

When the need arises – for example, if a discussion requires participants to calculate something in order to deepen the analysis. Participants should have done some sort of socio-mathematical survey previously (see separate sheet).

HOW?

The key to introducing abstract mathematical formula is to tie it in to something concrete from the participants' life experience. This involves applying problem solving strategies that people have developed from experience to new, different contexts. Through enabling them to see that the same techniques are applicable in a variety of situations - from farming, to cooking to understanding interest rates, their existing mathematical knowledge will be strengthened and generalised. This flexibility in understanding can be hard to achieve – and it is crucial that the individual discovers links for her/himself.

In some cases it might be that an **intermediary stage** needs to be used so that participants can generalise their knowledge. In the example overleaf it would not be possible to photocopy enough money to illustrate a school budget. In these situations it can be helpful to use a calculator, or by using oral or written mathematics. As division is the key operation in the example overleaf, the facilitator could introduce the division button on the calculator. She or he would demonstrate how the action of dividing the money into piles could be substituted for by using the calculator. The group could repeat the process for the school budget. If using oral or written maths participants should talk through, or write down, each step of the process for the different situations. By analysing where the processes overlap, they could use the same operations to calculate a school budget.

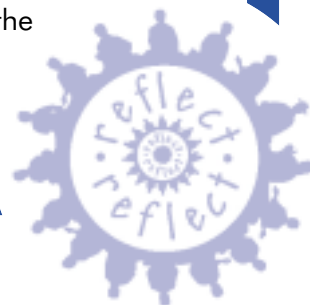
CHOOSING EXAMPLES

The first step in this process is to choose an example where participants use mathematics in their everyday life. For this it might be necessary to use some of the socio-mathematical ideas.

Participants should outline the steps they follow to make calculations in a specific context and then follow the same process in the new situation. Links between the two contexts should be continually highlighted.



Baking bread involves a lot of mathematics which can be applied to new situations.



When to introduce a formula

If the final answer to a sum is presented without the calculations then it is unlikely that participants will be able to understand the mathematics involved. However, if the mathematics is very complex or time consuming, it can confuse participants, or distract from the issue at hand. Thus, formula should only be introduced if it will be useful to participants in different situations (e.g. understanding percentages). If it is specific to the occasion (e.g. working out compound interest) it may be preferable for the facilitator to work out, and present the answer.

Issues to consider

There are various issues to consider when working with prior knowledge. These are introduced briefly here, although some debates are considered more fully on other resource sheets.

- **Should any mathematics be written down?** Mental methods often clash with written mathematics. To avoid this, links should continually be drawn between written methods and other ways of calculating, including calculators (see separate sheet).
- **Should participants be given random numbers to practice?** Many techniques in mathematics improve with practice and both speed and understanding can be learnt in this way. However, it is important that calculations are not abstract and irrelevant, where the focus is on the sum rather than the issue at hand.
- **Working with mixed ability groups:** In most groups participants will have different experiences and therefore different types and levels of mathematical skills. The facilitator will need to decide how best to work with the group; whether to divide the group and only introduce the formula to a few people, or to call on the different skills to complement each other, for example, someone with strong mental skills could work with someone with recording skills.
- **Facilitators' confidence/skills:** A person needs to feel very comfortable in their own mathematics if they are to facilitate 'flexibility' for someone else. If the facilitator does not have confidence in their mathematical ability it is more likely to confuse the participants than strengthen their skills.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

Participants in a Reflect group in Koffiefontein, **South Africa**, are involved in a small bread-making business. By generalising this experience the group were able to calculate the amount of money spent per child in school.

First participants talked through the steps they go through to calculate the cost of each loaf they produce. They used photocopied money (counting out the cost of each ingredient and then counting out all the money to reach the total cost) to find the production cost of a batch of bread. By sharing the money equally between the number of loaves they arrived at a cost per loaf. Participants then generalised this experience to calculate the amount spent on each child in their local school – the total budget divided by the number of pupils.

The mathematical formula is as follows:

Total Cost/Total no. loaves = individual loaf cost

Or

Total school budget/no. of pupils = amount spent per pupil

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This process could be the first stage in understanding budgets – making the bridge between the resource sheets such as 'Oral Mathematics' or the 'Socio-mathematics' and using mathematics within a process of critical analysis.





Using Calculators

This activity uses calculators to examine various mathematical operations – linking an understanding of how to use calculators with estimation techniques.

WHY?

Calculators can be used to demystify mathematical operations, thus allowing participants to focus on the meaning behind numbers without getting caught up in complex arithmetic functions.

WHEN?

Calculators might be used in the early stages of discussing arithmetic – in order to strengthen participants' belief in their own mental mathematical skills - or it could be in conjunction with a discussion on a specific topic. Recognition of numbers and arithmetic symbols is necessary, although these can be introduced at the same time as calculators. Calculators are especially good for working with groups of mixed mathematical ability.

HOW?

Because of the flexibility and broad relevance of calculators, there is no specific 'how', although there are certain issues to bear in mind when working with calculators.

Is calculator use appropriate

If calculators with the symbols used for numbers in the local language are not available (for example, the calculators available use Roman numerals, whereas the group is learning to write Arabic numerals) then the facilitator needs to make a decision whether it is appropriate to use them, questioning whether it would aid the discussion, or confuse the group further. This is likely to depend on how confident the participants are in writing numbers and in doing mathematics.

Introducing calculators

It is good to have at least two calculators available to the Reflect group so that participants can check each other's answers. However, if that is not possible one calculator can be circulated. Another advantage of working with two calculators would be to buy slightly different ones to ensure that participants learn to recognise the symbols on the calculator keys rather than just their positioning.

Exploring the keys

As a first step the facilitator or participants could draw a calculator on a large sheet of paper. This can be used to introduce the basic arithmetic symbols ($+$ $-$ \times \div) and the numbers 0 - 9 (see 'First Steps' for more ideas on introducing numbers). Any other keys on a calculator are merely shortcuts (e.g. depending on what has been entered the % key just divides or multiplies the answer by 100) and it is up to the facilitator to decide whether to use these.



Cheap and solar powered, calculators are accessible to everyone.



DECIMAL POINTS

A decimal point separates a whole number from fractional parts. This is clearly seen with money, as the majority of currencies are based on the decimal system with a whole, and 100 parts, such as pesos and centavos, or pounds and pence. Numbers to the right of the decimal point obey 'place value' rules (see 'First Steps' sheet).

Decimals

Depending on the reason for using calculators, the facilitator may decide to introduce the concept of decimal points. For example, if using the division key it is probable that the answers will include decimals and therefore these will need to be explained.

Practising calculations

The picture of a calculator can be used to ask participants to work out sums. Pointing to symbols on the picture, participants with calculators can work out the sums while other participants can check using their mental arithmetic skills. It is important to only use examples from participants' experience, using real numbers. For example, suppose you bought 3 cups of rice at a price of 5 rupees a cup (using the local measurement and currency).

Following this basic group exercise participants might spend some time using calculators in small groups in order to get used to the different keys and functions. One way to do this is to work in twos or threes, and to set each other sums/challenges. Those not holding the calculators could use mental arithmetic to work out the answer, while the person controlling the calculator should say out loud what they are doing, this introduces the idea of the need to estimate while using the calculator.

ROUNDING UP/ DOWN

When shopping we do not calculate exactly how much we have spent, rather we estimate by rounding up, or down, the amount items cost. This allows us to focus on what we are buying while having a general idea of how much we are spending.

Estimating

Calculators can easily lead to confusion and misinformation – it is very easy to press the wrong button on a calculator, and this can go unnoticed. When introducing calculators it is therefore worth spending some time exploring the effects of pressing the wrong button, or entering the wrong digit. It is also useful to look at how people estimate – what sort of

techniques they use (see sheet on 'Oral Mathematics' for ideas), as, in doing mental arithmetic people often use estimation without even really thinking about it.

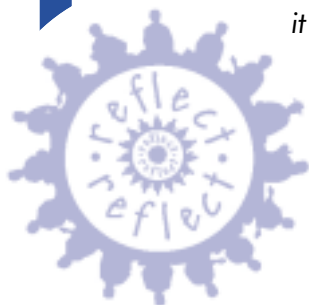
Once the simple functions are understood it is very easy to move quickly to big numbers, as the same processes are involved. A calculator can also be used to show that the same types of mathematical processes are applicable in different situations.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In El Quebracho, **El Salvador**, a Reflect group spent some time working with calculators. One member of the group, Talia, became involved in trading and by using her skills with a calculator she was able to bargain with market vendors and calculate the price to charge for the different items of clothing she purchased. Learning to use a calculator meant that she no longer had to rely on her husband's income and could control her own finances.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A powerful way of using calculators is to demystify the mathematics to focus on the matter at hand. For example, while working with piece-rate workers, Lange and Lange "*felt that it was more empowering to create a slide-rule that did the pay calculations for the workers, making the mathematics problem disappear, so that the workers could focus on the social and economic relations underlying the way they are treated and paid*". (Lange & Lange, 1984 in Frankenstein & Powell, 1994: 92)





Maths Histories

Participants can analyse how they have felt about mathematics at different points in their lives, and 'unlearn' negative feelings they have about mathematics.

WHY?

If people are to engage with issues of money and power it is crucial that they feel confident reading and using numbers and mathematics. However, many people have had negative experiences of maths, and see it as something out of reach and best avoided. A first stage in building confidence in maths can be for participants to analyse their prior relationships with the subject.

WHEN?

Anytime, especially with trainers, facilitators, or with people who have encountered formal mathematics (for example, in school). It could be powerful as a way to start thinking about mathematics, or it could be used later in the process if participants show or declare negative feelings towards maths.

HOW?

There are various different methods that can be used to enable people to reflect on their understanding of, and relationship with, mathematics. To begin either of the processes outlined below, participants need to spend some quiet time thinking about their very first experience of mathematics and any positive or negative experiences they have had with it since.

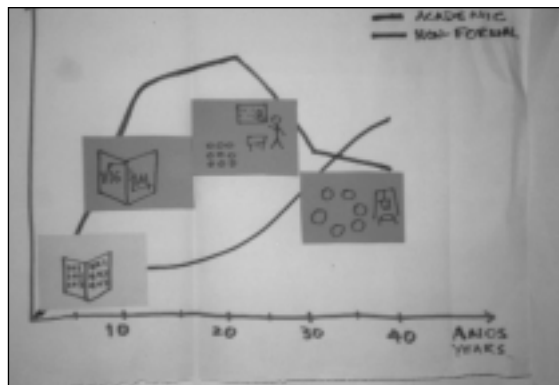
Line graphs

One way is to use a mathematical tool to enable people illustrate how their relationship with mathematics has developed over the course of their lives. The advantage of this method is that participants will realise that they have the power and ability to construct mathematical texts, and to interpret those of others.

Following personal reflections of their experience with mathematics, each person can draw their own maths history in the form of a line graph. They could plot age along one axis and use the other to represent their knowledge or enjoyment of maths.

Sharing experiences through graphs

After the individual graphs have been plotted these can be used to stimulate group discussion focusing on why the graphs look the way they do. Group analysis of similarities and differences in the graphs might show that there are common ages where relationships with maths deteriorate or improve, or in other cases that specific events have affected individuals' feelings about the subject. This forms the basis for discussion on where the feelings about mathematics come from, and what impact these feelings have on our lives.



Levels of enjoyment of maths at different points in life, Mozambique.

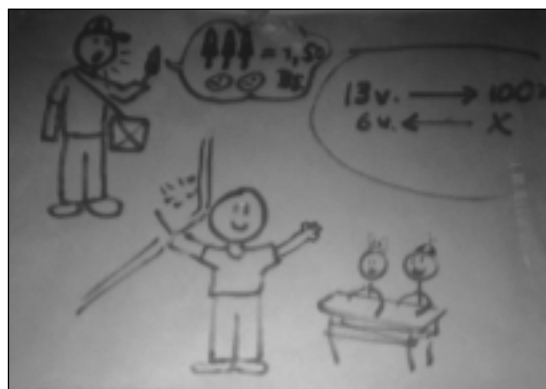


Changing attitudes

Once the group have analysed and discussed their graphs, you may wish to encourage discussion on how the graphs, and the relationships they represent, can be changed, perhaps focusing on the reasons behind more positive experiences depicted in the graphs. It may be that mathematics needs to be redefined in order for more positive experiences to come to light. Or it may be that graphs can be redrawn focusing on the use of mathematics through a single aspect of people's lives, which could be their work inside or outside the house, market trading or any other activity. Participants could also look at how we learn maths, and its relevance to our lives.

A powerful experience with maths

A different way to look at people's impressions of mathematics would be to ask them to choose one particularly strong memory they have of mathematics. This could be anything from playing as a child to filling in an insurance claim form. Participants should then choose a 'creative' way of illustrating this experience – whether using a picture, a sketch or a tableau (see sheet on 'Using Theatre' in the Spoken Word section). These illustrations should be used to generate discussion and debate on people's feelings towards, and understandings of, mathematics.



A particularly memorable mathematical moment, Bolivia.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

At a workshop in **South Africa** participants were asked to draw graphs depicting their relationship with mathematics. It was left up to the individual to define their axes. Participants then took turns trying to interpret someone else's graph, explaining to the group what they thought the graph showed. The group were thereby sharing and discussing individual histories while also exploring the potential of graphs as a tool. The exercise showed how graphs can be a way of presenting a lot of information clearly, but that they can also be misleading (or even manipulative) if scales and axes are not correctly drawn or labelled. This led to a discussion of how graphs are often used to convey statistics, or prices and there is a need to critically analyse the information expressed in this way, rather than accepting a graph as accurate.

Following the discussion on graphs the participants were also able to draw out some common experiences in their maths histories. Everyone had at least one positive and negative experience with mathematics. Many people had hated mathematics for a long time, but had begun to feel more confident through using mathematics in a work setting. It was particularly interesting that all of the female participants had enjoyed mathematics until about the age of 11, at which time male teachers had undermined their confidence, telling them that maths was a subject only for boys.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

A similar exercise could be done looking at people's relationships with money, focusing specifically on access to resources and power.

The 'Adult Numeracy Teaching' manual (1995, National Staff Development Committee for Vocational Education and Training, Melbourne, Australia ISBN: 0 642 23302 0) suggests a wide range of activities to enable people to 'unlearn' maths.





Using Drama

Drama can be used to analyse what maths is and how participants feel about it, or to practice maths skills in a variety of different situations.

WHY?

If people rely mainly on mental mathematical skills, verbalising these can be an effective way of building their confidence. Furthermore, maths is best understood in its functional context, and role-play can be used to extend people's own experiences of using mathematics and explore how it can be generalised.

WHEN?

Any time.

HOW?

There are many different aspects of drama which can be used, and three main themes that could be explored. These are:

- 1 How people feel about mathematics, or how they feel in certain situations where they need to use mathematics.
- 2 How they calculate or use mathematics.
- 3 As 'rehearsals for reality', to practise the use of mathematics to achieve confidence for a future situation.

Relationship with mathematics

Tableaux or sculpture techniques (see 'Gestures and Postures' sheet in the *Spoken Word* section) could be used to illustrate situations where individuals feel empowered or otherwise because of mathematics.

The situations used in the sculpture should come from the existing group discussions (see box). In addition to analysing power relations in a specific context, this exercise may also serve to prioritise areas of mathematics that participants feel are important to learn. Further the realisation that there are multiple reasons for power relations, which are not just related to ability to do calculations, will decrease the specific power of mathematics.

Feelings about mathematics could also be explored through *Forum Theatre*. Small groups could develop a short role-play, illustrating either one participant's key experiences of mathematics throughout their lives, or one notable experience that has shaped their perception of maths. Other participants could then take over roles and initiate discussion on how people might behave differently, or change their current feelings about mathematics.

Using mathematics

To bring out different ways in which people use mathematics, participants might role-play certain aspects of their daily lives while others in the group interrupt where they think mathematics might be used. Participants could

TABLEAUX AND SCULPTURES

A group looking at the issue of credit and loans might create a sculpture to show a moneylender and someone borrowing money. In this situation, the moneylender usually has power over the borrower, perhaps because they have more money, or because they keep written records, whereas the borrower relies on memory and trust.

By using different sculptures participants could initiate discussions on different power dimensions and how these could be reduced.



then discuss the different steps they go through to solve the mathematical problem, highlighting the fact that different people use different methods to arrive at the same answer. This allows participants to recognise and value their knowledge while also enabling them to learn others' methods, some of which might be more efficient. Alternatively, drama could illustrate how the same mathematical techniques are used in different situations – for example, fractions in the market place, the kitchen and the farm. But that different ways of calculating are appropriate in different places. For example, it is unlikely that someone would take a pen and paper to the market to work out prices, but the same person may use written calculations when working out their business records.

Role-play could also help in explaining some mathematical ideas. For example, to clarify the concept of fractions, a group might act out a relevant situation, such as cooking a meal. They could then work through what happens if one of the variables changes – e.g. another person comes to dinner.

Rehearsing for reality

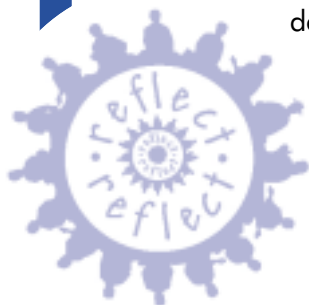
If the group have been discussing a particular issue and decide to carry out a concrete action, role-play could be used to bring out issues that need to be considered for this action. For example, if the group decides that they would like to see the budget of a local agency or organisation, they could play different roles to practise how they would go about doing this, and anticipate reactions and situations that might arise. This should enable participants to feel more confident before approaching officials.



*Planting crops requires many calculations,
East Godavari, India.*

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Bolivia**, Reflect groups have highlighted the importance of numbers to all of our lives. One method they used for doing this was to use numbers to describe their lives. This might involve numbering their age, number of brothers, sisters or children, how many people live in their house, how long they have lived in their house and so on, or using numbers to describe their physical characteristics – I have 2 brown eyes, weigh 60 Kilos etc.





Credit, Loans and Interest Rates

This involves a discussion around why people borrow money, what interest rates are, and the implications of different interest rates.

WHY?

Many people live on borrowed money. Patterns of credit and debt are similar worldwide – both for individuals and at national or governmental level. A discussion of these issues should enable participants to make links between their local situation and wider debt issues – to engage in more complex debates about the structural causes of poverty, and the relationships between money and power.

WHEN?

If credit and loans are a relevant part of participants' lives. For example, if Reflect participants are members of a micro-credit group, or thinking of joining one. Or when discussing more general issues around poverty and debt.

HOW?

Discussion of credit should start with what is local and relevant. However, there are many links that can be made between local, national and even international indebtedness and these should also be analysed. The emphasis should be on why people borrow money and what the short and long-term effects are.

Why credit and loans

There are two main ways for someone to become involved in credit and loans. Firstly an individual might borrow for a specific item. This could be from a bank/credit card, or a local moneylender, neighbours, family etc. Secondly an individual might become part of a formal credit programme – a micro-finance scheme with the aim of promoting development, or a cooperative credit scheme, such as a credit union. However, similar issues need to be analysed for both contexts (see box).

Graphics and discussion

Various graphics can be used to start discussion. For example, an income-expenditure tree might have credit as one of the roots – and repayment as one of the branches. Further, calendars might illustrate particular times of year when people are more likely to borrow money. A group could also use a calendar to analyse loan projection – examining when, and how, they are likely to be able to repay a loan.

DISCUSSING CREDIT AND LOANS

- ? **Why** do we borrow money?
- ? **How** do we feel when we borrow money?
- ? Are there **certain times** of year when we need to borrow money? Why is this?
- ? What **different** ways are there to access money locally? Who can you borrow money from? What are the **dis/advantages** of different sources?
- ? How does the money **repayment** work? How often do we need to make repayments? How and when is the **interest** calculated?
- ? What **happens** if you are **not able** to make the repayment?
- ? What **influences** are there over the rates of interest – how are the interest rates decided, and by whom?
- ? What do we feel should **change** about the system? What **can we do** to achieve this?



EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In Kanatalabanda community, **India**, participants in a Gotti constructed a graphic to analyse why they borrowed money, and from whom. They discussed how the different money lenders operated and the rates of interest they demanded, the power the money lenders had over them, and how they were made to feel when borrowing money.

Participants found that the moneylender was their main source of money, and that he used his power to humiliate them, making them wait all day before he would lend them money. The lender would also insist that the borrowers planted cash crops from which he could make money rather than traditional crops, creating further food security problems. The lender would then insist on collecting seeds to cover the interest of the loan, reinforcing his power over the borrowers as they were pushed further into debt. Following the analysis the group decided that they would refuse to use seeds to pay back the interest, and instead would start repaying the capital immediately. They also decided against borrowing from the moneylender in the future and began exploring alternative avenues with more favourable rates of interest.

In **Mozambique**, Reflect participants examined the impact of different ways of calculating interest. They found that while on some loans the interest was calculated on the original sum borrowed, on others the borrower was not only paying interest on the original loan, but also on the interest accruing. The frequency with which interest is calculated (e.g. weekly or monthly) also affected the total amount repaid.

This type of exploration of the impact of different types of repayment requires an understanding of percentages. Focusing on the idea that the best way to work with complicated mathematical formula is to generalise using processes familiar to the participants, the practitioners looked at the different ways of introducing percentages. It was noted that it would be best to use objects (or money) that could be divided to introduce the concept of 50% or 25 % etc. These could then be added to the whole, to illustrate how interest is added to the original loan.

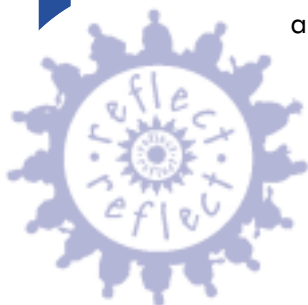


Matrix showing the different reasons for borrowing money, and where money can be borrowed from, East Godavari, India.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The focus of this sheet has been on the public impact of credit and loans. It is also necessary to consider the impact within the household. Groups may also want to challenge the way NGOs lend money, and to whom. Frequently women borrowers are prioritised, without any analysis of family relations or where the money actually ends up. (See 'Pathways to Empowerment' in *Gender, Development and Money*, ISBN 0 85598 453 8).

National debt is an extremely important issue for developing countries. Through an understanding of personal and local debt, Reflect circles could link with networks campaigning at local and national levels to achieve better debt policies and conditions which give the opportunity for development rather than further debt.





Prices

Analysing the prices of different goods in different locations can be useful to identify regional and seasonal disparities.

WHY?

To look at the wider influences on local prices and enable participants to better plan their selling and buying patterns, or campaign for better prices.

WHEN?

A discussion of prices may arise naturally from many Reflect graphics. It would link particularly well to any sort of analysis of food security or household expenditure.

HOW?

Discussion of prices should be based on key local produce and goods, with the emphasis on why prices differ and what could be done to improve the situation. Many different types of graphics can be used to illustrate or generate discussion, in particular calendars and maps. Below are some examples of the use of calendars:

Calendar of local market prices

This involves tracking the price of key locally grown produce over the period of a year. A major drop in price is common after the harvest when the market is flooded, with a rise in price usual when the produce becomes scarcer. This can generate discussion of the relationship between price fluctuations and other external events. Extending the calendar to include regional and national level price trends (which may be based on external information sources, such as newspapers – or information accessed through the internet) can further enrich the analysis, and links can be drawn between international, national or regional trends and local price rises or falls.

Long-term calendar of prices

Analysing price trends of locally produced basic commodities over five or ten years can capture a different pattern to seasonal shifts. It is here that the introduction of information about trends in commodity prices on international markets will be particularly relevant.

Calendar of prices of consumer goods

This involves analysing changes in the price of a basket of basic goods over a five or ten year period. Many of these goods will not be locally produced, and so this is a good point to introduce basic information about national and international influences, such as inflation and exchange rates or changes in fuel prices and tax. (This will require good preparation and support from the implementing organisation – for example, to produce information in an easy to use format which encourages critical study).

DISCUSSING PRICES

The following questions can be used to encourage discussion of prices:

- ? Do prices **change** over the calendar year? Why might this be? On what is price dependent?
- ? Do prices **differ** in between local markets, shops, traders? Why?
- ? Do prices **differ** in different towns and villages in the region or country? What about between rural and urban areas? Why?
- ? What **influences** the level of prices? How are prices decided? And by whom?
- ? What could be done to **change** prices, especially for local produce?



EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

A Reflect circle in **El Salvador** discussed how a middleman came to the community to sell them clothes. As there was no local shop and the nearest clothes market was a two-hour bus journey, the community members had little choice but to buy the clothes from the middleman. However, following the discussion Talia realised that she could take over trading from the middleman. This way she not only makes a living for herself, but the community benefits from lower prices.

In **South Africa** a Reflect group looking at influences on the prices of basic goods worked out that although Value-Added Tax is not charged on basic commodities, their prices are affected by changes in the cost of fuel due to the introduction of fuel tax by the national government.

In **Uganda** a calendar of local prices led many Reflect circles to take actions such as: improving the storage of crops (so that they could sell them/use them when crops are scarce) and cooperative selling, to secure better prices.

Follow up work

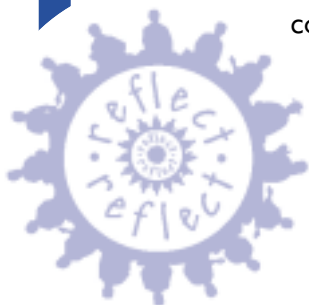
There is a large crossover between discussion of prices and work on statistics or credits and loans. Work with prices could form part of wider work looking at numeracy related issues.

Follow up work focusing specifically on prices might include discussion on planning when and where to most efficiently buy and sell produce, identifying different markets, or schemes for cooperative sale and purchase. This can also be linked to work currently being piloted on linking Reflect with information and communication technologies, which can be used to research and compare prices at different locations, and by continuation, work out where the profits are made.

TALIA'S STORY



Once a fortnight Talia goes to San Cristobal on the Guatemalan border where she changes Salvadoran Colones for Guatemalan Quetzales and buys clothes. Some people ask her for specific items, other clothes she buys in the hope that she will be able to sell them. The journey to San Cristobal involves three bus journeys and some walking and takes over five hours each way. She uses a calculator to check the price of each item she buys in Colones and memorises the price. On her return to El Quebracho she sells her purchases for double the amount they cost her, to cover her transport costs and leave her enough profit.





Small Business

Covering different techniques to explore the issues involved in planning and starting a small business.

WHY?

There are a huge number of organisations promoting income generation as part of development – however such projects are often unsuccessful for two main reasons: firstly, because not enough attention is paid to the macro-environment, and secondly, micro-credit participants are not supported within a wider learning process, with skills for business accounting and record keeping. This sheet intends to give suggestions as to how the planning and accounting processes can be strengthened.

WHEN?

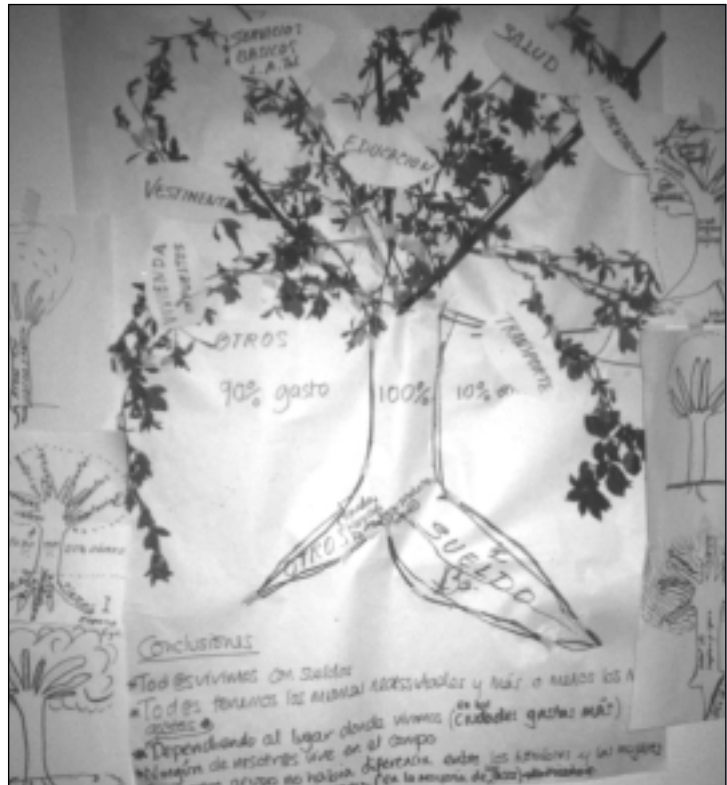
If the group is involved in a micro-credit programme or planning to start their own business or form a cooperative.

HOW?

Analysis should begin at an individual level: looking at motivations for getting involved in income-generation programmes. One way to do this could be for participants to draw their own **income-expenditure trees**. Focusing on whether the roots are strong enough to support the tree,

participants could explore the potential effects of joining an income generation programme. For example, they may have less time to work on the field, or care for their families and this could have knock on effects on other areas of both income and expenditure. Similarly it would be important to consider the wider effects on the local community.

If individuals plan to go ahead with forming a small business, it is crucial that they are given space to consider the business cycle. A **flow diagram** could be used to examine all the stages involved in running a business – including the possibilities for things to go wrong. (Part of this process could be to look at issues on credit and loans – see separate sheet). Having mapped out the different stages involved in the business cycle it is important to consider the different knowledge and skills that are necessary for each stage. In addition, it is useful to identify which points in the cycle are most vulnerable to changes in the external environment, allowing for more effective planning.



*Income-Expenditure tree,
Cochabamba, Bolivia.*



These two activities provide a basis for starting a small business. However, it is also necessary to consider the wider business environment - looking at all the potential positive and negative influences on a business. A **chapati diagram** could be used to map out these influences – examining both the relative importance of each issue and the amount of control the individual has over the issue. This could be done in an abstract way or for a specific business. There will be some issues which affect all businesses and others that are specific – e.g. climate is more important for farmers than for hairdressers.

Additional questions

- ? are there other people involved in the same business in this area (either now or in the past – what lessons can I learn from their experience)?
- ? what market access is there?
- ? is the business seasonally affected?
- ? what control will I have over the different aspects of this business?
- ? how can I create a more positive business environment?
- ? how will this business affect relations within the family?
- ? who has power over the money that is raised?

LAYOUT

The mathematical skills we use in our daily lives are often in contradiction with the formal, written mathematics taught at school. If participants are to be able to keep business accounts, it is important that they are involved in a process of deciding how to lay out these accounts. The focus here is on producing something understandable for those involved, rather than accounts for external presentation.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Brazil**, 15 women from the Rutas de Pedra fishing association in Pernambuco gathered in a Reflect process to learn to read and maintain accounts. Previously the women had very little control over production processes. However, as they began to be able to track production costs and keep written records, the women's notebooks became major symbols of power, regularly referred to by others.

The women extended their activity to start observing the production costs of different items such as fish cakes, sausages and other local products in the market, to lay bare the costs and viability of different forms of generating income. The group maintains daily and monthly records of production costs at both individual and collective level, giving them genuine access to information and a meaningful source of local power.

In the Malealea cooperative, **Lesotho**, participants used a matrix to analyse different products and the different markets in which they were sold to identify gaps so that production and marketing could shift accordingly.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

It is useful to think through how work on small business can link to different areas of numeracy work, including prices, interest rates and taxes.

This sheet is based on work done by participants at an international numeracy workshop, which took place in Mozambique, 2001. Many thanks to Roberto Luis, Elias Moreira, Vitor Barbosa and Judy Goldman-Sacks for their inputs.





Understanding Budgets

How to analyse a specific external budget that affects the Reflect group, and explore general issues of budgeting.

WHY?

Budgets hold information about the planning choices organisations and governments make, and analysis of these can show up inconsistencies with the professed priorities of these organisations. Through critically engaging with a budget, decision-making and accountability can be improved, policies and practices can be changed, and corruption and inequity exposed. However, budgets are notoriously difficult to understand - especially if you are not involved in producing them. If people want to challenge the priorities and plans expressed in a budget, they need to understand the processes and power issues involved, as well as its potential impact.

WHEN?

To deepen discussion about any particular topic. Recognition of numbers is necessary.

HOW?

It is important to examine how income and expenditure decisions are made, and how these decisions impact different people. It helps to start by considering an individual or family budget, as participants will feel familiar with this. However, questions can be asked of any budget (see box).

Another way to initiate discussions on budgets is to use a graphic. For example: a **tree** could be used to show the sort of knowledge needed to produce a budget, and the advantages of having a budget; a **flow-chart** could be used to show the steps followed in developing a budget; a **chapati diagram** could illustrate the influence of different actors in making budgetary decisions (see sheets in the *Images* section for more information on these tools). Specific questions can be used to help participants understand the power relations and values involved, asking how spending priorities are decided within a family, for example between an elderly relative needing medical treatment and a child needing school fees paid.

General issues

A different entry point for looking at budgets is to produce a map or matrix to illustrate all budgets that have an impact on the group or individual. These may be formal or informal and include budgets such as: household, the school, community groups, a cooperative, NGO, local government, national government, international organisations.

DISCUSSING BUDGETS

The following questions could be used to promote a discussion of a specific budget:

- ? **In whose name** is it constructed?
- ? Who is involved in its **production**?
- ? Who **approves** it or **controls** it?
- ? Where is the **decision making power**?
- ? How much **influence** could you have on it?
- ? What **choices** are made producing this budget?
- ? Who **contributes to / benefits** from it and how?
- ? Who **knows** about it? Is it **accessible**?
- ? What is a **good use** of resources?
- ? What is the **worst use** of resources?
- ? What would **you change** about it and why?
- ? Is it **transparent** or does it hide things?
- ? Should anything be **confidential** – why?
- ? How **important** is this budget to you?

This analysis is dependent on the fact that the budget and accompanying information, e.g. tax laws, are available. However, if this is not the case it is also worth discussing where gaps in knowledge are, and why this might be.



From here, it might be relevant to compare various budgets, looking at the different decision-making power and influences and uncovering links between local, national and international situations, showing how decisions at one level influence reality at another. As budgets are very complex the group might work with a simplified version produced by the implementing organisation. However, the original budget should always be available to ensure transparency and to enable participants to develop the skills necessary to work independently.

If there is a particular budget that the group hopes to influence, it can be interesting to see how its decision-making processes differs from other budgets. This may indicate a particular way of tackling the budget in question.

The questions above could be used for this analysis, using a tabular graphic such as the example on the right.

Budget	Qu. 1	Qu. 2	Qu. 3	etc
National government				
Local government				
NGO				
Household				

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In a workshop in **South Africa**, participants examined the public budget from a gender perspective. Public policy decisions are frequently made without considering the different types of activity that men and women are involved in. A discussion on transport spending plans showed that the majority of bus services ran from residential areas to city centres – to take people to work in the city centre. However, although this suits some workers, many women are involved in domestic labour and therefore need to travel from residential to residential area. This would require a change in transport spending plans. This and other similar discussions highlighted the need to get women’s voices heard in public policy making – a space which is traditionally occupied by gender-blind men. This exercise could be extended to look at how a particular budget affects different people due to: geographical location, likes, dislikes, profession, values etc. - and to grade the level of impact of each of these.

In a workshop in **Nigeria**, participants considered the workshop budget. Groups considered who controlled the workshop budget, and how it could be changed. They used role-plays to illustrate the dynamics involved in planning a workshop and illustrated expected reactions if aspects of the budget were changed.

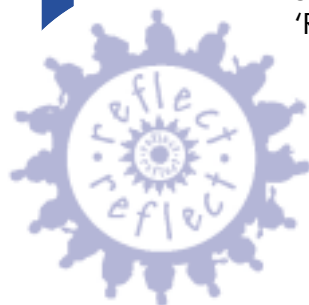
During an education budget tracking exercise in **Kenya** it was noted that, while there was money in the national budget for primary schooling, this money often disappeared by the time it reached district level. Using this evidence, civil society organisations are campaigning for systems to ensure that money reaches communities – thus tackling corruption and increasing transparency. Reflect circles could feed into national budget tracking projects by monitoring the actual use of budgets on the ground.



School budget displayed on school building for all to see , Bolangir, India.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

All the examples on this sheet focus on budget expenditure. It is equally important to examine budgetary income, for example to analyse government revenue – see sheet on ‘Revenue Analysis’. In order to understand the concept of a budget it might help the group to produce their own budgets – see sheet on ‘Alternative Budgets’ for more ideas. See the International Budget Project website for lots of additional ideas and information on budgets: www.internationalbudget.org





Alternative Budgets

How to produce a budget – either for personal use, or as an influencing tool for an organisation that the participants are not part of, but are affected by.

WHY?

Budgeting is an essential element in deciding individual or group priorities. A budget can help an individual or group map out their activities and enable them to better plan over the medium or long term. An alternative budget can also be an excellent campaigning tool. Furthermore, involvement in budget production will give important insights into the budget processes and outcomes of others.

WHEN?

At any time, although reading and writing of numbers is necessary. The idea of producing a budget might be linked to discussion of household expenditure, to micro-planning – implementing an action decided on as a group – or to analysis of local services – producing an alternative budget that better meets their needs.

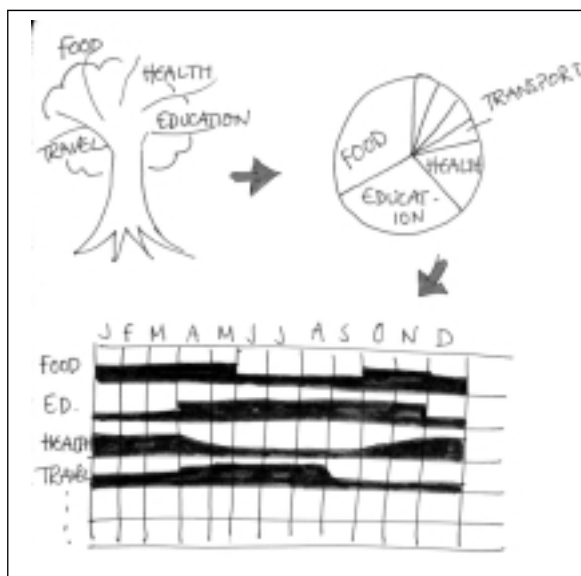
HOW?

Budget production should not be a mechanical exercise – there are many decisions that need to be made at each stage of the process and it is important to analyse these, examining power issues both within the group and due to external influences. The activities suggested in this sheet relate to the more practical side of budget production – the sheet on analysing budgets gives ideas about exploring issues in the construction of formal budgets.

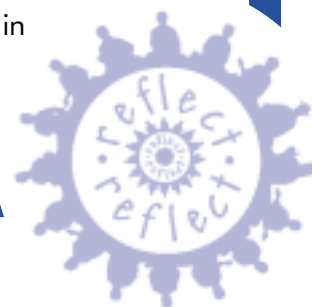
Initial steps

Any discussion of budgets should begin by identifying the various categories of income and expenditure. An income and expenditure tree could be constructed to show the different things that bring money in, and what money is spent on. This could be done for both the reality and the group's ideal situation. A pie chart (focusing on income or expenditure) could be constructed to show the proportion of the total budget spent on different categories or areas. Up to this point numbers do not need to be used, as long as there is some conception of scale or comparative costs. Again different pie charts could be used to reflect both the actual and ideal situation.

The tree and pie chart both represent total income and expenditure over a set period of time. Breaking this down into weekly or monthly expenditure can help in planning activities and encourage participants to think about issues which affect decisions, such as seasonal price changes and needs (see sheet on 'Prices').



Trees, calendars and pie-charts can be used to produce budgets.



A calendar can be helpful for looking at how income and expenditure is phased throughout the year. Again the graphic could be constructed for the actual and ideal situation.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

Staff from Fair Share, in **South Africa**, used various techniques to analyse their organisation's budget. This was relatively simple as it is a small organisation and they had all previously been involved in the planning process. However, when developing an income and expenditure calendar, new issues were highlighted. Two particularly surprising areas were the extremely high staff costs, which took up nearly 80% of the expenditure, and the fact that all the funding came in the beginning of the year.

This meant that there would be lack of flexibility if a sudden crisis occurred and very careful planning was needed to avoid problems towards the end of the year. The group then looked at local government income and expenditure. Repeating the same techniques meant that they were able to use their understanding of one budget to analyse a new one.

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8	గిరి	1500	2500	3000	4000
9	గిరి	1500	2500	3000	4000
10	గిరి	1500	2500	3000	4000
11	గిరి	1500	2500	3000	4000
12	గిరి	1500	2500	3000	4000

*Budget produced for reconstruction work
following the Orissa Cyclone, India.*

Decisions regarding how to distribute profits from a Craft Cooperative in **Lesotho** showed how money is not the only form of income. The Reflect facilitators who formed the Income Generation Cooperative applied a range of PRA tools to plan the cooperative and help make democratic decisions. One of the most challenging debates was around income distribution. Some argued for a completely even division of all profits amongst members, while others felt that a division of profits by level of individual input was preferable. In the end a very elaborate points system was developed to allow for equitable distribution, rewarding people taking on other community development roles, or servicing the cooperative in other ways.

Reflect participants in Bolangir, **India**, have elaborated detailed budgets to determine the allocation of human and financial resources in micro-level community development plans. These plans have not only looked at how to divide up profit, but have also looked at all the different work that is done, valuing it and then deciding how to redistribute profit.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Producing a budget links very well with ideas on understanding budgets – it is very difficult to understand a budget produced by someone else if you have not had the chance to produce your own. Further, having analysed a budget, it might be appropriate to produce an alternative one to reflect how different revenue collection/expenditure decisions could give space to those voices traditionally ‘*un-heard, un-prioritised and un-funded*’.

See the International Budget Project website for lots of additional ideas and information on budgets www.internationalbudget.org





Understanding Statistics

Statistics can be used to bring an international, national or regional dimension to discussions that have arisen from Reflect processes.

'If you torture statistics long enough they will confess to anything'
(John Kennedy, quoted by Bharti Patel, Radical Statistics Group 2001)

WHY?

Using statistics to extend and deepen their analysis, participants can identify links between local issues and wider processes and use these as a basis for building alliances and lobbying for change. Although statistics are usually presented as neutral, they are almost invariably highly political. Therefore, it is also important to examine the power of statistics themselves, who controls them, the implications of this and how they can be misinterpreted.

WHEN?

Use of statistics requires recognition of numbers.

HOW?

Statistics have a wide range of very practical uses. For example, they are used to inform budget decisions and for predictions on income and expenditure – if they are inaccurate this can have a knock on effect on a wide range of development decisions. They can also be very useful in supporting analysis of local markets and help to provide information for those who want to take part in small business.

A relevant set of statistics might be introduced into discussion of an issue that has arisen from other learning techniques, such as graphics or role-plays. These statistics could be figures relating only to the local area, or statistics from a wider region from which comparisons between the local situation and the wider context could be made.

When analysing statistics it is important that people do not get too bogged down in the mathematics – it is the ideas behind the statistics that are important, rather than the mathematical processes involved (it might be worth using a calculator, see sheet on 'Using Calculators' for ideas). It is useful to consider which questions are missing, and what analysis is missing. This gives a group the starting point for deciding how to produce more accurate statistics, and what precisely they are attempting to achieve with these statistics (see 'Alternative Statistics').

DISCUSSING STATISTICS

The following questions could be used to promote discussion of statistics and what they represent:

- ? What is being **shown** in the statistics and why were they compiled? (*This can solicit a purely **descriptive** answer, such as 'the price of coffee' or an **analytical** one, such as 'that coffee is getting cheaper'*)
- ? How are the statistics **relevant** to what we have been discussing?
- ? What **comparisons** can be made?
- ? What **categories** have been chosen in the statistics? What has been left out?
- ? **Who** decided on the categories?
- ? **How** could the numbers have been collected?
- ? What sorts of **decisions** were made in compiling the statistics? (E.g. in choosing which figures to include or how to present the numbers). What **assumptions** were made?
- ? Are the statistics **neutral**? What do they highlight or obscure?
- ? How **accurate** are the statistics? What aspect would you challenge?
- ? How could they **be used** by different parties? How could they be used for **advocacy**, **monitoring**, campaigning or alliance building?



Finding the statistics

Reflect implementing organisations will play a major role in accessing relevant statistics. They might be found directly through a library or the Internet, or by linking with campaigning organisations and research institutes.

Presenting the statistics

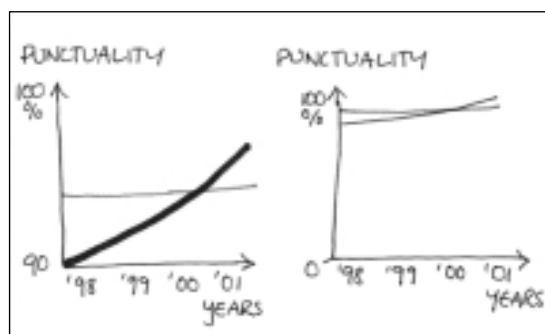
The organisation might decide to present the statistics in a more accessible format, or to simplify the amount of information shown. However, in this case the official version of the statistics should also be provided to the group so that they have some exposure to the formal document. The group could also compare the two versions and question and discuss the complexity of the official one.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In the **United States** Marilyn Frankenstein has worked with adult learners looking at the mathematics of political knowledge and the politics of mathematical knowledge. Examining a wide range of social data and 'looking behind the statistics', her students could analyse what actually happens if you change the definition of poverty.

Taking an example such as unemployment it is clear that the decision of who counts as unemployed involves a political struggle. Unemployment is not a neutral description of the situation of working people, and various different counts give rise to different statistics. For example, in the **United Kingdom** one definition used frequently is the number of people claiming government unemployment benefits. However, those on other types of benefits, and married women not claiming benefit, are not included in this number, thus underestimating the real number.

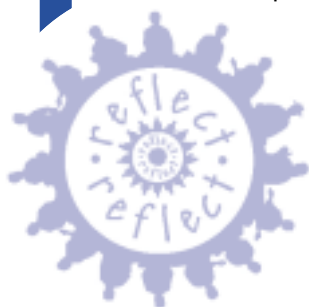
Denise Lievesley of the **Unesco Institute of Statistics** recognises that countries have been known to manipulate statistics to give the appearance that they are closer to meeting internationally agreed targets. One example of statistical manipulation relates to enrolment figures. Not only are these statistics an incredibly inaccurate indication of school attendance, as they are compiled using registration at the beginning of the academic year and do not take actual attendance into consideration, but the use of gross enrolment figures leads to distortions. The fact that many children repeat years means that the gross enrolment is frequently over 100% thus illustrating a very different reality from the actual number of children in, and out of, school. Another such manipulation is that of national spending on primary education. Unless figures actually include the source of spending (e.g. government, donors, NGOs, parents) it is impossible to analyse real levels of expenditure on education.



The first graph draws your attention to the improvement in train punctuality by using a thick line and only showing 90-100%. The second graph uses the full 0-100% and the same size line for both modes of transport, thus showing that there is not much difference between the train and bus punctuality rates.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more examples of how and when statistics have been manipulated look at the Radical Statistics website: www.radstats.org.uk.





Alternative Statistics

How different PRA techniques
can be used to produce local statistics.

WHY?

Statistics are a very powerful campaigning tool - and can be used to support the demands a group are trying to achieve by demonstrating a particular point of view, or the reality on the ground. By going through the process of producing their own statistics, participants are more likely to be able to critically analyse others, thus reducing the power of written maths.

WHEN?

At any time when it is relevant to the discussion – participants should be able to read and write numbers. Statistics may be produced as a way of deepening the group's understanding of an issue, or to influence others. It might also be that a group decides to produce alternative statistics after analysing external ones if they feel that these don't accurately capture their reality.

HOW?

Because many of the graphics are about recording local reality they are the perfect starting point to produce statistics. For example:

- a **map** could be used to collect information relating to: number of houses in the area, the local population – disaggregated by gender, age, ethnicity or any relevant factor – local services, land tenancy, size of land holdings etc;
- a **calendar** could be used to collect statistical information on health issues, gender workloads, seasonal work or weather patterns;
- a **matrix** might show information on school enrolments and drop out, adult literacy, income or land distribution, un/employment etc.

These are just a few examples; there are many other ways that these and other graphics can be used to produce statistics. However, graphics should not be used merely as a way of producing local data – the process of creating the graphic must be participatory and evoke discussion.

What statistics

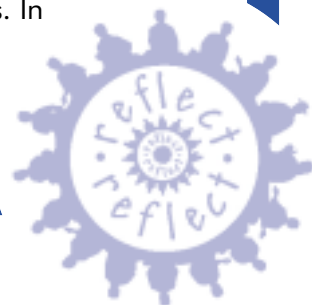
The purpose of collecting data (for example, to lobby local government) will affect the type of data collected and how it is collated.

Wider research

It might be necessary to collect information from people in the wider community. The Reflect group could decide in advance on questions that would elicit the necessary information. In this way participants become researchers, collecting data to compile statistics. In other cases, more precise information might be needed, for example through measuring size of land, or calculating exact profit from crops etc.

TYPES OF MATHEMATICS USEFUL IN PRODUCING STATISTICS

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| • Sampling | • Proportion:
<i>percentages,
ratios</i> |
| • Arithmetic | • Graphs |
| • Measuring:
<i>distance, time</i> | • Estimates |
| • Prices | • Comparisons |
| • Calendars | • Averages |
| • Pie charts | |



Deciding categories

Graphics can be adapted to help clarify what extra information is needed. For example, a preference matrix could be used to decide which categories to include. Group members could discuss various different categories and then, using the framework of the preference matrix, vote on which categories are the most useful, or most strongly demonstrate the point they are trying to get across.

Presenting results

Decisions on how to present the information will depend on the intended purpose. For example, if it is intended to influence members of the local community, it might be best to do this through a poster or role-play. If it is an official government body a series of tables or graphs in a report might be more effective. It is also useful to think about what other material (whether written, photos, audio-visual) might illustrate and explain the statistics or any follow up work that could strengthen their impact.

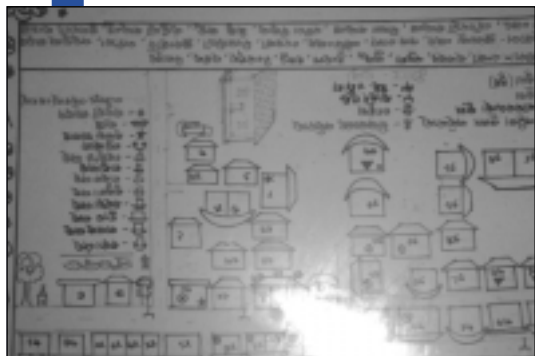
EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In a workshop in **Mozambique**, a group looked at all the different statistics they could collect which would be relevant to education. By using various graphics they showed how they could collect a diverse range of statistics. These focused on family and community information (for example, the size of family, community infrastructure available), and more specific details about the local schools and the standard of education (for example, the size of classes, teacher qualifications etc.). These statistics could be used to make decisions about educational priorities and influence local organisations in the way they allocated their funds.

In **Bangladesh** a Reflect circle used a matrix to track daily wages for different jobs, and different people (men, women and children). They used this as evidence that the national minimum wage was not being met.

Other ideas for using statistics include:

- Different minority groups and their assets.
- Different ways of paying for services: e.g. how direct debit benefits the rich and the poor spend more (both as a proportion of their expenditure, and literally because of the way of paying) on gas, water, electricity etc.



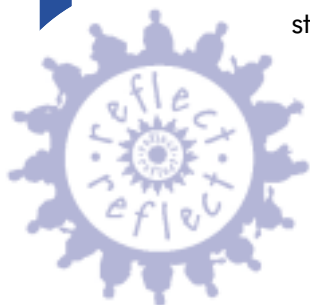
*Using data from a map for planning,
Orissa, India.*

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The idea of challenging officially produced statistics with local information is not only about producing alternative statistics, but also about showing how statistics can be more qualitative/presented in different ways – and highlighting the importance of individual testimonies etc. For instance, PRA visualisations can be used directly to present the statistics, such as pie charts instead of percentages. It is important to use techniques that people are familiar with, as this will enhance their ownership and understanding of the information that they are producing.

However, it is also important to draw the links between the PRA visuals and official statistics to increase the likelihood people will be able to engage with them.

Statistics can also be very useful for monitoring – either to hold official bodies accountable to agreed targets, or within a group itself to monitor its own progress against collectively agreed indicators.





Revenue Analysis

A variety of ideas about how to analyse the taxes people pay, and the costs, both hidden and direct, involved when accessing services.

WHY?

Much of the focus in budget analysis is on expenditure. However, the source of government funds is an equally important social and political issue. Although direct taxes, such as that on income, are the most conspicuous source of government income, in reality poor people contribute a large percentage of their income to basic services in the form of indirect taxes on spending and user fees for health or education. Awareness of the financial contribution they make to public services can bolster poor people's confidence to assert their rights to quality services. Reflect participants can use their analysis of revenue to advocate for better basic services, and challenge tax systems that discriminate against poor and marginalised people.

WHEN?

At any time, recognition of numbers is necessary.

HOW?

Discussion on revenue collection should be linked with general discussion of budgets and budgeting (see 'Understanding Budgets' sheet). As with discussion of budget expenditure, it is useful to begin with analysis of individual or household budgets, using income-expenditure trees.

Expenditure map

One way to generate discussion of the different charges each individual pays would be to generate an expenditure map showing all the different places where Reflect participants spend money. From this, the group could analyse what they are actually spending money on – whether it is the price of the goods and services or if other costs are involved. For example, when paying for public transport the fare might be used to cover the price of petrol, which includes tax, salaries, including income tax, maintenance of the vehicle, road taxes and profit to the company. Such analysis should develop participants' understanding of their own personal contributions to governmental revenue in a variety of contexts, and build awareness of their stake in government spending and services.

Flow diagram

This graphic can be used to track how tax revenue is used, at what point each individual contributes and where the money goes. For example, is the money

Discussing revenue

The following questions could be used to discuss the different types of revenue collection that exist – focusing on how each type of tax/user fee affects different people:

- ? In **what ways** do people **contribute** to the cost of public services? i.e. different types of taxes and user fees?
- ? **How** do we know what services we are paying for? E.g. do we pay for a specific service when we receive the service, or are taxes collected indirectly?
- ? Is tax **redistributive**? Who pays? Who benefits?
- ? Who makes the **decisions** about these charges, and how?

If the information is not available, it is worth discussing where the gaps in knowledge are, and why this might be.



spent to see a doctor and pay for medicine used to improve or sustain services for the poor, or does it 'disappear' – to government or multinational corporations or through corruption and misuse.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **South Africa**, people involved in training local government employees on budget analysis produced a 'tax timeline'. Participants mapped out all the South African taxes that they knew of, noting when they were introduced, how they are collected, and by whom. It was amazing to see just how many taxes did exist. They discussed the affect of these diverse taxes – focusing specifically on the political context surrounding their introduction and their impact on diverse members and sectors of society. It was observed that the vast majority of taxes are indirect and therefore their effects and sources often hidden. One particularly interesting discussion focused on the introduction of fuel tax, which led to an increase in the price of basic foodstuffs (many of which are supposedly tax-free) due to an increase in transport costs.

As part of more general work on tracking the education budget, groups in **Kenya**, **Bangladesh** and **Brazil** looked at all the hidden costs in education. Even where governments have invested in free primary education parents are still required to contribute towards various different items, such as books, uniforms, school meals, transport, security, or sporting events. This means that education is not actually free and cost is still prohibiting many families from sending their children to school. This discussion led to a decision that the concept 'free' needs to be defined as its meaning can vary in different contexts.

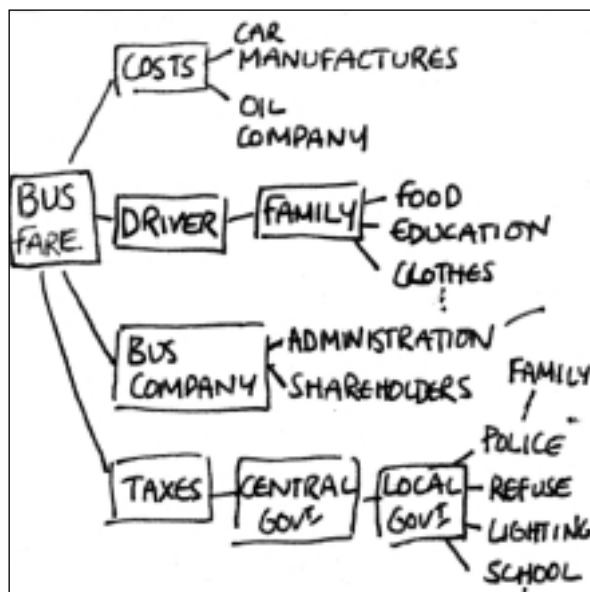
FOLLOW UP WORK

The aim of the work on this sheet is to enable people to see that they pay taxes and other fees and that therefore have a right to basic services. It is not to discourage people from paying taxes! Although it will be extremely difficult for people to campaign to change the actual tax system, there are many hidden costs which can be highlighted and decreased.

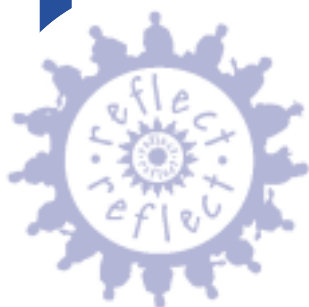
Although at first glance revenue collection appears to be a national issue, there are various international links that can be made. For example, the policies of the IMF and World Bank have an impact on user fees for basic education, and add another important dimension to decision making in the budgeting process.

It could also be interesting to examine tax and pricing issues in relation to trade – examining the costs of imported goods compared to locally produced goods, the reasons for the difference, and the types of subsidies or trade barriers which exist.

ISODEC have produced a CD-ROM (<http://www.isodec.org.gh/workshop-cd/index.htm>) with resources for budget analysis and training. The International Budget Project website (www.internationalbudget.org) also has resources for budget analysis and lists organisations worldwide undertaking this type of work.



A bus fare covers many different costs.





Spoken Word

Introduction

Despite their obvious importance to daily communication, listening and speaking are rarely conceived as an integral part of any learning or empowerment process. People's ability to speak up or speak out, in the public and private domain, and particularly on sensitive issues, can have a dramatic effect on power relationships.

SPEECH AND POWER

There are many elements of our spoken language, some very subtle, which can bestow on us status and power, or otherwise. Differences in speech can range from the choice of words, strength of voice, or regional and national differences in language or accent.

Language

Most countries are multilingual and there is often a clear hierarchy in the status of different languages. Where someone is only able to speak a local language, they are likely to be excluded from wider national processes and decisions, while those fluent in the dominant or official language will almost certainly have more access to positions of social, economic or political influence. The sheet on 'Teaching a Second Language' gives some ideas for how to work on this.

Dialect

Even where there is a common national language, there are usually significant hierarchies of dialect or accent. Some ways of speaking are taken more seriously than others, including regional words and accents. In the UK, for example, the 'Queen's English' is traditionally regarded as an indicator of education and status, while the majority speak with one of the many regional accents.

Discourse

Beyond regional differences, there are other vocational and social influences on a person's choice of words. This might be the use of technical terms and specialised language related to a trade, whether a doctor, plumber or government official. Of particular interest is the development discourse, used by NGO workers and academics, often to the exclusion of workers closer to grassroots. Large international institutions such as the World Bank or IMF can have a disproportionate influence on this discourse, co-opting new language as it arises.

Voice

In many cases the strength of a person's voice is quite physical. A strong, unfaltering voice commands attention and respect. However, there are more subtle distinctions: speaking too fast or with too much passion may lead people to dismiss your contribution as a rant, while it is not acceptable to speak loudly in a place of religious worship, for example. There are more ideas on physical voice in the 'Theatre' and 'Role Play' sheets.

Range

The spoken word is not limited by the physical strength of a person's voice, however. There are various media or instruments of communication which can increase your range, from microphones to radios and telephones. Access to and control over these media is often closely linked to social status or power and the sheet on 'Voice Technology' has some ideas for reflection on this.



Conversely, there are many social situations where contributions are only expected or allowed from certain people on subjects which are the domain of the few. These boundaries are often along gender, age or class lines – usually determined by a complex web of power relationships – and enabling people to challenge them can be an important part of achieving social justice and change.

REFLECT AND THE SPOKEN WORD

The origins of the Reflect approach lie in the work of Paulo Freire, who placed dialogue at the centre of the learning process. This is never easy to achieve as there will be complex, multi-layered power relationships within any group. A range of strategies are needed to help create an environment in which everyone feels comfortable to speak and confident in their own contributions – whilst at the same time being open to the opinions of others. The resource page on “Ensuring Equity in Who Speaks” offers some initial ideas, but there is no simple recipe and in different ways all the resource pages in this folder offer means to work towards achieving dialogue.

From another angle, Marc Fiedrich’s critical research on Reflect in Uganda illustrated the importance of the spoken word to the Reflect process: *“Talk is easily the most predominant activity in the majority of Reflect circles. Participants chat informally before, after and during the sessions; they answer questions and make contributions to debates both formally and casually”*. Indeed, Fiedrich argues that, in Uganda, *“it was much more vital to talk the talk than to read or write”*. Using the example of local conflicts over land boundaries or crop damage he reveals how *“the ability to talk convincingly can be very useful in turning the tables. It can involve being witty and sharp ... but it also entails having a feel for whom to talk to, about what and when.”*

Taking talk seriously

Given the relationship between speech and power, it is important for Reflect practitioners to monitor the extent to which programmes enhance people’s capacity to talk, asserting their physical voice in different situations. The Reflect circle should act in this respect like a rehearsal space where people can experiment with new roles and new ways of talking. In doing this we need to respect not just the changes in public discourse, but more subtle ways in which participants can achieve change through the spoken word.

Using graphics

The use of visualisation tools helps to break down formal norms of behaviour and provides a structure for systematic analysis in which all participants are actively engaged. Evaluations of Reflect have identified increased self-confidence as an important impact on participants, and this is linked to the process within a Reflect circle in which people find space to speak in new ways on new issues. The resource pages on ‘Language and Power in Institutions’, and ‘Teaching a Second Language’, include ideas on how graphics can be integrated into work on oral communication. See also the *Images* section.

Dangers

One of the dangers of raising links between the spoken word and power is that it could lead to a very traditional response in which people are taught how to speak ‘properly’. This would be very patronising and damaging, leading to a devaluation of local language forms and associated culture. There are, in fact, many opportunities for the Reflect circle to provide a basis for the assertion of pride in traditional or local communication forms, as covered in the sheets on ‘Radio’ and ‘Music, Song and Dance’.





Who Speaks

A positive group dynamic is essential to ensure that all members of a group contribute equitably to discussions, and that quieter voices can be heard.

WHY?

The Reflect process depends fundamentally on the creation of a democratic space in which all participants are respected – and this can never be taken for granted. The societies where we live and operate stratify people along many lines – by age, gender, race, language, social status or education for example – and we must all work to counter this within a Reflect group.

WHEN?

Sensitivity to equity in who speaks needs to start from the very first day and continue permanently. If a negative group dynamic is established it is very difficult to change, but a positive group dynamic needs continual maintenance.

HOW?

The participatory approaches used in Reflect are all, in a sense, designed to increase equity in who speaks. For example, the use of graphics has considerable potential to break down formal power dynamics as people are physically involved, and the focus point is on the collective task.

The facilitator is the most important person in generating the right group dynamic, and this is a major part of their role. It is crucial that facilitators establish openly at the start and throughout the process that a key principle of Reflect is that everyone's voice is given equal status. By being up-front, the facilitator can encourage participants to play an active role in monitoring and working towards the ideal. So long as this groundwork is in place, the following approaches can help:

NOTE

While many of the approaches described on this page have been developed for use in workshops, they can be adapted to grassroots work with relative ease. When used in Reflect circles one of the exciting outcomes can be the spread of the same approaches to other spaces, for example in meetings of grassroots organisations.

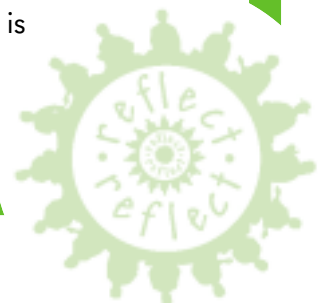
SPOKEN WORD

Small / Buzz groups:

Many people who feel intimidated talking in a large group will freely contribute to a smaller group. Regularly dividing up the group helps to vary dynamics. If there are a handful of dominant voices in the large group they can be clustered together into a single small group or given a specific task (e.g. monitoring) when others are discussing an issue. Even just giving a short time for people to discuss an issue in pairs or threes before starting a whole group debate can give everyone time to formulate and test out their thoughts.

Role-play:

In their Reflect work in the **UK**, ODEC uses a technique by which a discussion is simulated, but each participant secretly allocated a role to play, such as "dominator", "saboteur" or "bored". At the end people try to guess who was



playing which role. Pippa Bobbit of ODEC observes: *"after this game inter-group power relations are much easier to handle"*. (see sheet on 'Role Play' for further ideas).

Monitoring contributions:

One of the simplest techniques to monitor the equity of contributions is for designated people to record on a chart every time each participant speaks. This can be done with symbols to represent, for example, the length of interventions, and whether the intervention contributes to opening or closing debate. A secondary analysis can then be done to classify participants by age, gender, language, ethnicity or any other relevant stratification. Results should be discussed regularly, without personal accusation. Such methods of counting contributions, though not sufficient to ensure equity, are often revealing and increase group awareness of power dynamics.

Such monitoring can be extended by establishing a series of small groups, each taking responsibility to monitor the whole group according to different lenses of power. For example, one group might monitor gender, another language, and a third hierarchy. Each group develops its own monitoring tools and time is allocated to regularly share observations with the whole group.



Monitoring who speaks can be helpful for challenging power.

Controlling contributions:

Various different objects can be used to empower the group to actually control contributions. Yellow warning cards and red 'stop' cards can be handed out, either to all participants or to designated observers, to display when they feel that serious imbalances are occurring. In other cases a small object such as a ball can be used as an 'empowered object', so that in order to speak a participant must be holding the object. Whilst this can stifle the flow of discussion, it can prevent dominant voices shouting over quieter voices.

Alternatively, each participant can be given a limited number of objects, perhaps three stones, at the beginning of a discussion, putting one in the middle each time they speak. Once a participant has used all their objects they cannot speak again. This helps to ensure that people think carefully before they contribute – but needs to be linked to imposing a time limit on each contribution!

Being aware of language:

In groups where participants have different mother tongues there are additional dynamics to consider. Equity in speech has been a major concern for the International Reflect Circle meetings where multiple languages are spoken. Even where interpreters are available there is a need for ongoing sensitivity, and consideration of the delay, to ensure that everyone is able to contribute fully.





Role Play

Role-play is an effective tool both to analyse issues and to rehearse speaking up in new situations or on different topics.

WHY?

Everyone has different roles in different spheres of their lives, perhaps as a colleague, employee, mother, daughter, wife, politician or friend. Someone may be a passive participant in one context, active in another, empowered in one sphere but a victim in another situation. Essential to the Reflect process is to explore the different power relations and patterns of communication between different roles. Role-play is an effective way for people to think about different perspectives in a particular situation, and the impact this has on communication – an important step in the process of challenging and changing relationships of power.

WHEN?

At any time.

HOW?

Enabling people to reflect on their multiple identities in life can help raise awareness of the idea of roles and role-playing and make it easier for people to take on or act out the roles of others. Often participants are nervous at first, and the use of simple props or masks can help them take on a character.

Role-plays may come in many forms for example:

- **Re-enactment:** Participants re-enact a real incident, highlighting power dynamics and pivotal moments of conflict.
- **Simulation:** Participants act out a situation that could happen or which represents what normally happens in a particular situation.
- **Rehearsal:** Participants act out a situation that they want to happen – to practice their roles. For example, if the group has decided to send a delegation to the local government offices, the scenario of the meeting can be rehearsed in advance to test out roles, help refine arguments, or prepare for different responses/eventualities.
- **Projection/Inversion:** Participants invert or switch normal roles, projecting themselves into the roles of others: men become women; bosses become employees; the landless become landowners etc, in order to understand better that person's reactions and behaviour. This can help people see other points of view and identify points of leverage for changing relationships.



Role-play about HIV/AIDS, Mozambique.



In each case the role play should be the starting point for discussion and can be re-visited at different stages of the discussion to explore alternative responses or outcomes.

Relating this to the circle itself and self-reflection, it can be interesting to encourage participants to come up with different stereotypes or labels for the behaviour of individuals in group discussions. In situations where this approach has been used, labels have included: rambler, talkaholic, wise-guy, coloniser, aggressor, joker, daydreamer, pontificator, silent cowboy. Having such labels can enable participants to reflect on their own roles and challenge each other with humour.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In *Tambopata Condambo*, a national park in **Peru**, role-play was used to powerful effect. Two groups with a history of conflict were brought together: the population living in the park and the authorities responsible for maintaining the natural environment of the park. In the role-play the two groups were asked to play each other, causing much laughter (and hence a relaxed atmosphere for dialogue) and giving both sides new perspectives on the reasons behind the conflict. The role-play was carefully prepared and structured, based on a series of fictional incidents based on actual situations which had caused conflict in the past.

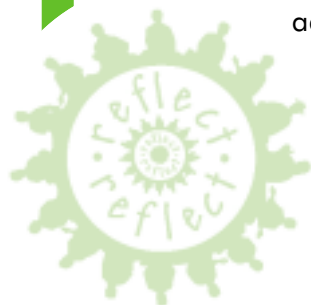
Role-play was also used within a Peruvian organisation, *Madre de Dios*, in order to promote a better understanding of power dynamics. Different members of the institution, from field level, project office and head office, exchanged roles to act out specific scenarios — and then reflected on the dynamics of power through lenses of gender, culture and hierarchy. This has significantly improved understanding and working relations within the institution.

In **Honduras**, a visualisation of social problems in a tree (see sheet in *Images* section), led to a powerful role-play. Women were asked to take on the role of husbands, children became women and men became children – to explore how these different social problems are played out in the life of a family and how they could be resolved.

In a Reflect process with a co-operative in **Lesotho**, local people identified jealousy as a counter-development force. In order to explore this, a role-play was mounted with one group of people working together to dig a gully while another group of people were excluded and did everything to sabotage or undermine the efforts. In discussions people then explored how they felt, what tactics were used, and how this can be addressed in future.



Pros and cons of farming traditional versus cash crops, East Godavari, India.





Theatre

Theatre is one of the most powerful forms of communication and there are many ways in which it can be used within the Reflect process.

WHY?

Theatre can be an effective means both for bringing people into the Reflect process and sharing key learning within the wider community, with other communities and even with decision makers. Reflect processes start from people's own knowledge, culture and identity – theatre can build on that basis and strengthen it as an act of resistance or assertion.

Theatre is a dynamic mix of fiction and reality, offering people the opportunity to express or challenge ideas and issues using a fictional voice, and symbolic situations. Reflect circles offer a space to address a wide range of issues, enabling people to find new ways to express themselves, and theatre can be used in this environment as a positive force for transformation.

WHEN?

Theatre work can be introduced at any stage – as an initial means of mobilisation for the Reflect process, to extend analysis within circles or for participants to raise issues with, or communicate conclusions to, a wider audience.

HOW?

There is a long history of popular theatre work around the world. In the 1970s in southern Africa, for example, theatre practitioners would research community problems and run local workshops to create a play presenting those issues in context, followed by structured discussion. Forum theatre, developed by Augusto Boal drawing on the work of Paulo Freire, challenges the power structure inherent in traditional Western theatre, where a few powerful people have control of the process while others passively watch. Forum Theatre transforms the audience into actors and creators of the drama, actively engaged in the process, encouraged to critically reflect on, challenge and change the course of the play and try out different solutions.

Theatre for Development

This was developed largely to enable target communities to analyse and criticise the work of development agencies were doing in their name. It is based on a democratic process, building on indigenous modes of entertainment and therefore looking very different in different cultural contexts.

USES OF THEATRE

There are many ways to use theatre which, in the context of Reflect, might include:

- **Mobile theatre groups to encourage people to join circles where a new Reflect process is starting;**
- **Short pieces developed by group members in order to communicate specific issues to a wider audience;**
- **Theatre groups formed by interested participants from different Reflect circles to devise plays based on common issues to mobilise support or perform directly to decision makers;**
- **External groups playing to provoke deeper analysis of specific issues;**
- **Reviving traditional forms of theatre as a means of culture regeneration.**



PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

An example of using theatre for initial mobilisation around Reflect comes from Yakshi in **India**. A local organisation, Girijan Deepika devised a drama highlighting local issues and encouraging people to reinstate the "Gotti", traditional community forums which had become largely defunct. In the process, the Gotti was also reconceived as a democratic space for analysis of local issues and collective learning. Theatre has continued to be used by the Gotti to place local issues in a national and international context that might otherwise not be known. For example, a play was developed that dramatised the role of the World Bank and World Trade Organisation in changes to local patterns of crop production.

Participants in a Reflect circle in Arua, **Uganda**, developed a powerful piece of theatre on the theme of family neglect that eventually led them to perform in front of government and NGO officials. The play captured, through the stories of members of a family, a range of interconnected issues from prostitution and alcoholism to domestic violence, school drop out, early marriage and petty crime. At the end of the performance, the audience discussed the issues raised and the role of their institutions to address the root causes of the problems.

The Pastoral Social in **Guatemala** has used puppet shows to raise very sensitive issues in a non-threatening way. The fact that, with puppets, there is no eye contact makes it easier to raise issues such as child trafficking or the impact of war. The effect has been to give people a licence to speak out and act on issues which have previously been taboo.

At the Latin American Reflect conference in 2001 Colapso Urbano, a popular theatre group from **El Salvador**, presented work based on the popular story of "The Emperor's New Clothes", but with high-technology designer clothes from the US bought by the Emperor with money raised through extortionate taxes. This stimulated rich debate on the manipulation of power, the US role in domestic affairs and the irrelevance of much imported technology, as well as leading to intense discussion around our own role as NGOs.

References:

On theatre for development, contact ActionAid-UK (e-mail: esummers@actionaid.org.uk) for a copy of Katie Wiseman's report "Hearing Voices for Social Change". Boal's books include "Theatre of the Oppressed", "Rainbow of Desire" and "Legislative Theatre". "Lines in the Dust", a video produced by CIRAC and available from ActionAid-UK, highlights some of the theatre work of Yakshi.



A play performed in the local community, by the local community with musical accompaniment in Orissa, India.





Music, Song and Dance

Ways of using different cultural and artistic means of communication to enhance and reinforce the Reflect process.

WHY?

Many elements of the Reflect process, such as the emphasis on democratic space and equity between participants, challenge local norms and stratifications. Yet, with roots in people's existing knowledge and experience, Reflect processes can also positively assert or affirm aspects of local culture. Song and dance are fun, help to sustain people's interest and motivation, strengthen group solidarity, communicate messages to wide audiences and can also provide rich material for critical analysis.

WHEN?

Any time, including linking into existing local cultural festivals or performances.

HOW?

Where participants in a Reflect circle share a local culture rich in song or dance, then the facilitator need do little more than to suggest that they sing or dance and it will happen. In other situations it may take some time to build a dynamic where participants feel confident and comfortable to express themselves musically.

Energisers

Song or dance can be used to energize and motivate the group, and in this case might be facilitated by any member of the group. A song or dance may be a regular part of a session, to get things off to an energetic start, to revive spirits in the middle of the session or to bring it to a close on a high note.

Analysing content

In places where song or dance is a powerful traditional form of communication, participants can be asked to introduce examples of particular relevance to an issue being discussed. Then, for example, in relation to songs it can be useful to analyse them in more detail, asking:

- Who wrote the song? Might it have been a man or woman? Young or old?
- When was the song written?
- Why was the song written? What is its history, meaning and power?
- In what way is the song relevant to our current lives?
- How has the song been recalled, handed down and learnt?



Traditional music, Bolivia.



A similar range of questions can be posed concerning music and dance: exploring the meaning and origins of dances, questioning who dances, who plays, what instruments are used and why. This is also an interesting dimension to explore in other elements of oral culture, such as proverbs and sayings: what is the original intention? Is it misused? Is it still relevant? Questions about how things are learnt can illustrate the myriad of ways in which learning takes place.

Means of communication

In many cultures music is a very important and well respected means of communicating messages. In these cases this traditionally powerful form of communication should not only be critically analysed by the Reflect group, but should also be considered as a primary means of ensuring that messages reach a wider audience.

Song and dance, along with other cultural means such as theatre, can often be a very powerful way of reaching local decision-makers or raising awareness among communities.

This may be done using existing

songs which resonate with a relevant issue, or the group may create a new song or dance, or adapt existing lyrics or movements to express new ideas or spread campaign messages.



Dancing in a Reflect circle in Burundi. Here dance is an integral part of the Reflect process.

PRACTICAL EXAMPLES

In **India**, Yakshi found that, while there was a huge range of popularly known songs, they were all over twenty years old and there were none which addressed current social and economic issues. As a result, people started writing songs about the cash crop economy and its impact. The songs can disseminate key reflections, observations and learning widely.

In Bolangir, **India**, the recurrent drought was a central issue for Reflect groups. The local facilitators wrote a series of songs about drought, emphasising that it is man-made and that mitigation is possible through the proper use of available local resources. These songs were compiled onto a cassette, with the facilitators singing and playing musical accompaniment, which were distributed and played at village meetings and social events. Where no tape recorder was available facilitators would group together to perform at key cultural events in different villages – encouraging everyone to join them in the choruses.

In **Burundi** dance is an integral part of the Reflect process. The sheer act of dancing together as Hutu and Tutsis becomes a powerful statement, breaking down the ethnic divisions which were aggravated to perpetuate the conflict. Song is also a very important means of communicating messages of peace, and in many cases is the participants' preferred means of reaching local decision makers.





Recording Oral Testimony

Ideas on how people's own stories can be effectively used to communicate an issue to a wide audience.

WHY?

During the Reflect process, powerful personal illustrations or stories often arise from the experiences of participants. Personal testimonies can be vivid and challenging and can breathe life into an issue, placing abstract issues in the context of a real person's experience. People's own stories can reveal the complex inter-relationships between issues, and effectively place contemporary situations in an historical context. As such, they can be an effective way of communicating local analysis and reflection to a wider audience, even at government level.

WHEN?

Relevant testimonies might be actively sought or recorded once the group has concluded its analysis of an issue and is seeking the best way to communicate it to a wider audience.

HOW?

The decision to record a personal testimony may be spontaneous, when a participant has told a story that powerfully moves others in the group. In other cases facilitators may actively seek stories to illustrate a point or issue, perhaps beginning with a story of their own to put people at ease. In other cases, the group may decide to approach someone outside the group who they know has a powerful story to illustrate points that they wish to communicate to others.

It is important when recording testimonies to be clear about the reasons for telling it and the intended audience, and these questions can be resolved through group discussion. The interviewee might feel more comfortable if only one or two members of the group ask questions, though the wider group can support them by proposing questions and pointing out connections.

The testimony can be recorded on a tape recorder and then transcribed, or the group might listen and take notes. It may be appropriate to start with a visualisation technique, such as a river, which will help the person tell their story in a more structured way.



People working together to record one participant's story, Kenya.

SPOKEN WORD



Reviewing the material

Once the basic story has been collected, the group can review it to identify areas where further information is required and check that the story is structured in the most effective way. At times, being too close to something makes it hard to see how others will react. Key information may be taken for granted or missed out, so cross-checking with outsiders may be appropriate, perhaps through facilitators, or with another organisation interested in the issues raised.

It is extremely important that the testimony continues to accurately reflect the tone and meaning of the original. The person concerned must be happy with the final version and agree fully to the way it will be used. They should retain the rights over any use of the story and some form of short, signed contract might even be appropriate.

Using the testimony

Depending on the audience to be reached, the testimony might be broadcast on radio, published in a newspaper or pamphlet, or sent directly to an official or organisation. It might also need to be translated to reach the intended audience. Finally, the group should aim to review the whole process and see how the final testimony affects their own understanding of the issues they previously discussed.

Testimonies can offer a new perspective and sometimes even point the way towards new solutions.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Bolivia**, Reflect groups have collected stories from participants about the changing world and allowed these to be used for reflection and analysis by other groups. When used in this way, tape recordings can be stopped at critical moments in the story while participants discuss and write down possible conclusions before hearing the actual ending.

In **Peru**, oral testimonies have been recorded to document the displacement of indigenous peoples, the history of people settling in an area and the cultural roots of communities who are undergoing processes of rapid change.

PERSON TO PERSON POWER

Reflect circles in Ruyigi, Burundi, collected powerful personal testimonies from local people and took them to the refugee camps in Tanzania to convince the refugees that it was safe to return home.

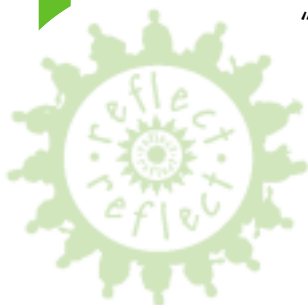
Related work

The process of transcribing a testimony can be used as a constructive part of a wider learning process in Reflect, and the final text can be used for literacy work, including: summarising; highlighting key sections for different audiences; pulling out key quotes for publicity; or even editing it with an explicit view to distorting the meaning. (See sheets in *Written Word* section)

Further reading

"Giving Voice", and *"Listening for a Change"* from Panos;

"Life histories paper" Harsh Mander (available from AA India mail@actionaidindia.org).





Language and Power in Institutions

Critical reflection of the language practices of institutions, including jargon, is essential in order to challenge power relationships and assumptions.

WHY?

People communicate most easily with others who share their language, discourse and understanding. In institutions this means we risk talking to ourselves, rather than to the people with whom or for whom we claim to be working. We become receptive to ideas presented in a certain way, with a certain style, format or discourse - and we react negatively to ideas presented without the same refinements. This can also become a critical power issue within institutions, between management and staff.

WHEN?

As an integral part of any grassroots process we should be looking at our own practices within institutions – examining how we communicate and how that communication is linked to our own practice of power.

HOW?

The resource page on institutional literacy raises some issues around jargon, focusing on the written forms. Here are some methods of thinking through the use of spoken language in institutions:

Personal reflections

The starting point for any individual, whether coordinator, trainer or facilitator, should be to critically analyse their own communication practices and consider the links between these practices and their own power. By understanding these issues in our own lives we are more able to understand how they affect others.



Staff of ActionAid forming a line to illustrate their relative power within ActionAid.

Mapping the language we use

A chapati diagram can be used to identify the cultures and sub-cultures, institutions or individuals that have somehow influenced the way in which we use language within our organisation. The size of circles in the diagram and proximity to the centre can represent the degree of influence on our language use. It can be helpful to track the origins of some of these influences. For example, a lot of current development discourse is disturbingly similar to that used in the colonial era.



Exploring time-use

Different visualisation techniques can be used to look at our styles and directions of communication and linking this to power, asking, for example:

- With whom do we communicate and how?
- What percentage of time is spent at a computer compared to talking on the phone or meeting people?
- What is the status of different forms of communication within the institution?
- How much of our communication with our stakeholders is direct?
- How do we communicate differently to different people in the institution?



Brazilian women giving examples of when they have felt powerful/powerless.

Analysing language and culture

In a multilingual context, and particularly with international organisations, different languages will be perceived to carry different weights. It can be helpful to map out the points where languages meet or cross over and consider the power issues involved at the interface where languages cross or collide: what happens to the voices of people who cannot effectively cross the interface? A diagram showing the formal power structure of the institution can be overlaid with information on who speaks what language, making evident some core power issues.

Identifying actions

Discussion of how the dominant institutional language affects the working culture at different points in the organisation can bring out ideas for how this could be changed or mediated. Strategies could include:

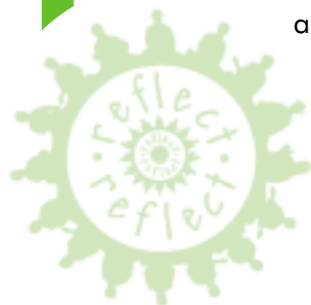
- a ban on jargon, enforced by fines, or rewards for using clear language;
- no computer days;
- regular informal oral briefings across departments and divisions;
- increasing investment in interpreting and translation;
- ensuring key institutional processes take place in multiple languages.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Peru**, CADEP conducted a Reflect workshop to look at the practice of power within their organisation. The central issue emerging concerned the contradictions between being an organisation committed to bilingual education yet adopting a western working culture.

At the World Education Forum in Dakar, **Senegal** 2000, 185 governments signed up to a Framework for Action that was available in multiple languages. However, the real debates over the content of the document took place over a six-month period before the conference and were exclusively conducted in English.

Similar tensions exist in the International Reflect Circle, which brings together practitioners from around the world. Language has been the biggest single factor in determining people's capacity to participate actively.





Citizens' Juries

Using the status of a jury system to put experts under interrogation and give ordinary people the power to pass their own verdict.

WHY?

Decisions and policies regarding significant issues that shape all our lives are too often decided without the knowledge or participation of the majority of people. In relation to major science-related developments, such as genetically modified foods, people have little opportunity to hear all sides of a debate and offer their own response. The same is true of many local development projects that are designed or approved with minimal consultation or participation. Citizens' juries provide the space for ordinary people to learn more and have a voice that carries considerable credibility. In the context of Reflect processes this can be a powerful way to bring a key issue into the wider public eye. In some cases a jury might be organised by several Reflect circles on an issue that affects them all, identified through participants' forums or networking of facilitators.



Citizens' Jury in process in India.

WHEN?

Citizens' juries are relevant where the Reflect circle has already spent some time identifying and examining an issue. It might take place over a day or a few days depending on the weight of evidence to be heard.

HOW?

Once an issue has been identified, a steering group needs to be established to take on the work of organising the sessions, framing the question to be decided, recruiting the jury, and identifying stakeholders and witnesses. They can also take responsibility for follow-up to the event, developing an action plan in the light of the verdict. The steering group will remain accountable to the Reflect groups from which they are formed.

Selecting the jury

The jury itself will be responsible for passing judgement on the basis of evidence given. They might be nominated from the local Reflect circles or could be selected at random from the wider community using a local official register, to give wider legitimacy to the process and findings. Either way it is important to ensure that a balanced profile emerges, with appropriate socio-economic, ethnic and gender representation.



Selecting the witnesses

Witnesses will be called to give expert evidence on the basis of which the jury will make their verdict. They should be taken from a broad cross-section of people with different perspectives on the issue: officials, experts, people who will be affected in various ways, those responsible for making decisions etc.

The hearing

During the actual hearing, witnesses give evidence one by one and are cross-examined in front of, or by, the jury. At the end of the hearing the jury discuss the information given and pass a verdict. This should be an opportunity for considerable media coverage, which can help to give weight to the proceedings and increase the power of the verdict.

Follow up

It is useful to give some time for the jury and other observers to draw out key learning from the process. It is unlikely that the jury verdict will in itself lead to immediate change. It will therefore be important for the steering group to sit with jury members afterwards to develop an action plan for taking the issue forward in the light of the new depth of understanding reached. The targets for influencing are likely to be much clearer by the end of the process.



Members of a UK citizens' jury on food and farming, whose verdict questioned the need for GM foods, meet Environment Minister, Michael Meacher.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **India**, ActionAid organised a citizens' jury with Indian farmers on the issue of genetically modified crops. Until then the debate had been dominated by scientists, corporate spokespeople or campaigners. The jury enabled farmers to exercise their democratic right to both access sufficient knowledge and judge the issue for themselves.

A cross-section of farmers who could potentially be affected by GM crops, all with sophisticated knowledge of the ways in which new crops could impact on their lives, made up the jury. They were asked to give a verdict to the following question: "would you sow the new commercial seeds proposed by the Department of Bio-technology and Monsanto on your fields?" A wide range of witnesses – from corporations, academia, development organisations, unions and government – were called. After four days of evidence the jury had a secret ballot. The clear majority of the jury (9 out of 14) said no. They were then asked to discuss how GM crops could be made more acceptable to them and make detailed recommendations.

Additional Information

You can find more information on Citizens' Juries at:
www.peals.ncl.ac.uk (search under Citizens' Juries),
or visit: www.soc.surrey.ac.uk/sru/SRU37.html





Radio

Ways of linking to local and national radio stations, enabling Reflect groups to analyse broadcasts and actively contribute material.

WHY?

Radios are widely available in most countries, particularly in rural areas and new technology, including solar power and clockwork radios, is allowing it to become ever more widely and cheaply available. Local FM radio stations are multiplying, in more and more local languages. Radio broadcasts on social, economic or political issues can provide material for critical reflection and analysis. Furthermore, community radio stations enable people to actively produce material for broadcast, sharing their analysis or experiences and influencing others.

WHEN?

At any stage.

HOW?

Opportunities to work with radio will depend largely on the local context: what radio stations exist and how open they are to contributions. However, even local stations that don't encourage contributions can usually be made to rethink with a bit of audience pressure. It is increasingly feasible for radio stations to extend their coverage to new areas or to start programming in new languages where popular demand can be shown. It is even possible to persuade organisations to open new stations. All of these may be areas for appropriate action by Reflect participants and their organisations.



Many people, even in the most rural communities, have access to radio.

As a source of information

In many communities, radio is a trusted source of information. Sometimes this trust proves to be misplaced, as political groups or state broadcasters use the medium to spread propaganda or one-sided messages. During the ethnic conflicts in Burundi and Rwanda in the early 1990s, radio stations were key weapons used to spread violence. In contrast, Radio Ljambo, set up after the conflict in Burundi, played a crucial role in collecting authoritative news from multiple sources and facilitating roundtable debates between opposing parties that helped to lay the foundations for the peace process.

Reflect circles may organise regular listening sessions, selecting particular broadcasts which relate to issues they have analysed or which address current affairs. Discussion after the broadcasts may include reflection on why certain perspectives were given prominence (who controls the radio station / particular programme) and why other views were excluded. In some cases the group may decide to write or record a response to the programme.



As a communication tool

The potential for constructive use of radio to communicate the analysis of Reflect groups and extend the scope of action is very broad. One popular use has been to set up radio phone-ins or discussion panels, where sensitive issues of relevance to the local community can be discussed. Similarly, radio stations have been a good channel for promoting local democracy and accountability as local government officials face questions put to them by listeners. Radio has also been used by minority language or cultural groups to assert their identity and provide a cultural reference point.

More generally, Reflect groups might choose to put together a radio programme or documentary around an issue arising from their reflection and analysis. This may start with them using a tape recorder (if one is available) to record different people's experiences or opinions. These can be played back to the group, commented on, refined and re-recorded.

A short sample tape (5 or 10 minutes) may then be taken to the local radio station to persuade them to do a professional recording drawing on the sample material and to then broadcast a programme on the issue.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Guatemala** in the 1970s, speakers of the minority Mam language set up their own local station, Radio Mam. The station broadcast material about Mam culture, history and traditional knowledge in the Mam language at a time of great cultural repression when

many people were ashamed to speak it in public. Local people were encouraged to come in to the station to give news from their villages, and popular reporters were trained to collect material with tape recorders from villages. A library of recordings was set up, from which people could borrow materials. In this way, people learnt to produce their own programmes and a new form of literacy was developed.

In **Uganda**, Reflect participants contribute to a regular discussion panel on gender and education on the local radio station. The panel breaks taboos, openly discussing sensitive issues such as rape and harassment in schools or early pregnancy. Radio has also been used to open up debate on sensitive issues in **Peru**, where following an intensive analysis of domestic and sexual violence in the family, Reflect participants were encouraged to produce small slots for a local radio station. Recording and editing their own material in small groups, participants were able to communicate their understanding of the issues and contribute to the breaking down of the culture of silence around domestic violence.



Radio can be a powerful way of getting your voice heard outside your immediate community.





Teaching a Second Language

Initial ideas for adapting Reflect to language teaching – where participants are keen to develop their skills in an official language.

WHY?

Many Reflect groups operate in a multi-lingual context, where one language is used for communication locally and another for official or national communication. In this context, language can be a significant basis for exclusion and disempowerment. Reflect can be adapted to focus on strengthening people's oral skills in a dominant or official language, while analysing some of the power dynamics involved.

WHEN?

This may be introduced from the start (after discussions about language and power) or may be added later on in response to demand from participants.

HOW?

It is important to begin by exploring the relative status and power of different languages used locally. A map or matrix may be constructed to illustrate the different contexts in which each language is used, in oral or written form. A timeline could give an historical perspective on the appearance of different languages and link this to wider issues of power. This can help to challenge any prejudices or assumptions concerning the natural superiority of one language over another.

In some cases people learning a second language may already be literate in their own language, whereas in other situations a second language may be learned at the same time as basic literacy. Both are possible, but it is easier for initial literacy to be learned in the mother tongue and then to learn the second language. These might be separate events in a single process, and can be mutually reinforcing:

- In their mother tongue participants know the words/sounds and have to find the right letters to represent them.
- In the second language participants have to decode the letters to work out the sounds.

Many supplementary reading materials are likely to be available in the dominant language - often more than in the mother tongue. These can be used for reading aloud, collective translation and critical study.

— MTHU —
Showing the places
where different languages
are spoken

HEBAMBEKO YA NDI NGATHI HUNE NYAMBO / LAJAMBO LWA SHUMUTWA BONE
Shilwezi 1998

amabani

	(01)	(02)	(03)	(04)	(05)	(06)	(07)	Zungu (08)
Ukulu (01)								45
Tungu (02)								15
Ukulu (03)								11
English (04)								15
Ukulu (05)								
Ukulu (06)								

TRADITIONAL (01) Nyanzi (02) Nyanzi (03) Nyanzi (04) Nyanzi (05) Nyanzi (06) Nyanzi (07) Nyanzi (08)

(01) Nyanzi (02) Nyanzi (03) Nyanzi (04) Nyanzi (05) Nyanzi (06) Nyanzi (07) Nyanzi (08)

Matrix showing where different languages are spoken.





Voice Technology

A range of ideas for how to work with technology around oral communication, including telephones and microphones.

WHY?

When we think of oral communication or the spoken word we tend to think of the naked voice and assume the physical presence of the communicator. However, there is a range of technology that can amplify and extend the spoken voice. There is a separate resource page addressing the possibilities of radio, but here we touch on other ways of enhancing the power of the spoken word and using oral media to address power issues.

WHEN?

Anytime.

HOW?

With any powerful technology it is important to ask questions about ownership and access. Whose voice is being heard through microphones and megaphones? Who reaps the benefits of telephones? A gender analysis can also be very revealing, pointing to wider power issues. The microphone or megaphone is more likely to be the property of a man and this can reinforce the impression that public speaking is a male domain. Often the act of a woman seizing the microphone is in itself political.



*Slum eviction rally, Tikopora, Bangladesh.
In this context megaphones are real
instruments of power.*

Microphones and megaphones

The megaphone is perhaps the most favoured of technologies for activists seeking to mobilise a crowd. It is informal, cheap, mobile, and affords the person holding it dominance and power. Megaphones incite a certain style of political discourse - rallying people around political slogans or chants. There is a different style associated with microphones as they tend to be used in more formal meetings and are more fixed. Control over the microphone can be more structured and sequenced and their presence in meetings can change the dynamic, making some voices more powerful than others. Regardless of the content of what is said, a person who is experienced with speaking through a microphone will sound more assured and competent than someone whose voice fluctuates between an annoying boom and a distant whisper.

Given the power issues involved in using these technologies, it can be very effective to use them within a Reflect circle using role-play. Even the idea of a microphone is sufficient to bring out different dynamics, so a fake can be made from a stick or toy. When holding something that represents a microphone most people will behave differently and as they play with this role they may find elements



that they can take on and use in other contexts. The mock microphone in this way becomes a kind of mask. Observing and analysing the changing roles and behaviour of people using the 'microphone' can lead to significant insights into roles, identity and the nature of power.

Telephones

There are particular communication skills associated with telephones, especially when dealing with formal situations. In some places the telephone can be the most effective means of accessing institutions. In such contexts, work can be done within the Reflect circles to develop telephone negotiating skills through role-play and games. Being able to frame an argument, make a case, and secure progress when there is no one physically in front of you requires practice! Confidence is needed to ensure that you speak to the right people, and are not constantly transferred between departments or lost on hold.

For many people in rural areas access to telephones is still not easy. Seeking the extension of coverage can be an important means to narrow the gap between people and the institutions that have power over them. Telephones can also be crucial in speeding up the process of organising people across communities, enabling people to work together on common issues and maintain regular communication. This is potentially even easier with the advent of mobile phones. The present state and potential future of telephone provision is an important issue for discussion in any process that seeks to address the power issues around people's capacity to communicate.



Reflect project Nzhelele, Northern Province, South Africa: a Reflect participant speaks up in a meeting with local officials.

Future technology

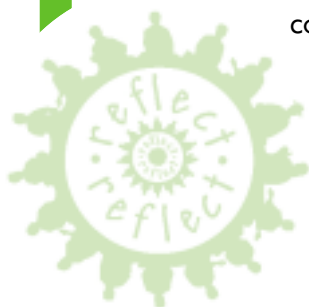
Computer technology has progressed remarkably in recent years, moving beyond the past dependence on literacy to include more oral and visual interfaces. It will not be long before computers can be completely voice operated. Overcoming the power issues that lead to inequity of access to such technology will take much longer.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **El Salvador**, CIAZO use imitation microphones in simulations of different quiz shows and political interviews in order to bring people out of themselves and address big issues in a light way. The setting of a discussion in a heightened space can help maintain active participation and bring out extrovert behaviour even in shy people!

Further information

For more information on work linking Reflect to the introduction of information and communication technologies, including the internet, contact Hannah Beardon (hannahb@actionaid.org.uk).





Images

Introduction

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY IMAGES

The term “images” is used here to cover a range of forms of communication that go beyond the spoken or written word. Included in this section are non-verbal, visual and audio-visual communication.

Visual communication

Visual tools such as maps, calendars, matrices and diagrams form the basis of much of the Reflect learning process. Often undermined by the status of written communication, visual communication is actually of growing, rather than diminishing, importance in today’s world. Computers rely on visual icons. Large corporations depend on a unique and recognisable logo to strengthen their identity. Photographs, cartoons and picture stories are very popular and widely used. All of these can be relevant to a Reflect process, to stimulate analysis or to communicate the outcomes of discussion with a wider audience.

Audio-visual communication

Audio-visual communication, such as film, video, television or even theatre, is in many contexts the most powerful of contemporary mediums of communication. Critical analysis of the power of such media is often an important part of the Reflect process, and it can provide a crucial channel for communication and action for Reflect circles.

Non-verbal communication

Body language is the most fundamental form of human communication yet often we are not conscious of it. Complex messages are communicated by our posture, gesture and facial expression and silence can be used very effectively. Through our physical presence we emit messages about our own feelings of power or powerlessness. Critical analysis is necessary in order to invert sub-conscious processes, challenge the perpetuation of oppression and command power.

HOW DO WE USE IMAGES?

From its very conception, Reflect has centred on the use of images. Through the Reflect process, visualisation tools and techniques designed for Participatory Rural Appraisal are handed over directly to people to help them develop their own process of learning, analysis, planning and action. Furthermore, Freire’s understanding of the power of visual communication is central to the understanding of literacy and adult learning of Reflect. Freire used drawings and photographs (“codifications”) to capture and isolate key contradictions in people’s lives, giving them space and distance to analyse their own situations.

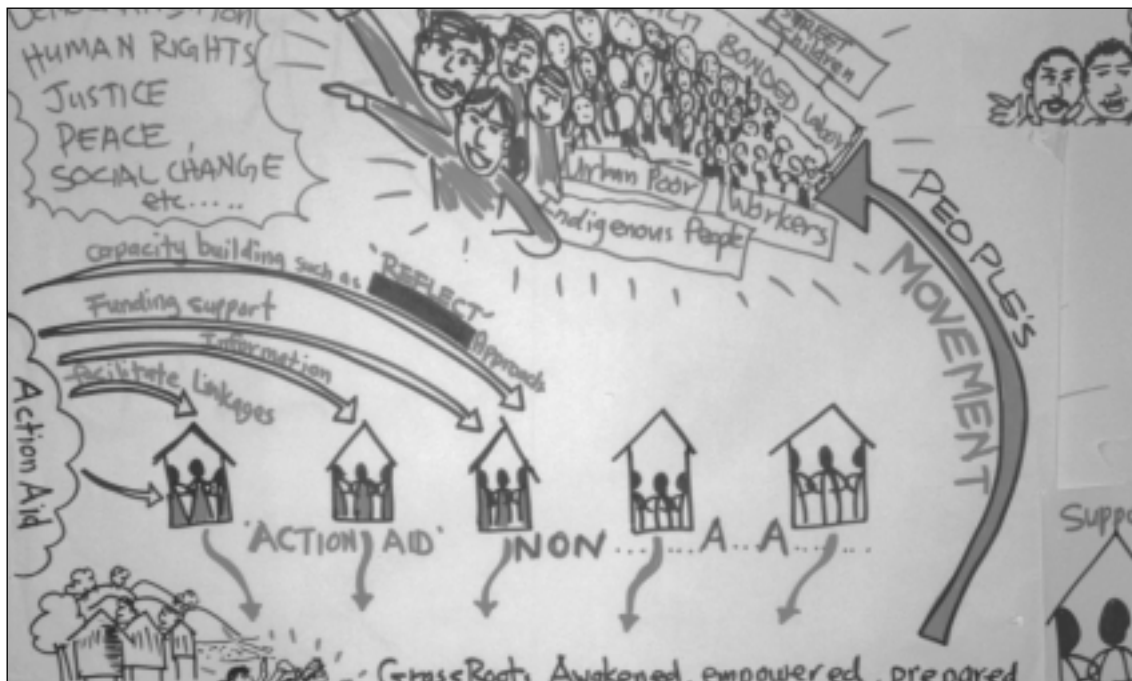
Usually, Reflect programmes are structured around a series of graphics developed by participants, (see resource pages on ‘Trees’, ‘Rivers’, ‘Matrices’, ‘Chapati Diagrams’, ‘Flow Diagrams’, ‘Calendars’ and ‘Maps’) each addressing a local issue from a different angle. These graphics provide a core structure to the process of systematising local knowledge and stimulating critical analysis,



creating an environment in which a range of other participatory approaches can be effectively used. Visualisations have also proved particularly effective at generating an active group dynamic, breaking down formal boundaries and re-framing established power relationships.

From images to writing

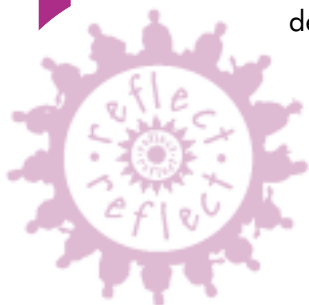
Many Reflect programmes include a strong literacy dimension, and the process of expressing thoughts and dilemmas on paper that is developed through the use of graphics, is central to the literacy learning process. A three-dimensional visualisation (constructed on a large scale using locally available objects that can be moved around), can gradually take on a written form, beginning with the addition of pictures or symbols (on small cards) for each object and then labelling these cards. Translating the visualisation onto the two dimensions of a large sheet of paper involves Reflect circles in a re-tracing of the historical evolution of literacy: from symbolic representation through to the introduction of written words.



A simple drawing can say much more than words: Diagram showing the Reflect process, Bangkok 2001

Using images for action

It would be wrong to understand images and visualisation processes only as a bridge to literacy or a means to structure the learning and reflection process. We need also to explore how participants can strengthen their capacity to use images as a force for change and a form of social action. The skills which participants develop through work with different types and sources of images, can serve them to develop actions to assert their voice and change their environment. Sometimes materials produced within a circle can become powerful communication tools in themselves. In other cases, images can be specifically developed in order to share information and perspectives with a wider audience. This is particularly evident in the sheets on using photography, posters and video.





Mapping

Maps are an effective way of presenting local information – problems, opportunities and stratifications - in a clear, visual way.

WHY?

Maps can be used to present basic local information in a revealing new light and are a useful tool to structure analysis. A basic map of a local area can be overlaid with information on any pertinent local issue, such as social relations, public services, sources of livelihoods, or land use. Maps can be developed to show changes over the years or generations, and to anticipate changes or expectations for the future.

WHEN?

Any time.

HOW?

Maps and models are flexible tools that can be used in diverse contexts, so there are no definitive steps to the process. However, some key observations are useful.

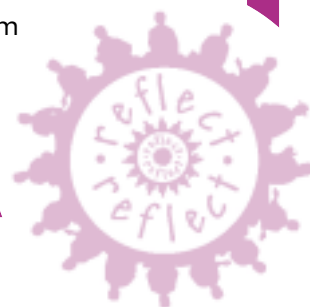
Initially, a map should be created on a large scale on the ground or another surface, so that all participants can actively contribute and clearly see what is going on. The first things to be put down should create a basic framework for the space. Important features such as rivers, roads and communal buildings help people to orient themselves and therefore participate more actively. The group may wish to begin the exercise by taking a walk around the area to note natural resources, buildings, crops or any other features they wish to represent and analyse.

Many different types of materials can be used to represent the different elements on the map. These could be anything locally available and easy to move, such as sticks, stones, beans, leaves, flowers, coloured dyes, pictures, pins, thread etc. The meanings of the symbols should be selected and agreed upon by the whole group - for example, a stone could represent a house or a type of bean represent a woman. Movable objects are crucial, as everyone needs to be able to go back, change and revise elements as the map develops. Less assertive participants find this particularly helpful.

Once all the physical things relevant to the purpose of the map are in place, more qualitative judgements can be considered, for example, to indicate positive or negative perceptions of what is represented. Then the group can reflect on the map as a whole, drawing out insights or conclusions to stimulate discussion. The completed map often enables people to see issues or phenomena in a new light – as they are at the same time removed from daily reality and yet confronted with a new overview or perspective on that reality. In some cases the “real” map may then be used as a starting point for



Community map done by Reflect circle Monte alegre Mill, Catende, Pernambuco, Brazil.

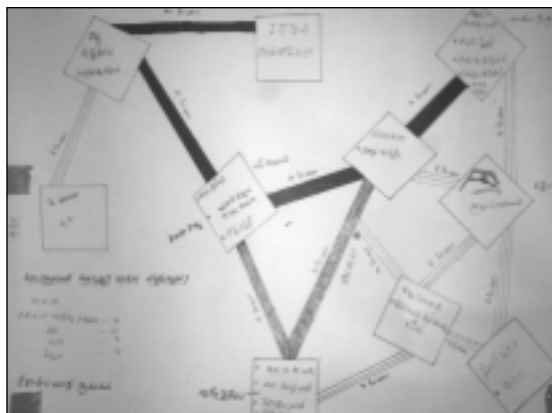


developing an “ideal” map, showing future changes, whether practical and achievable or idealistic and visionary. In some cases such maps can become practical planning tools.

For the map to be recorded on paper or card, participants need to decide pictures or symbols with which to label key elements on the map. Transferring the graphic takes practice, so start with a pencil and a large sheet of paper! Once down on paper, participants may wish to make their own, smaller copies.

Abstract mapping

Maps can also be used to analyse spaces outside of the purely physical. For example, the challenges faced in education can be “mapped out”, to identify where key decisions are made, who is controlling the implementation of these decisions, the influences on these people and the spaces for group members to assert their voices. This can be a cross between a map and a flow diagram.



*Social Mobility Map, Kanatalabanda,
East Godavari District, Andhra
Pradesh Region, India.*

Using satellite maps

Satellite maps can now be obtained for almost any place on the surface of the earth, and in many cases maps are available dating back many years for comparative analysis. These maps show land surface, often in considerable detail. The careful interpretation of these can be used to stimulate discussion, or to compare with maps produced in the group, on issues such as soil type, forest cover or water resources.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

Maps played a crucial role in the context of Reflect work in a national park in **Peru** with families who had colonised the park and were perceived to have a negative impact on the environment. Through participatory mapping, areas were specified where people could hunt, fish, farm or collect produce without causing any damage.

In Bolangir, **India**, maps were used to identify land which was supposed to be commonly owned, but had been encroached upon by wealthy people. In one case these encroachers were expelled and the land given to homeless families, but in many other contexts the struggle for land continues. Physical structures are only one part of the map and the analysis of values is essential. For example, one group in **El Salvador** were discussing the local football pitch, and while the men thought it was a positive asset, one woman said that it also represented danger, as one of her sons had been beaten up there and the games sometimes ended in violence.

Mapping is used in many ways as can be seen from the following which have been developed in different Reflect circles:

- map of land tenancy / ownership and land reform in El Salvador;
- map of land mines in Mozambique;
- map of displacement and migration in Burundi;
- map of shifting land use over generations in India;
- map of government agencies and NGOs in Nicaragua;
- map of languages and literacies in Peru;
- map of office space in ActionAid UK.





Calendars, Timelines and Daily Charts

Time visualisation tools such as calendars and timelines can be used to track changes, document histories and processes or analyse routines.

WHY?

Time is an important dimension of most issues: looking at how something came about, learning from experience, or anticipating what might happen. Many problems are experienced in a very immediate way – but responding to them effectively requires a long-term perspective, recognising the factors that led to the situation in order to ensure sustainable solutions. Visualising these in the form of a calendar or timeline can be very effective.

Analysis of routine uses of time can clearly show differences in individuals' patterns of work or behaviour, encouraging shared analysis, debate and in many cases assisting planning for change.

WHEN?

A time dimension is useful in analysis of nearly any issue or situation, and can be introduced at any point.

HOW?

Three main graphics can be used to add a time dimension to analysis. *Calendars* can be used to map and analyse seasonal patterns and variations, for example, looking at workload during different times of the year or price fluctuations, while *timelines* are an effective way of tracking changes in relation to a particular issue over time and predicting future events on the basis of past experience. Both bring out powerful associations between cause and effect, and

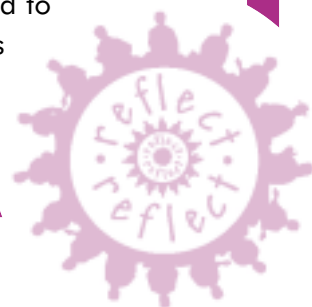
can be used to improve planning and preparedness, looking ahead and determining, for example, small steps that, over a period of time, might add up to a large change.

In contrast to the longer view of timelines, *daily charts* can help participants to focus on the micro use of time, allowing for shared analysis of patterns in work-load or behaviour. Through highlighting differences, or convergences, in routine activities and duties, the charts are useful for encouraging debate of division of labour or opportunities for collaboration. This type of individual graphic is particularly powerful when examining gender issues and power relations.

As with any visualisation exercise, calendars and timelines should be used to deepen analysis of an issue arising from group discussion. Common themes include agriculture, health, food security, income and gender relations. Having a long-term perspective of any situation can be useful. Depending



Daily routine chart – Pakistan.



on the issue or situation to be analysed, different units of time will be appropriate, whether hours, days, months, years or decades. In some cases, this will relate to a specific period, and in others it will be general: months of the year or hours of the day.

Once the time units have been determined, a basic calendar or timeline can be drawn up, with locally appropriate symbols used for the different units of time. This can either be done individually or as a group. Participants then place symbols or words representing relevant events in the appropriate place on the graphic. If done as a group, the decisions of which events are relevant, and when they occur, may in itself be cause for revealing debate. Group analysis and discussion of the resulting calendar can form the basis for drawing up strategies for coping with, or preventing, regularly occurring problems.

As a group builds up a series of calendars and timelines these can be compared to enable participants to observe interrelationships between apparently distinct events, such as changes in the local economy and patterns of disease.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

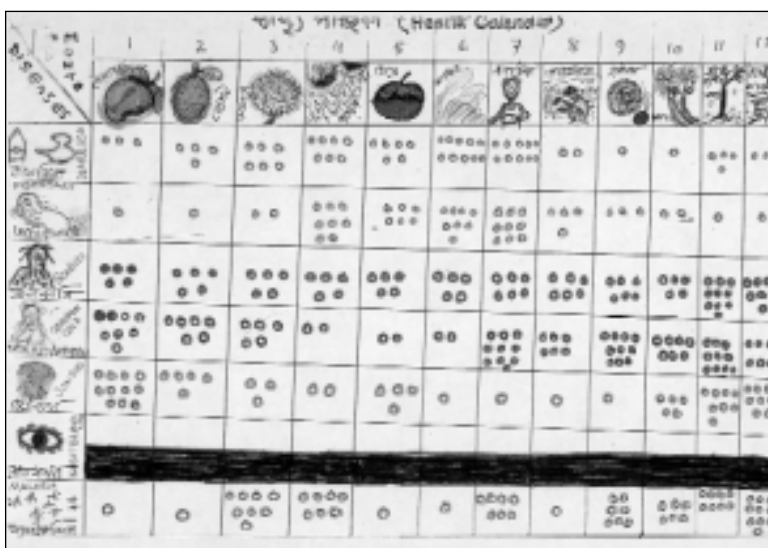
Health calendars were used in **Nepal** to provoke discussion of the causes of common illnesses on a seasonal basis. Through completion of the calendar, considerable discussion was generated on why the illnesses were common, whether they changed from year to year, the causes which were or weren't seasonal, how the illnesses were spread, how they could be prevented or reduced and how medicines or funerals could be better afforded or planned for.

In **Uganda** hunger and abundance calendars were used to plot the availability of food and income through the year, to determine the times of year when there were serious shortages and the times of abundance. The reasons for shortage were explored and discussion focused on survival strategies and ideas for

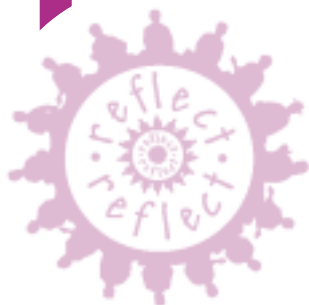
improving them. Ideas for action included introducing new crops, improving storage, bulk purchasing, cooperative selling, irrigation, income-generation projects etc.

Calendars and timelines have also been used in the following ways:

- gender workload calendars in Uganda;
- cooperative history timelines in Honduras;
- village history timelines in Bangladesh;
- daily routines of boys and girls of different castes in India.



Health calendar, Orissa – India.



Using Trees

The image of a tree, with roots, trunk and fruits, can be very effective to draw out relationships, such as cause and effect or inputs and outputs.

WHY?

A tree is a universally recognised symbol with clear metaphorical meanings, which people can use to explore issues or processes from a new angle.

WHEN?

Tree graphics can be used in many situations and at any time.

HOW?

The various elements of a tree working together in a cycle are a basic metaphor for almost any situation to be analysed:

- The trunk usually symbolises the situation to be studied;
- The roots represent inputs, whether causes of a situation, past events leading up to it, or things necessary for its existence, or income;
- The branches are the consequences or outputs of the situation, or expenditure;
- Fruits may be added to represent possible solutions or actions.

The first time that the technique is used, it might be useful for the group to study a real tree and discuss its various parts and how these could be used to discover, compare and analyse an aspect of community or family life. The group then finds a place to 'plant' their tree, developing the image using locally available, symbolic and movable objects.

Once the basic idea has been established, participants can develop their analysis in rich directions, often with much artistic expression, representing complex connections and relationships in a relatively simple image. As long as participants develop the image in consultation with each other, it will be linked to a serious structured discussion about the situation being addressed – of the causes and effects of what we are studying, or the implications and comparisons.



*Tree showing income and expenditure,
San Luis Community, El Salvador.*



In practice, participants often continue the metaphor to add other elements to the tree, such as:

- threats or limitations to a situation represented by weeds, fungus or pests;
- fundamental damage or major risks shown, for example, as lightening;
- environmental factors, such as the quality of the soil, nutrients that can be added, or the climate;
- different living creatures in the tree whether positive or negative forces, within or outside of the participants' control.

Analysis of the full tree highlights the fact that problems cannot be addressed by concentrating on the branches, or effects, alone – the roots are key. Participants might consider whether the resulting tree is sustainable, or whether the weight of all the branches and fruit is too much for the roots to bear. Finally, the image is copied onto flipchart paper so that a permanent record remains of the work and the collective conclusions.



Healthy and unhealthy tree – Yakshi, India.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

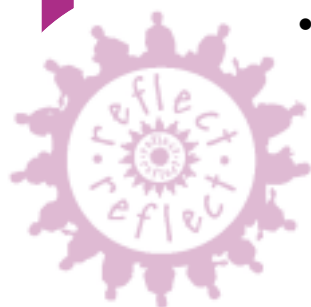
In **Bolivia**, the tree is used to explore family relations and identity, with all current members as branches and the different levels of roots representing the ancestors – with their depth in the soil symbolising to how far back they go. This image of personal continuity and change is then used to discuss, amongst other things, the languages spoken by different generations and local history.

In the Save the Children guide to education advocacy, they suggest using a tree to plan a campaign. In this case, the roots represent the resources available to the campaign: the allies, opportunities, networks, money and capacity. The branches are planned activities and the fruits are the desired outcomes. The higher the fruits are placed on the tree, the longer term the projected achievement. Participants are then encouraged to trace links from the roots to the fruits.

In **India**, Yakshi used the dual images of a healthy tree and an unhealthy tree to encourage analysis of health issues. The healthy tree illustrated the factors that promote good health (as roots) and the consequences of good health (as branches), whilst the unhealthy tree showed how poverty, poor diet and addiction fed into a negative cycle and led to social breakdown.

Other uses of trees have included:

- the analysis of household income and expenditure in Ghana;
- the causes and effects of conflict in Liberia;
- the causes and effects of HIV/AIDS in Uganda;
- the roots and features of the traveller community's cultural identity in Ireland.





Using Rivers

A river, constantly flowing and changing, is an image which people can use to map their own life experiences, or other ongoing processes.

WHY?

A river is a powerful symbol for many people and visualising any process in the form of a river can produce creative insights. The most common use is for people to draw rivers representing the course of their own life – but many other uses are now emerging.

WHEN?

Any time. Personal rivers can generate trust within a group, enabling participants to understand each other more.

HOW?

The characteristics of a river: its changing width, current and direction, as well as features such as whirlpools, islands, rapids, waterfalls and forks, can represent changes and events in our own histories. In richly illustrated rivers the surrounding landscape can represent the environment that forms us. If it is used to map an individual's personal journey, it will be constructed individually. However, it might be used to represent the history of a community or organisation, in which case the process would be communal.



River developed by Arcola Theatre during a Reflect and refugees workshop in London, UK 2002.

Personal rivers

It is important to clarify that each person only needs to include in their river those events or situations which they feel comfortable to share with the group. A useful way for people to focus is to sit quietly together with their eyes closed while the facilitator prompts them to think silently about different moments in the course of their lives, from birth to the present moment, with suggestions or open questions. Then each person draws the journey of his or her life in the form of a river, sometimes on large sheets of paper or on the ground with locally available materials.

When everyone has completed their river, they can discuss them in small groups with a facilitator. Each person chooses the level of detail they wish to relate: they may wish to focus on a particular time or current, or take people briefly through the whole journey. At the end of each person's story, other participants can ask questions if they wish, always respecting the privacy of the person.



The aim is not just to hear stories, but to find a link between our personal experiences and attitudes and the ways in which we are influenced by the environment in which we have grown up and live. The facilitator may wish to direct discussion and analysis to consider issues of power and control, cause and effect, to draw out patterns or major influences. Comparisons might be drawn between people of different social classes, cultural contexts, sexes or ages in order to uncover influences and analyse the environmental forces that shape us all.

Emotional support

Since the experience of constructing and sharing our own rivers of life can be an emotional one, it is important to balance feelings of vulnerability with positive feedback. Many trainers in Latin America use the 'teddy bear' technique to replenish participants with feelings of optimism and solidarity. In this process, one person at a time faces away from the group while people mention the most positive qualities and values of that individual. At the end of each round, the group hugs and/or congratulates the person in question. This process helps to bring the group closer together and encourages a feeling of identity within the group.



Rivers showing experiences with Reflect in different countries, India 1998.

Group Rivers

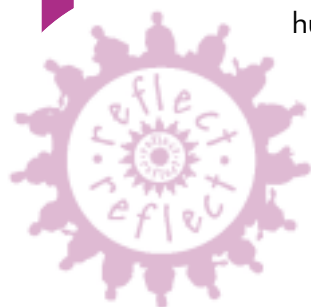
Where a river is used to map the turning points and key events in the history of an organisation or community, participants will work together, negotiating the points to be represented and the symbols to be used. In this case, the process of constructing the image will in itself be the cause of much discussion and debate, as different perceptions of the significance of situations and events become apparent. Where the exercise is done in small groups, feedback and discussion of the process should be facilitated.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Honduras** CNTC used rivers to enable Reflect circles to explore the history of their own local cooperative. The impact was dramatic, with the younger generation hearing powerful stories about the origins of their cooperative and the history of the local struggle for land and justice.

In Recife, **Brazil**, rivers have been used by Centro Josue de Castro in a more literal way with Reflect groups amongst freshwater fishing communities. They map out fish stocks at different times of the year in different parts of the river and the best way to catch different fish at different times. They have used these to analyse sustainable options facing the diverse groups entitled to access fishing resources locally. The image of a river has such powerful resonance for this group that they also use it to express their personal lives and to analyse the evolution of different local organisations and political struggles.

In the global Reflect conference in **India** in 1998 over 100 people constructed huge rivers on the beach in Puri to explore the evolution of the Reflect approach in different parts of the world. Some of the rivers ran over a hundred feet and illustrated the different trends and movements that have links to Reflect, dating back over a hundred years. (see photo above)





Posters, Drawings and Logos

Visual images are an important part of the Reflect process, including drawing by participants, picture books, posters, logos and symbols.

WHY?

Children almost invariably love to draw - but through years of schooling this activity is progressively devalued and marginalised until the only space they get to draw is with scribbles and doodles in the margins – something that becomes almost a subversive act. However, visual communication can be immensely powerful – transcending language, with an immediate and long-lasting impact. Most issues and stories, indeed almost any information or idea, can be captured in a drawing or series of drawings.

Therefore, even in situations where literacy is central to a Reflect process, we should promote the value and status of drawing as a parallel form of communication. We should celebrate the joy of drawing and encourage Reflect participants to develop and cultivate these skills for wider communication work.

WHEN?

Always!

HOW?

There are many different ways of structuring and using visual communication. Here are a few examples of types and uses, but facilitators can be led by the skills and creativity in the group, which will often be stimulated or revealed by the pictures participants draw to illustrate or label different visualisations.

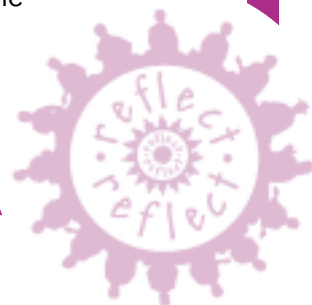


Rangoli, traditional art form using ash, East Godavari District, India.

Logos and identity

Almost every organisation now seeks to harness the power of branding to construct an identity using some form of visual image or logo. In fact, part of the strength and speed of the spread of the Reflect approach can be attributed to its logo. Logos can be developed or appropriated to express or explore identity and belonging.

In the **Basque Country**, a Reflect group consciously used the power of the logo to reassert cultural identity. Using an existing symbol of Basque identity, participants branded a wide range of materials such as bags and badges. The objects were used by people who strongly identified themselves as Basque. This helped fellow Basque speakers to easily identify each other and speak to each other in the minority Basque language, rather than the usual Spanish.



Posters

There are many ways in which posters can be used: to announce or publicise events; to communicate core messages; to educate and inform; or to sell things. Most posters involve a mixture of pictures and text but they always contain a strong visual component. It is unsurprising then to find that some Reflect circles have decided to produce posters of their own – to take advantage of this powerful medium and spread their messages more widely.

In Cusco, **Peru**, Reflect participants produced posters on the issue of domestic violence. After discussion of the issue, they divided into small groups to each produce a poster: with photographs or drawings depicting the issues and slogans in both Quechua and Spanish calling for an end to the practice. These were then combined to make a glossy printed poster with the slogan *“Don’t let other women suffer how I have suffered”* and calling for *“Wasinchismanta qallarisan ... peace in the home”*.

In **Burundi**, reconciliation posters and calendars have been produced with peace messages for display in schools, homes and offices. In the first year the posters were designed by NGO staff, but it became clear that people often had difficulty interpreting the messages so now they are designed through close consultation with Reflect circles. The posters link images to slogans derived from local proverbs, such as *“shared roots – common destiny”* or *“without peace nothing will grow”*. They are published in three languages – the local mother tongue Kirundi, French and English.

Picture Books

Booklets using pictures and diagrams to get key messages across can be a very important medium for disseminating information. For example, in Bolangir, **India**, booklets have been produced about the rights of migrant workers – with everything communicated in pictures. In **Sri Lanka**, cards showing simple drawings of insects: colour-coding those who benefit farmers and those which are pests, have been developed and used to great effect. No amount of words could substitute for pictures in this context! In **Uganda**, participants have produced their own children’s books with strong visual images and words in their mother tongue, reproducing these on silk-screen printers.

Cultural designs and patterns

Cultural identity is often richly expressed through the diverse patterns and designs used in fabrics and cultural artefacts. Enabling participants to copy, adapt and transpose these patterns into new materials can help to reclaim identity or assert cultural identity in new ways through new media.



Poster showing various products with genetically modified ingredients, Brazil.





Matrices

A matrix can help to structure discussions on a complex issue, usefully consolidating information and comparing items in a systematic, visual way.

WHY?

Most issues are complex and it is difficult for a facilitator to structure a serious discussion on them without getting sidetracked. As discussions get more detailed, the big picture can be lost. Matrices can help to ensure a systematic approach, in which all details are covered and the big picture becomes progressively clearer.

WHEN?

On any occasion when a complex, multi-dimensional issue arises, or there is a danger that discussions will lose coherence. In some cultural contexts, such an approach may never be appropriate or useful.

HOW?

A matrix is a table or graph which shows a set of elements across the top and another set of criteria or classifications down the side. Matrices can be constructed on almost any topic. They can be used to represent systematically the wealth of information or knowledge held in the group around a particular issue or topic. Alternatively, they can be given a stronger analytical role, where different elements or items are evaluated as they are entered onto the matrix.

Matrices can be constructed to compare the value of different items or elements in a preference ranking, by placing the same list of items across the top and side axes of the table and comparing each pair of items. This exercise can then be deepened with analysis of the reasons given for preference of particular items, or simplified with a ranked list of preferences.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In Bhola Island, **Bangladesh**, participants in all-women circles developed very detailed matrices about medicinal plants. Small pictures of all the plants identified locally were drawn and laid in a row across the top of the matrix, while all the common local illnesses were represented down the side. Then a score out of 10 was given for the use of each herb in relation to each illness. Each time a score was given there would be a debate about the value of the herb concerned, with some women giving evidence or testimonies, others challenging them. By the end of the exercise, every woman had learned something new and key issues were logged concerning medicinal plants and herbs. The matrix was further developed by adding new criteria, such as



Illustrating different ways of ranking the effect of donor influence on an NGO, developed as part of a training workshop in Ireland.



availability, risks and dangers, and ease of preparation. This type of matrix has also been used in **India** to analyse the qualities of different varieties of rice and other crops.

In **El Salvador**, a Reflect group used a matrix to analyse the effectiveness of different government agencies and NGOs working in their community. The names or logos of the different agencies were placed along the top, while criteria by which to judge them, chosen by participants, were placed down the side. The criteria included: level of efficiency; transparency; corruption; responsiveness to complaints; and attitudes to minorities. Each organisation was then judged against each criteria with examples offered in each case. The results and recommendations were shared with the agencies involved.

In **Nicaragua**, Reflect circles have used preference ranking to analyse local development priorities. Having listed all the different problems faced locally, they were compared to determine which was most critical to resolve. One of the great advantages of this approach is that it made explicit the multiple criteria that people use, allowing discussion of the value of different criteria. The result was not a simple preference for one thing, but rather a detailed assessment of each. This served as the basis for a second matrix which became a form of feasibility study of possible actions to address the key problems, itemising which were cheap or expensive, urgent or not, dependent on outsiders or not, and so on.

In Bolangir, **India**, participants track every action they identify as a result of discussions on a matrix, always including details of who will do what, when and at what cost. They also track unintended outcomes.

	Fruit de abstract	Vitality Para	Horse Para	Fruit Para	Fruit de	
Gallina	10	0	10	10	10	40
Vacuno	0	0	10	5	5	20
Cerdo	7	0	10	10	5	32
Pato	10	0	5	10	10	35
cabro	7	3	4	6	8	28
caballo	4	7	0	5	3	19
Vaca	0	10	10	0	5	25
Perro	10	0	0	10	5	25
gato	10	0	0	7	8	25
Jalote	8	0	10	5	7	30

Matrix of farm animals, ranking them by availability, value for work, value as food, ease to keep/maintain – El Salvador.

Notes

As with many visual tools, once the group has grasped the basic idea of a matrix, they can structure the discussion for themselves and the facilitator can take a back seat. It is important to do all matrices on a large scale so that everyone can join in – and to use movable objects, symbols or cards so that new items, categories or criteria can be added and scores adjusted in relation to one another. The matrix is only transferred to paper once complete.

Other uses of matrices/tables have included:

- charts to record trends in the violation of different human rights in various communities of El Salvador;
- a matrix to analyse trends in farming and the interests of different consumers in the UK;
- a matrix on the diverse powers/responsibilities of different stakeholders in primary schools in Mozambique;
- the viability of different livelihoods and coping strategies in Malawi.





Chapati or Venn Diagrams

This tool can be useful for exploring relationships between things – particularly the relative importance, influence or power of people, organisations or groups.

WHY?

The analysis of power is central to Reflect. Chapati (or Venn) diagrams can be very helpful in structuring the analysis of complex dynamics or relationships between people, groups or organisations. They can also be used to explore the relative importance of different influences on a person or process.

WHEN?

At any time.

HOW?

Chapati diagrams are made up of a variety of circles, each representing a different actor or influence in a situation and sized and placed accordingly. Similar processes need to be followed as with the construction of other graphics: using movable objects for an initial, large scale version developed by the whole group; negotiating actors, sizes of circles and relationships between the group; and facilitating full discussion of the resulting graphic.

The following examples show how this type of graphic can be used to analyse power relations at family, community and national levels.

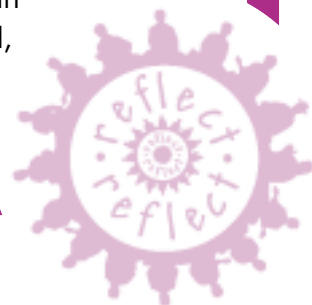
Personal power

One powerful use of the chapati diagram (used for example, in the **Basque Country**) involves individual participants drawing diagrams of power relations within their family when they were children. Each person in the family is represented by a circle, including the participant, and the relative power of each person is represented by the size of their circle.

The circles are then placed at different distances from each other to show the nature of relations between them, and lines or symbols added accordingly. Alternatively, the figures can be placed only in relation to the person making the diagram. When this is complete, each participant goes on to construct a second diagram illustrating power relations in their present home environment. Discussion and sharing of stories might focus on why certain people were attributed significant power, how it felt to be powerless or powerful, whether patterns change across generations, and whether similarities can be drawn between families.



Facilitators in El Salvador analysing power relations between various organisations and the community La Peña.



This same process can be used to analyse relationships between people in many other contexts, including the Reflect group itself, or the community in which it operates. In some Reflect training workshops a chapati diagram is constructed as part of the evaluation process to show the inter-personal power relations among participants and facilitators. These can be constructed individually and then shared and analysed, or a single diagram may seek to capture the consensus of the whole group (though conflict should not be avoided in the process).

Influences within the community

Chapati diagrams can also be used to look at different power dynamics within and between groups and organisations. This type is constructed collectively by a group, starting with a large circle that represents the whole community. Circles of different sizes are then added: inside the main one to represent the relative importance of different organisations or groups within the community; and outside the main circle to represent external organisations with a presence or influence on the community.

This mapping of organisations can yield a rich analysis, helping participants to share information and opinions in a structured way and enabling them to see gaps or identify opportunities for change. The visualisation can be extended, for example, to add different values to each organisation – indicating which are allies, which are neutral and which are enemies – or by developing ideal versions and exploring how to get there. As always there will be discussion and analysis in the process of constructing such a graphic, and a further layer of discussion and analysis once it is complete and the whole picture can be seen.



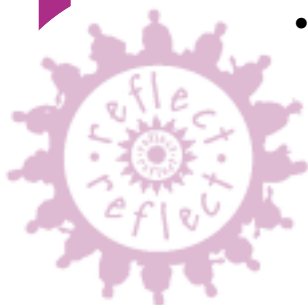
Chapati diagram – El Salvador, San Luis Community. Work of a Reflect circle showing all the different organisations with a presence in the community, their relative closeness to the community and their power.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

Reflect workshops have often included the construction of diagrams to analyse institutional power relations or the practice of power at national or international levels. The process of constructing these diagrams is often a useful way for participants with different perspectives to exchange views and achieve some form of understanding. The act of visualisation can help to crystallise key points of difference and encourage people towards common ground.

Chapatits have also been used:

- to analyse power relations between different castes in Indian villages;
- to analyse changing power dynamics in Ireland at national level, looking at the roles of important players such as the church, the media, the government and the European Union;
- to develop a campaign strategy for ActionAid's education campaign, where different influences on education at international level, or at the level of participating countries, were mapped out to inform choice of advocacy targets and allies.





Flow Diagrams

There are countless ways to use diagrams to help make sense of different processes or complex systems – to explore cause, effect and inter-connections.

WHY?

To help capture complex processes or systems in an image that can be analysed in its parts and as a whole – exploring, for example, how change in one element may have effects on others.

WHEN?

A basic level of literacy is helpful in using these tools as it is often difficult to represent all the information in a purely visual form.

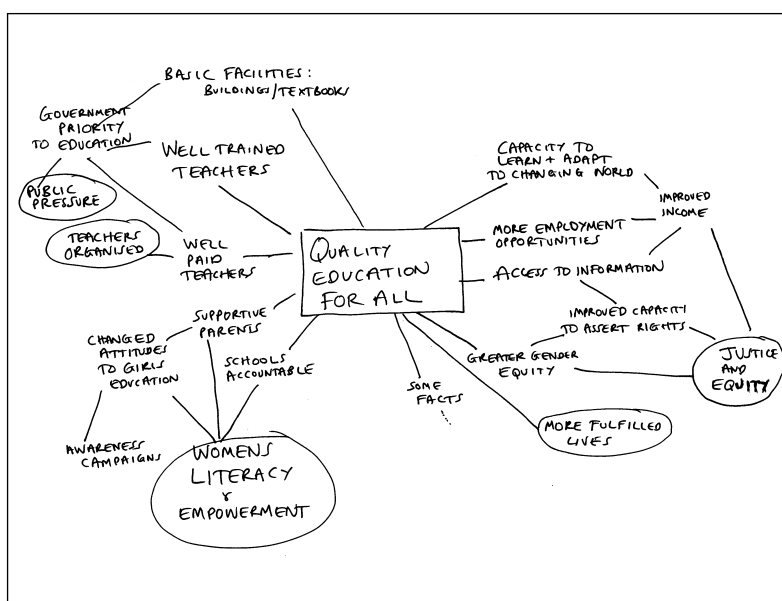
HOW?

Flow diagrams are a means to explore causal relationships between events – following the process as each event causes another event to occur and so on. They are particularly helpful to identify negative cycles and actions which can break them. Flow diagrams have been used in Reflect processes to analyse the impact of many issues, including conflict, deforestation, drought, girls' education and road building.

To begin constructing a flow diagram, place a card representing the central theme in the middle of a large, empty area. Participants can then start to identify the causes and effects of this phenomenon, making a card for each suggestion using words or symbols and placing it in relation to the central theme. These might be of different colours to capture different categories or types of event. It is essential to use movable cards, as flow diagrams can get very complex with new connections identified during the process, leading to radical restructuring. Threads of different colours can be used to make links with different meanings between cards.

The facilitator then asks participants to consider the effects of each effect (and if relevant the causes of each cause) and the flow diagram starts to expand. Each time a new card is laid attempts are made to link it to any others that are already there and gradually concentrations of cards are likely to occur around certain key cards. At some point the group will have to decide to end the exercise, stepping back to review the overall picture and discuss where action or intervention might be most effective.

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The requirements for, and the outcomes of, quality Education for All.



Process diagrams

Similar to a flow diagram, a process diagram shows different stages involved in a process. It can be elaborated to include many details such as roles, time or costs involved at each stage. A process diagram might be constructed to analyse the steps involved in accessing a certain government scheme or entitlement, making a legal claim or producing something.

Process diagrams can be started at the beginning or at the end of a process: for example, it may start with a goal and work backwards to determine the steps necessary to achieve it; or it may start with the current situation and work forwards. Each stage is set out on a separate card, and the more detail that can be included the better, including the precise actions, those responsible for making them happen, times and dates, materials needed and so on. The result is often an effective action plan.



Systems diagram of the UK system as encountered by refugees and asylum seekers.

Systems diagrams

Another similar diagram explores the interdependence of different elements within a system. It may be used to demystify how a specific government system such as social security works; how a household economy functions; or how a small business or organisation works.

The aim is to map out roles, activities and outcomes within a given system, using the same technique of movable cards and links as described above. Once the diagram is complete, questions can be asked about how to improve the system, where it is failing and what actions would most effectively change it and key points of leverage often become clearer.

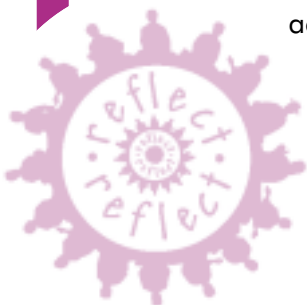
An additional layer of analysis is to consider where the lines of power are within the system, using symbols to illustrate certain types of power and influence.

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Pakistan** flow diagrams were developed to analyse the causes and effects of different traditional cultural practices. By laying these out clearly in a collective process participants could agree effective ways of changing certain deeply embedded, but harmful, cultural practices.

In **Ireland** flow diagrams have been used to analyse the causes and effects of alienation and disillusion amongst young people.

In **India** a form of systems diagram has helped communities to map out their access and entitlements to different government schemes. In the process they demystified government bureaucracy and were able to expose examples of corruption or mismanagement.





Photographs

There are various ways of using cameras to bring the power of the photograph in to the Reflect process.

WHY?

Photographs have the ability to really grab our attention and get messages across quicker or with more impact than other means. Newspapers rely heavily on photographs to attract and keep their readers engaged. It is logical then that as part of their analysis of communication and power, Reflect participants should explore the power of photography and, where possible, experiment with using the medium.

WHEN?

At any stage.

HOW?

Effective work on photographs will include both taking pictures, and analysing their use by others. A set of pictures compiled by the group, or the facilitator, from newspapers, magazines, posters, etc. can be used to stimulate critical discussion, in particular questioning the apparent neutrality of photographic images. Looking through the pictures, the group might think about why particular images are used, why they are effective, how the framing might be used to emphasise particular points, and what might be hidden, or out of shot. Is this what our world really looks like?



Photos which show us something we are not expecting to see speak louder than words.

Provoking analysis through photographs

Powerful work can be done with photos that capture local problems or contradictions. A well-chosen photograph can enable people to see something everyday from a fresh perspective. Seeing something from a “distance” can actually be a means to see something more closely than ever before. This holds true even where the photograph has been taken by someone within the group. At first participants describe what they see and they are progressively asked to analyse the picture until they truly confront the issue and its role in their own lives.

Introducing cameras

Cameras can be used in many ways within a Reflect process – and with the availability of cheap, disposable cameras it is now easier than ever. The main costs will probably be in the developing and printing of films, although sharing this information with the group can help people to focus their minds on the careful selection and use of images. As digital cameras become cheaper this process can be much easier to manage.

When first introducing cameras to the Reflect group it can be good to let participants take a range of photos without much direction or guidance. These



images can then be subjected to the same critical questions used above, encouraging discussion of subject matter, framing and the qualities of a good photo. Ground rules might be drawn up for future reference about what types of photo work best, the reasons for taking photos and when not to take a photo.

Using cameras for documentary purposes

Enabling participants to photograph their reality can be very powerful. This could be for the purposes of a local exhibition, which may aim to capture the everyday life of the community or a particular slice of life, for example, parts of traditional culture that are being lost, or the world from a particular group's perspective. The group then needs to agree the range of photos to be taken and selected for exhibition. Captions may also be added to the photographs, this will require more negotiation.

Using cameras for advocacy

Photography can also be a useful tool for advocacy work, taking evidence of people's priorities or problems to those in power, to complement oral or written arguments. Posters showing key images, or mobile photography exhibitions can help to reach larger audiences and build mass support or awareness for a campaign. A good photo can also increase the chances of getting an article published in a newspaper (and read!).

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

The NGO Photo Voice have done remarkable work with **Vietnamese** street children, giving them cameras and basic guidance in how to use them – and then mounting exhibitions of their work to challenge attitudes and

prejudices of others. At first kids took photos of themselves in fantasy settings – posing on parked motorbikes etc. However, they soon moved on, taking images of personal significance which offered a real insight into their world. Each photo is analysed and the following questions explored: Why was it taken? What do you think other people will see in it and what is its different significance for you? [see PLA Notes 39]

In **Lesotho**, Reflect facilitators are given cameras in order to record what is happening in their circle. They claim to have found this very empowering – as it enables them to document what is happening without having to write long reports. It also helps them to reflect on a different media of communication and related issues such as, what it means to have the power of framing a picture (what do you include and what not?) and the power of editing (which photos do you show and why?). Discussion of the photos can give great insight into the perceptions the facilitators have of their own circles and the wider environment.

In **Malawi** Reflect trainers were given cameras to take photos of different literacy events or practices – to help them develop a sensitivity to the diverse ways in which literacy was used locally and the resources in the local environment that could help reinforce the Reflect process.



Role play, Orissa, India.





Analysing Television

As one of the most powerful means of communication, the variety of television output should be critically analysed as part of a Reflect process.

WHY?

It is scarcely possible to exaggerate when talking about the power of television and how much it has transformed lives around the globe in the past fifty years. Any process that is concerned with communication and power must therefore give some time and space for reflection on television: what messages it transmits, to whom, and in whose benefit. Furthermore, television can be a useful tool for learning.

WHEN?

Where the community has access to television, this might be an important element of the Reflect process.

HOW?

Most of the time we let television wash over us as passive recipients, not questioning what is given to us. If we can develop and maintain a critical perspective then the whole output of television can become a rich resource in unexpected ways.

The news

Many people are already cynical about television news programmes, recognising either censorship or political manipulation. However, even the cynical are often seduced as it is common for people to feel that the events they see with their own eyes on television must be true. Asking a few simple questions can prompt people to question the neutrality or truth of such news: Why is this story the headline? Why is this in the news when something else is not? What are we not told? Whose opinion have we not heard? With what objective has this story been “framed”?

Soap operas

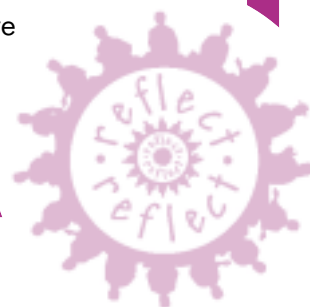
Around the world soap operas or ‘telenovelas’ attract huge audiences. Yet even their biggest fans will confess that the characters are stereotypes and the stories vulgar or unrealistic. However, these popular programmes can often provide a useful way in to examination of serious social issues. (See ‘Examples From Practice’, below).

Advertising

Adverts are key to understanding the power of television, and the medium’s alliance to large commercial interests. Furthermore, the more conscious we are of the ways in which advertisers manipulate us, the more we might be able to make sensible choices in what we buy. Discussion on the role, intention



A rickshaw is used to take a television and video to communities where they do not usually have access, Bhola Island, Bangladesh.

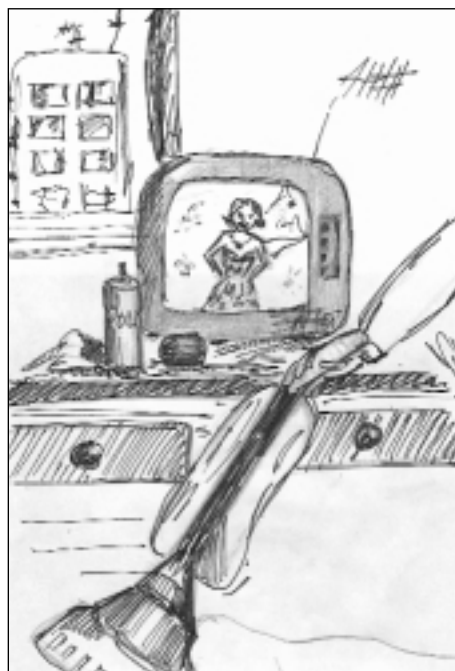


and impact of adverts can be structured by questions such as: What stereotypes are used? What are the tricks used to sell things? Who is being targeted? How are people seduced into identifying with products? Is there really any difference between advertised brands and non-branded, or cheaper versions of the product?

Active engagement

The more people can contribute to making television for themselves the more its power can be demystified. Making and editing a video yourself is a very effective way to understand the power of editing on television (see 'Participatory Video'). And with the proliferation of local stations and cable TV it is increasingly possible for Reflect groups to get stories of local importance on to their television screens. Links can be made with television news journalists, documentary makers, writers, drama producers or actors. Almost any strong local story can be sold to television if you find the right hook, whether a connection to current affairs, a powerful human story or an interesting twist. Television reporters are always looking out for ways to illustrate their stories and their high-pressured production environment and timetables mean they will often leap on something if it arrives at the right moment and is presented to them in the right way.

In some cases, where there is good access to television, it may be appropriate to run media training sessions for those people who may go on television to be interviewed. It is important to be well-prepared, knowing the key points you wish to communicate and understanding the importance of eye-lines and speaking clearly, without being distracted or fidgeting.



Life shown on TV is often very different from reality.

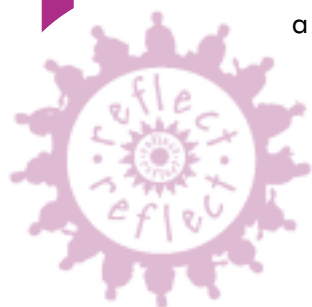
EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

CENECA, an NGO in Santiago, **Chile** were keen to explore the phenomenon that some of the poorest viewers were addicted to the most absurd telenovelas, and the assumption that this was about escapism, fantasy or aspiration.

Their analysis suggested otherwise. Although the material world of the soaps was far removed from the lives of the viewers, they found that "conflicts on which the dramatic structure of the soaps are based were not far removed from the women's lives: abandoned children, incestuous fathers, barriers to love and so on". Taking this as a starting point they made links to adult education groups and started to use particular characters and story lines to provoke serious debates on issues such as gender roles and relations. Almost invariably women made strong connections to their own lives.

The next step was to discuss which issues were never addressed in the soaps and why. It became clear that "Family conflicts are presented in soaps, whereas economic ones are not".

Finally the groups discussed the kind of conflicts that they would highlight if writing a soap themselves – and started to sketch out storylines. Through this process, the women moved "from being passive and credulous to being selective and demanding." (See *Literacy and Power*, Archer and Costello, 1990)





Participatory Video

This involves participants making a video themselves, focusing on an issue that is relevant to them at that time.

WHY?

Video is a powerful means of communication, and can be a very effective way of presenting the voices of the marginalised directly to people with influence. With good planning, video can present complex issues with dramatic effect. However, close attention must be paid to the power dynamics involved in the planning, filming and editing processes.

WHEN?

Participatory video can be used to take a relevant local issue to wider audiences, including policy makers, or to explore power issues involved in putting together films. However, it requires considerable investment and time, not least in equipment and training. If the group intend their video to be used as a campaigning tool it is also likely that they will need access to editing facilities.

HOW?

There are many stages to the process of putting together a video, as highlighted below. Where the necessary equipment and training is available, Reflect participants can do everything themselves, but where this is not possible strong editorial control should be negotiated and retained within the group.



Using video, East Godavari, India.

Identify resources

In many countries there are organisations that support participatory video and a first step might be to invite them to link up with Reflect groups. In other cases organisations using Reflect may have basic equipment themselves.

Train

Technical training of one or two weeks should be held either with selected participants from across different Reflect circles or intensively within one circle, before they are given control over the equipment.

Decide a theme and audience

The theme or objective of, and audience for, the video are likely to arise organically from wider discussions taking place in the circle. However, they will need to be explicitly stated early on, to give clear focus and direction to the group.

Preparation

Before actually shooting, it is important to develop a basic structure using a simple visual storyboard showing the different parts of the story in sequence. This can be a good collaborative activity and helps to ensure a strong, clear narrative



structure. In some cases it may be inappropriate to pre-determine what will be said and instead the video-makers should remain open-minded about the outcomes of interviews and explorations.

Filming

Once the structure and tone have been decided, the scenes need to be put on film. Since video is primarily a visual tool, things need to be shown, not only talked about, with plenty of practical examples. Language should not be too abstract: short, direct messages work best on video.

Editing

Any video will need editing and it may not be possible for this process to be as collaborative as the design and filming. It is important to recognise and compensate for the power that lies with the editors. Many decisions are made at the editing desk about the tone and substance of the message – so it is important that participants are represented in the editing team to ensure that the overall meaning of a video is not changed. Even such things as the choice of background music can have a big impact.

Local screening

Before a wider public screening or targeted use of the video with decision makers, the video should be shown to the group or local community where it was made. This local screening should be followed by critical discussion and suggestions for changes or improvements (whether for immediate changes, if this is viable, or as recommendations for the future).

Advocacy

The video might be used to relay messages and the voices of the poor and marginalised directly to decision makers. In this case, it can be very powerful to video any follow-up discussion and screen it back to the community.

Video can become an alternative media – as it did for MOMUPO, the urban women's movement in Chile:

“When official TV arrives in our communities we are simple adornments of the propaganda of the mayor. When foreign TV arrives it only shows the misery or the poverty. But we want to show the beauty as well – the beauty of our lives”

EXAMPLES FROM PRACTICE

In **Bangladesh**, ActionAid and Worldview coordinated a participatory video project with excellent results. 28 people from four communities were trained on participatory video production, and returned to their communities to make a video on a subject of their own choosing, with a television and video unit set up in a rickshaw. One group chose to document the crisis in local schools. They secretly filmed the local teacher arriving late day after day while the children sat around waiting aimlessly. Finally they confronted the teacher on camera, forcing him to change his behaviour. Word spread to neighbouring villages and soon all local teachers were arriving on time, worried that they would be caught on camera and lose their jobs. Another group filmed the unhygienic practices of the butcher in the local market and showed the tape on their mobile television unit in the market square, prompting action to force the butcher to improve hygiene. Several of the videos produced in Bangladesh were also shown nationally, contributing to existing national campaigns.

In **Peru**, Reflect groups have produced video slots for broadcast on local TV, while in **Tanzania** a video was produced to campaign against illegal fishing: people rushed to give testimonies, keen for the opportunity to talk directly to decision-makers.





Gestures and Postures

Ways of exploring and analysing the largely unconscious world of communication through gestures and postures.

WHY?

Perhaps the most fundamental form of visual communication – indeed of all communication – is body language. This is a language which we have all learnt to speak and understand and yet it is so fundamental that we are often not conscious of it. The way we carry ourselves, the gestures we use and our facial expressions all communicate much more than we realise. No analysis of communication practices and power can be complete without giving some space for reflection on this.

WHEN?

Facilitators should be aware of the basic signals from participants – their gestures and postures from the start – as this will help them to identify ways of making people more comfortable or involved when their body language shows detachment. It is something that might be explored with all participants at any stage.

HOW?

There are many dangers in exploring gestures and postures in a Reflect process. The last thing we need is for people to be taught how to comport themselves properly as if this were some kind of social finishing school which teaches people how to behave. However, at the same time, it is clear that this should be a legitimate area for analysis and reflection – and that it can give people new insights into both themselves and others that might be helpful for addressing power relationships.

Mapping postures

An easy place to start with this discussion is to ask the group to identify different postures that communicate clear meanings to them. People can be asked to exaggerate at first to make their point clear. Participants could take it in turns to adopt a posture with others guessing the intention or describing how they interpret it. This can be done with different basic positions – for example, getting people to show different ways of sitting that send different messages to others – and then later different ways of standing. This can be extended by asking participants to adopt different postures in a simulated situation – such as at a community assembly or at a party. It is particularly interesting to overlay a power analysis on each posture identified – what does this posture say about this person's status and power in this situation.

Mapping gestures

A similar process can be used to map out gestures – identifying as many different ways of using hands to communicate meaning – and again exploring the power dimensions of different gestures. As people practice doing this, more subtle gestures will be identified.



How we stand can say a lot about how we view ourselves.



Mapping facial expressions

A similar process again can be done with facial expressions – trying to identify smaller and smaller changes. This process can involve a struggle to find the right language to distinguish differences.

Power pairing of gestures or postures

The power (or lack of power) of some postures or gestures is difficult to read alone. So, asking people in pairs to create a power tableau, conscious of gesture, posture and facial expression can add a new dimension to this analysis. Pair work can also explore how gesture and posture affect others e.g. in pairs asking one person to talk and the other to gaze around the room avoiding eye contact? How does that affect the talker?

THE POWER OF SILENCE!

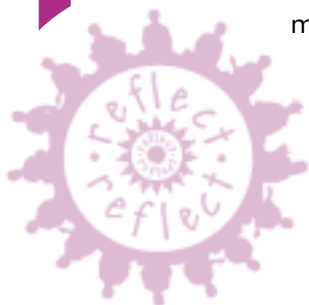
Silence is in many respects the ultimate in communication. It can be used actively and subversively. It can scream louder than the loudest voice. It can be a complete inversion of the “culture of silence” as in the case of Susan, a Reflect participant in Uganda: *“Susan would fall silent when she wanted to hint at something without saying it. If, when asked about corruption or abuse of power by officials, she had actually spoken, she would have been left open to counter-attack or revenge from the officials. Silence in such contexts can actually add to the credibility of her unspoken accusation. In other situations Susan’s silences were openly disrespectful, aggressive silences which often succeeded in stopping a shouting adversary in his tracks.”* (Marc Fiedrich 2001)

Body sculptures

These can be done in various ways. One option is to have one or two sculptors who shape everyone else to build a composite image. This was done by ODEC in Oxford (**UK**) to explore racism within its own organisation. One person was asked to silently (or as silently as possible) sculpt the bodies of each person – including their facial expressions – to capture a specific dimension of racism. An alternative is for everyone to participate in constructing a composite image of something. For example, in a Reflect workshop in **Pakistan** groups were asked to build sculptures of different social issues – capturing, for example, the feudal order in rural areas.

Role-playing internalised oppression

Freire wrote much about people internalising their oppression. This is not just an abstract intellectual process but often a fundamentally physical process. Our social status and the oppressions we have internalised are embedded in our bodies – in the way we walk and move and sit – the way we assert ourselves physically or cower and submit. It is expressed not just individually but also socially – with women’s social status so often evident by their sheer physical presence (or, in a sense, relative absence), sitting behind men, walking behind men – their silence physicalised sometimes over many generations. Once an awareness of (or sensitivity to) gesture and posture has been generated, participants can be asked to identify examples of “internalised oppression” and to dramatise these in role plays where they also speak but where the body language speaks louder than the words. After initially running a role play participants can be encouraged to re-enact the same situation with the aim of inverting the physical dynamics – asserting themselves and trying to challenge the physical dominance of the authority figure (e.g. finding ways of getting a bureaucrat to move from behind their big desk). This is likely to generate humour – and may also generate some powerful insights.





Cuculmeca and Reflect

This sheet shows how the organisation Cuculmeca understands Reflect as a way of acting – of treating everyone equally.

WHY?

As Reflect practitioners we recognise that power relations are replicated, and the way we act in our private lives and institutions will influence the way we work and the impact our work has. Our own systems and practices often contribute to the very inequities that we seek to redress. Thus, if we do not examine our own attitudes, behaviour and power relations within our organisations, we will not be able to facilitate democratic space for reflection, analysis and action for others. Cuculmeca believes that Reflect is about treating everybody equally. It is a way of thinking and acting that is used to try to change the balance of power. Because power is never given, only taken.

WHO?

Cuculmeca is a local NGO based in Jinotega, Nicaragua. It was established, in 1991, as a popular education group to support communities in defending their land rights. This sheet describes how Cuculmeca has used Reflect principles as the basis for how they work – both within the office, and with people at the grassroots.

HOW?

Office space

The first thing Cuculmeca considered was how they use their space. Their office is open-plan. The administrator sits next to the illustrator; the agro-ecologist is next to the person responsible for the radio programme. They do not have their own personal computers, partly because they do not have enough resources for that, but also because it encourages movement around the office for work. It also means that if people come into the office for information, whether they are students, people from other organisations, people on a tourist development trip or the Jinotega Tourist Board they can access information directly on whichever computer is available.

Roles and responsibility

In terms of hierarchy, it is not necessary to knock on the door to see anybody, nor to make an appointment. Moreover, everyone is responsible for cleaning the office. In the mornings, the administrator talks to the driver or the person in charge of the programmes, while everyone prepares coffee, cleans the floor or takes out the rubbish.

Some people might say that this is a waste of time, that there are more important things to do. However, the staff of Cuculmeca believe that it is wrong to think like that. It is in these moments that they are able to share experiences and update each other on the daily and weekly work plans. Moreover, this way of working is in line with Cuculmeca's values. They ask: *"Would it not be contradictory to our values if we let one person (usually a woman) do the cleaning?"* Everyone has something to add to the work of others, and by breaking down the artificial professional boundaries, mutual support can lead to a very creative environment. This means that on a normal day at the office, you might see the driver writing a story on the computer, or the illustrator doing a pre-school budget.



In the community

A former popular teacher, together with some other people, sent Cuculmeca a letter, requesting help to get building materials to build a bus shelter, so that you wouldn't have to get wet or sunburnt whilst waiting for the bus. La Cuculmeca were not quite sure how to react to the request – should they say sorry, but we only build latrines? Or that you have to be a direct beneficiary of La Cuculmeca and participate in at least five training workshops to be able to write a letter like this? Or that it is a great idea?

Cuculmeca opted for the third answer. Along with a bus shelter come many other things. Firstly the recognition of an idea that came from the community, thereby giving it value. Moreover, you can plant plants around the bus shelter to promote reforestation. You can put up a notice board to write information on, and encourage literacy. You can organise a rota for looking after the shelter. And all this just from waiting for a bus.

Valuing the positive

Cuculmeca also changed their focus when working with communities. Instead of using maps, matrices, venn diagrams – aimed at finding out what was wrong with communities, to look for problems, they began to look at what works in communities. Analysing what is good, and emphasising the potential rather than the weaknesses, is a good way to stimulate new ideas. Participants are more motivated when the starting point is positive whereas focusing on the negative can be disempowering.

SO WHAT IS REFLECT FOR LA CUCULMECA?

"It is the internalisation of a participatory philosophy."

"It is about humanity and power."

"It is enabling people to develop the power to communicate."

"It is about respecting people as full human beings."

REFLECT IS EVERYWHERE

As well as using Reflect in their everyday work and lives La Cuculmeca use Reflect in their leadership training with the local collective production association. They use it with women in marginal urban areas to challenge the government. And as a way of working with children on environmental issues, developing their sense of responsibility through running vegetable gardens and using this engagement to change attitudes to children in the wider community.

With funders

The normal position when faced with funders is submission. You have to do what they want, when they want it, because if you don't there isn't any money. But Cuculmeca have changed this dynamic a little bit. They ask the funders questions, and treat them as equals. Encouraging them also to practice what they preach. And highlighting the injustice caused by 'the privatisation of poverty' in which reducing poverty has become big business (with donors and development

professionals earning salaries and local people volunteering their time).

One example of this was their engagement with UNICEF concerning La Cuculmeca's pre-school programme. UNICEF wanted to support this programme, but in such programmes UNICEF will not pay the coordinators salary, and will only fund materials. The woman asked La Cuculmeca: "Why don't you give financial assistance to the pre-school educators with whom you work?" La Cuculmeca replied: "Where are we going to find that from if you don't even pay a salary to the person who is going to work with you full time on this?" After this she fell silent.





Yakshi and Girijan Deepika

Using Reflect with indigenous communities in the East Godavari District, India to strengthen literacy skills, enabling people to value their knowledge and fight for their rights.

WHY?

The indigenous system of community interaction (The Gotti), where people traditionally met to discuss local problems, was in decline. This was linked to wider processes of change, particularly concerning the local economy. The government policy of subsidising rice undermined the traditional food crops. Although the cash crops (tobacco and cotton) had led to large profits in the early years, the price subsequently slumped on international markets, and the increasing price of inputs meant that over 80% of households fell into debt.

There was a need for community members to meet and decide what to do about the increasing debt. Traditionally the Gotti was dominated by men. By using the Reflect approach in the Gotti meetings, it was hoped that all village members would actively participate as equals. Reflect was seen as a way of promoting sustained dialogue at a community level; integrating the learning of literacy with the strengthening and systematising of indigenous knowledge.

WHO?

Yakshi is a small NGO based in Hyderabad in India who offers technical support to Girijan Deepika (GD), an independent tribal peoples' mass organisation working in the East Godavari District. GD work with people from about 100 communities in the area.

HOW?

There had been many negative experiences of literacy programmes in the past, thus facilitators were recruited from communities with a view to collectively analysing local problems, rather than teach literacy. The first stage was to re-invent the Gotti – this was done through a campaign using street theatre, music, dance and painting. The facilitators developed a play which dramatised how the Gotti functioned – emphasising the importance of the active and equal participation of everyone.

The role of Reflect

The Reflect approach is used within the Gotti to focus the extensive discussions amongst the participants. The visualisation techniques form the

'THE GOTTI AS OUR FORUM'

The Gotti is a vibrant forum for community debate and as an indigenous (albeit revived) institution offers much greater chance of sustainability. It is a space *'to sit and talk', 'to share our happiness and our sorrows'* and *'an opportunity to reflect'*. It is a place for collective learning, but also a place for fun and enjoyment. It has created a space and opportunity for people to meet and interact on a regular basis. The Reflect methodology sits comfortably within this space and helps to structure and reinforce the interaction.

Most of the sessions begin with singing and games. The specific context of each village determines the kind of issues discussed. These include: agriculture, livestock, health, gender and forest issues. In many villages the gotti is seen as a forum for the resolution of village conflicts.

REFLECT IN
ACTION



basis of all discussions, and encourage participation from everyone (Theatre and role play are used to enrich the debates). The discussions form the basis of literacy learning. Although most of the adult population of a community engage in the discussions only a certain number of adults chose to learn literacy, which is seen as a collective resource (see photo quote).

In learning literacy skills a big emphasis is placed on continuing to use participatory techniques. The importance of local issues, language, visual techniques and aids, along with songs, games, puzzles and body movements have been recognised as easy and enjoyable ways of learning.

Addressing agricultural issues in Gotti

Agriculture was consistently highlighted as a major concern by the Gottis, particularly owing to rapid changes that have taken place in the area over recent years with the introduction of cash crops. A series of PRA tools were thus designed to bring out key agricultural issues, starting with historical maps showing agriculture in the village, comparing and contrasting the present situation with that 30 years ago. This was followed up with a crop matrix exploring the uses of each crop that was grown locally, which led to separate matrices analysing the advantages and disadvantages of each cash and food crop.

Cash crops were rarely identified as offering anything positive other than cash but had considerable requirements (e.g. land, plough bullocks, seeds, capital, market, water, pesticide, labour). In analysing the negative impacts of cash crops participants made some penetrating reflections, identifying: increased indebtedness, food shortages, rising suicide rates (through drinking fertiliser), the lack of fodder for livestock, the spread of new illnesses (fertiliser contamination, gastro-intestinal illnesses from the changing diet), the collapse of local markets and the undermining of communal life (as many traditional festivals had been linked to the planting and harvesting of food crops).

Following detailed analysis of agricultural issues, the Gottis began to look at solutions.

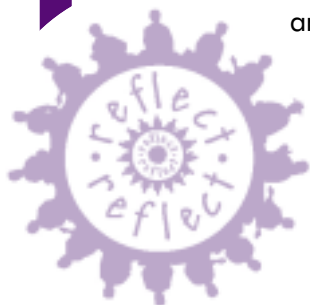
The cumulative analysis over several weeks meant that the actions were often substantial, rather than piecemeal, with many Gottis deciding to plant 50% of their land with traditional food crops (reversing the trend towards complete domination of the land by tobacco and cotton and providing food security while reviving the rhythm of communal life).



'Palm oil is an important product here and one youth in every five households can climb the trees to tap the oil. One in five is enough. It is not necessary for everybody to have the skill. The same is true of literacy. As long as we have enough literate people in the village we will manage'.

LITERACY USAGE

Participants recognised that improving their literacy skills led to: the ability to understand government programmes and deal confidently with officials; the capacity to avoid exploitation e.g. by enabling them to understand different forms and contracts; and the ability to preserve knowledge and culture in changing times - as hundreds of traditional songs and stories have been recorded.





Reflect and Dalit Rights

This page gives a brief overview of how Reflect is being used in the Eastern Terai of Nepal – enabling the Dalits (untouchable castes) to organise and confront the huge social, economical and political discrimination they face.

WHY?

Dalits in Nepal's eastern Terai have endured centuries of brutal intimidation, abuse and discrimination at the hands of the upper castes. Today, Dalits in this area can easily recall the details of countless murders and beatings provoked by the most trivial violations of caste barriers – drinking out of a water tap, daring to enter a temple, or crossing onto the wrong path. Challenging these

power relationships has seemed unthinkable. The vast majority of Dalits in this area are landless agricultural workers, utterly dependent on the will of high caste landlords for their well being. The high caste also wield undue influence over every institution in society – including the police and local government, leaving protesting Dalits without protection as well as vulnerable to harassment and intimidation. As a result of these significant dangers, challenges to the caste system – individual or organised – have been rare and unknown by many.



The written word is also an important part of the work with Reflect.

The Dalit Sanghams chose to take on education as a key issue. Dalits in the area suffered from startlingly high rates of illiteracy and a large drop-out of school population. For many Dalits, education was not possible given the school fees charged. Even those who could pay received education of appalling quality, as research by SCDF revealed. Through analysis in the Reflect circles Dalits began to mobilise. In mid 1999, 1,000 Dalit women and children protested at a rally in front of the District Education Office, demanding free education. The group's action led to change – as a result of the protest two schools began to waive school fees for Dalit children.

WHO?

ActionAid Nepal's (AAN) local partner, Saraswati Community Development Forum (SCDF), began work in four Village Development Committees in 1998. Fifteen Reflect centres for women were launched in Saptari District, in the eastern Terai of Nepal, as a means to build connections between women. These centres provided the women with an opportunity to identify and discuss issues, as well as build their skills, confidence and leadership.

REFLECT IN
ACTION



HOW?

In their meetings, the women began conducting an analysis of the caste system and the situation of women. Groups discussed the importance of creating an action plan to counter discrimination and identified the need to develop an organisation to create group strength. In response, eight women's Sanghams (organisations) were formed among Reflect members.

The Reflect classes themselves served to break down caste barriers, raising the participants' self confidence and dignity. The rigid caste separation (between Dalit and non-Dalit women) evident in the beginning began to break down. For example, when the Reflect classes started, Dalits had to sit outside the Reflect class and were not allowed to use the same water tap or share food with the non-Dalit class members. These divisions were analysed and discussed in depth in the Reflect circles. Participants were encouraged to explore the origins of this segregation and ask questions of their behaviour and attitudes. Barriers were gradually broken down and conscious changes were made to rectify the unjust treatment of the Dalits. After some time, non-Dalit and Dalit women would mingle, share food and sit together in the class. This in itself was a major achievement given the stringent cultural taboos surrounding 'appropriate' caste behaviour.

The Reflect circles provided the basis for a whole new way of organising in the Saptari area, forging the Dalit Sanghams as a space for Dalits themselves and establishing new norms for how such Sanghams would function, giving an equal voice to all members. The Sanghams were also progressively linked together so that before long there was a powerful voice for Dalits at a district level. Some issues need to be addressed beyond the immediate community level and now there is a means for Dalits to come together to address these.

Historically, a lack of unity has kept the Dalit community from regaining its guaranteed rights. However, early success with the carcass throwing campaign helped to propel the Dalit movement forward, generating faith in and commitment to the movement. New members were attracted as the word spread and before long a national level Dalit movement had emerged. The strength of the base of this movement – rooted as it is in the Sanghams and Reflect circles, means that once one victory is secured on one issue, new campaigns can arise and the momentum of change can be sustained. Now the Dalit movement in Nepal is continuing to put pressure on issues as varied as education, land reform and citizenship.

CARCASS THROWING CAMPAIGN

The turning point in the development of the Dalit movement in this area was the Dalits' decision to abandon their traditional jobs as dictated by the caste system. They chose one of the most sensitive issues in order to highlight their case, refusing to dispose of the dead carcass of animals. This was taken as a conscious stand against caste-based exploitation and their refusal to do the work was publicised. There was an immediate backlash from the local high caste community whose first action was to refuse to serve any Dalits in local shops. This caused big problems for local Dalits and could have led to them giving up. But the Dalit Sanghams discussed each new development and planned a careful united response – using both the law and the media creatively to get their way.





The Burundi Experience

ActionAid-Burundi have been using Reflect to promote peace building and reconciliation in local communities in the Ruyigi area of Burundi.

WHY?

Since the colonial era the principal obstacle to peace in Burundi has been the 'ethnic' conflict between the traditionally ruling minority Tutsi and the Hutu majority. This has led to ethnic clashes, coups, attempted coups, and inter-communal violence.

The continuing instability is perpetuated by distrust and a culture of violence.

WHO?

Since 1997 ActionAid-Burundi have been adapting Reflect to peace and reconciliation in the Ruyigi province. They are working in 84 centres with about 3000 Hutu and Tutsi participants.



Dancing and singing is an important part of the Reflect meetings.

HOW?

Reconciliation through communication

Reflect has played an important role in rebuilding trust and social relationships through creating space for communication and joint learning. All circles have two facilitators, one Hutu and one Tutsi and all have participants from both communities, creating ongoing opportunities for interaction and dialogue. The circles have become places for both young and old, Hutu and Tutsi, to meet, reconcile and forgive. This has made it possible to build trust as the key foundation of a sustainable peace locally, even where violence and instability continue elsewhere. It has particularly helped reduce people's vulnerability to "rumour" which was identified as a powerful agent of the spread of violence in the past. Now, when there are rumours of rebel attacks, Hutus and Tutsis meet together to review the dangers, analyse the reliability of the information sources

and whether they decide to stay or to flee temporarily, they do so together.

Narthe Bihari, a widow with 8 children said: " We dance and sing because we are joyful, this shows the whole community that we have peace. We also use the dances and songs to show how there has been division amongst us. People listen to the messages and know that we can't go back to the way things were before. Our dances are a kind of preventative measure. It's better that we try and forget about the past and the conflict, as the division it causes does not have any benefits to our society. The songs and dances also remind people of the days when we used to express joy and care about one another."

The contribution of culture to peace - building

Enabling and encouraging the return of the practice of performing traditional cultural activities such as dancing and singing has been important in bringing Hutu and Tutsi people. Through Reflect such activities are encouraged, with every meeting



punctuated by song and dance thus the challenging of stereotypes and the dispelling of myths, and reconstructing a shared history.

Obstacles to peace

Reflect circles use discussion and graphics to identify obstacles to peace, which have included petty conflict, insecurity and displacement due to rebel attacks, rumours and mistrust. Communities have consequently become linked in solidarity against the political instability in the region as 'poor people', rather than as Hutu or Tutsi.

Displacement and resettlement

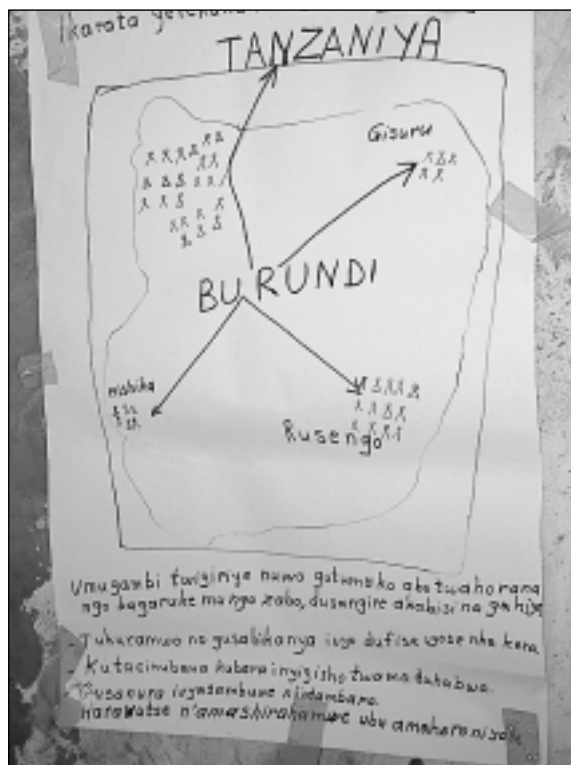
Many of the Reflect participants were previously refugees in Tanzania themselves. Using Reflect visualisation techniques to map and analyse patterns of displacement and resettlement, and devise plans to prevent it from reoccurring, has been important. Through opening discussions about why people fled and where people went, the communities have begun to share and understand experiences from both a Hutu and Tutsi perspective.

Participants have also discussed the reasons why refugees in Tanzanian camps have not returned home, identifying the lack of information about the security situation as the main reason for this. Reflect circles have devised action plans to facilitate the return of relatives and friends from Tanzania by helping them access accurate information on the security situation in their local communities.

"It is important that we have learned to read and write. We have written letters to some of our community who are still in Tanzania asking them to come back. We want to encourage them to come home. Some of us from the Reflect group went by foot across the mountains to Tanzania to try and encourage them to come home by our personal testimonies of peace and by telling them about Reflect. We write and tell them that they should not listen to the rumours and radio propaganda, life really has changed here". Juvenal Ndikumagerge (24).

Links to literacy

Although the focus of the Reflect programme in Ruyigi has been on peace and reconciliation, literacy has been an essential part of the programme. Literacy skills learned by Reflect participants have also contributed to peace and reconciliation within their communities. The participants displayed a wide range of uses of literacy skills, from letter writing to reading, sharing and producing articles for Ejo, a community peace-building newsletter. Participants in Reflect circles write articles for Ejo, giving their personal accounts of their efforts to rebuild life after conflict, and the challenges they are now facing. It has built up a large readership and now has a circulation of 40,000 in Ruyigi and neighbouring provinces – it is read by everyone from politicians to the general public. There have also been a series of peace papers produced to spread the message of reconciliation beyond the circles.



Many people left Burundi during the conflict.

