

FMNR WORKSHOP: GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATORS



An FMNR workshop can be seen as a journey of discovery. The facilitator is not lecturing the participants; rather she is seeding them with new ideas and challenges. Importantly, the facilitator can assist participants in relating the contents and purposes of the workshop to their life and work experience, and to the problems they struggle with. She can help participants to move beyond purely imbibing information: by engaging them on an emotional and intellectual level participants will register that this topic is important – so important that by the end of the workshop they will be so moved and so charged that they will be committed to take action on the things they have learnt.

Some of the key elements that you as a facilitator should consider to run a successful FMNR workshop:

- Relate your own personal journey of discovery, revealing your common humanity (you suffered and struggled also), how you solved problems, what your challenges were, what the results were.
- Give space for participants to share where they are at, what they are struggling with, what is working and what is not. Balance is needed, especially if there are many participants. Ensure you have enough time to comfortably present the materials you have prepared.
- One of the most powerful exercises in the tool box is the 'past, present, future' exercise. Somehow this stirs up deep emotion and conviction that the destruction of the environment is fundamentally wrong, that it is one of the major root causes of the problems we have today and that if we do nothing about it, things will only get worse. This exercise sets the scene for what will follow – the telling of the Niger FMNR story, its impact, and the steps. The Niger story of transformed landscapes under 'impossible' conditions, with the use of before and after photos and satellite images also strikes home. Somehow this story of victory in reclaiming land against the odds gives participants hope. I often hear the refrain 'if those people can achieve so much on the edge of the Sahara desert with so few resources, imagine what we could achieve here'.

- Always give time for questions and feedback after each session – it is extremely important to maintain a high level of interest and engagement. Also, no matter how good your photos and explanations, some people might struggle to understand something until their specific question is answered. If there are women and youth in the group (as there should be), ensure they have an opportunity for their voice to be heard.
- Mix your presentations with activities and group work. Especially after lunch when people feel sleepy, give them group work to do that they have to report back on.
- Have a few energizer exercises up your sleeve. They are fun and they keep people awake.
- If you have a short video – use that at a strategic point.

The workshop needs to be working towards a logical conclusion. Try to follow these steps:

- Engage the participants and get them to relate their situation and problems to the topic.
- Walk participants through the FMNR story illustrating practices, impacts and evidence.
- Take participants on a field visit where they talk directly to farmers who have adopted FMNR. It is critically important for them to engage not just with staff, but to hear from actual farmers, see the work, and to actually practice FMNR themselves.
- At this point participants are fully charged and primed for action. If you leave it at that, probably nothing will happen!
- The next step is to form them into groups – perhaps according to geographic area, or to their organization if they are a mixed group and get them to prepare an action plan.

FMNR ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

What will be done	By whom	With whom	By when	Where (location)	Target Area (ha)	Support needed (financial, administrative, technical)

A good plan will not be limited to devising a strategy to introduce FMNR to local communities and government agencies. It shall also include a communication strategy for the organisations that the participants belong to. Participants are likely to return to their own organisation full of excitement about FMNR but they will be facing the challenge of convincing their busy colleagues about the importance of implementing FMNR activities and they need to be prepared for this.

Ideas for follow up include:

- Form a network (e.g. Facebook group, regular conference calls, bi-annual or annual meetings)
- Commitment from all participants to meet again to share experiences (victories, failures...) and re-set targets for the coming year. This will provide benefits in terms of mutual encouragement and learning.
- Visits from trainer/facilitator to see workshop participants in action and assess what they have achieved.