

Here we are

Building our community for all

Study circle handbook

Expanded edition
2020

This study circle handbook belongs to:

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What you will find in this handbook

Introduction to study circles - - - - - Page 6



Please read these notes if you are the study circle leader.
They will help you understand how study circles work.
It is also helpful for study circle members to read the notes.

Guides for study circle meetings

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Introduction to Study Circles

Learning Goals

After completing this study circle programme, you will be able to do the following things:

1. Broadly understand the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights, and how they provide the foundation for our democracy.
2. Identify the three spheres of government in South Africa and their main responsibilities, especially those of local government.
3. Build strategic relationships and alliances for people power.
4. Use several tools to organise your community to work for change.
5. Collaborate with people from different backgrounds to promote development, fight corruption and facilitate peaceful co-existence in your community.



People have used study circles to learn for over 150 years, especially when they have not had access to formal education. People's movements in places like Sweden, India, Brazil, and South Africa have used study circles to build poor people's capacity to play an active role in changing their society.

Study circle basics

What is a study circle?

A study circle is a small group of people who meet together to learn about something that interests them. A study circle is also for people who want to help solve problems and build a stronger community.

How big is a study circle?

Usually a study circle has 8 to 10 members.

It should not be too big or too small. It must be big enough so that there are lots of different ideas to share. It must be small enough so that everyone can participate easily.

Who can join?

Adult learners from any background can join this study circle if they are interested in learning about the foundations for a strong, democratic community.

People do not have to be well educated to join the study circle. Even people who cannot read can participate. Life is our teacher.

Are study circles only for adults?

Study circles are mainly designed for adults who are able to share their life experience as part of the learning process. These materials can be used with young people in grades 11 and 12, provided they are interested and engaged in community life. The materials are not suitable for younger learners.

Who can lead a study circle?

Anyone can be a study circle leader. Leading a study circle is not difficult, but it is different to how learning usually happens at school or university. The study circle leader is a learner, not a teacher.

What is the role of the study circle leader?

- The main job of the study circle leader is to set up the circle and call it together.
- The leader runs the study circle meetings, but does not teach the group.
- The leader is a learner, just like all the other members of the study circle.
- To help the learning process, the leader should:
 - remind the group of its goals;
 - help people to focus and stay together as they talk;
 - encourage everyone in the circle to take part in the discussions;
 - help the group to keep time;
 - encourage members of the circle to be accountable to each other.
- If you like, the leader's job can be shared by other members of the circle. Be sure to plan this before the meeting.



A study circle is different to a classroom where the teacher does most of the talking and learners keep quiet.

What is the role of study circle members?

A study circle works well when the members agree to do the following things:

- Participate actively
- Share questions, ideas, experiences and resources
- Listen carefully to others
- Be open to new ideas
- Respect other people's ideas, even if they disagree
- Appreciate everyone's contributions
- Attend every meeting
- Complete small tasks between meetings

When will the study circle meet?

Any time that suits the members – morning, afternoon or evening.
It works best to meet once a week, at the same time.

How many times will the study circle meet?

There are guides for 12 study circle meetings in this handbook. You can decide if you want to use all of them or only some of them.

How long is a study circle meeting?

2 to 2½ hours is a good time for a study circle meeting.

The meeting guides provide instructions for a 90-minute discussion. Add another 30 minutes for catching up at the beginning of each meeting.

Members can agree to meet for longer if they want to. It is useful to ask someone in the circle to help with time-keeping.

Where can a study circle meet?

A study circle can meet anywhere, in a place that is easy for the members. Here are some examples:

- Someone's house
- A church hall
- A shady place outside
- An empty classroom



The meeting place should be flexible and informal. You do not need desks.

Arrange chairs in a circle to create a relaxed mood so that everyone feels equal.

How to start a study circle

1. Find members

The most important task when setting up your study circle is to find people who really want to participate.

Here are some tips for finding study circle members:

- Listen carefully to understand what issues people are interested in. What do they care about most? Are they motivated to learn how life in the community can be improved, and how they can play a role?
- Share the learning goals of this programme (see page 7).
- Explain what a study circle is, how it works, and how long it lasts.
- Don't force people to join the study circle or ask them to do you a favour by coming along.
- Recruit people one by one, face to face. Don't just make a general announcement, send an sms, or ask people to bring a friend.
- Try to recruit people from different backgrounds. This can make the study circle more interesting.
- Encourage people to believe that they can make a useful contribution to the study circle, whoever they are.
- Make sure that people can commit themselves to meeting for 12 weeks in a row, unless you plan to run a shorter study.
- Share your enthusiasm for learning together.



Take time to pull together a motivated group.
Then people won't drop out.

2. Choose the time and place

If possible, consult a few study circle members before deciding when and where you will meet. It might be impossible to satisfy everyone.

Find an easy place to meet and a manageable time.

The time and place will influence whether people are able to join the study circle.

3. Get handbooks for everyone

Make sure that you have enough copies of this handbook for every member of the study circle. As the leader, you should never be the only person in the circle with a handbook.

The handbooks are in English only. Even if people cannot read or do not speak English, let them have a copy. They can share it with others.

4. Prepare the first meeting

Prepare carefully so that the first meeting runs smoothly. If the first meeting is interesting, people will be happy to come again.

Also prepare well for all the meetings that follow. As the leader, it is important to know in advance how each meeting is structured and timed.

10 Tips for using this handbook

1. “Own” your handbook

You should have your own copy of the handbook. Put your name in it. Feel free to write your own notes and comments in it. Make it work for you.

2. Prepare

If you are leading the group, it is very important to read the whole meeting guide ahead of time. This will help you to feel comfortable with the meeting process and timing.

As a member of the study circle, you do not have to read the guide before the meeting, but feel free to do so. It will help you to start thinking about some of the questions and to remember relevant experiences.

3. Learning from experience

Adults learn best by thinking about life experience in a disciplined way. This means looking closely at your own and other people’s life experiences. The circle will build knowledge by comparing these life experiences and analysing them together. **Take each other’s** experiences seriously.

4. Questions for discussion

There are lots of questions in the handbook to guide your discussions. Most of these questions are open. They are not a comprehension test, like at school. Add your own thoughts and ideas. Also feel free to ask your own questions. Discussion will help you to go deeper into a topic and build knowledge together.

5. Small groups

Sometimes the handbook will suggest that you divide the circle into smaller groups. This gives everyone more time to talk. It can also be easier for quiet members. Sometimes the groups will report back to the **whole circle, but sometimes they won't**. It depends on the activity.

Be flexible.

6. Information

The handbook provides some basic facts and ideas about each topic. Sometimes it will fill in gaps or even challenge you. But remember that the study circle is also helping you to build knowledge from experience. Pay attention to each other's experiences and ideas. Don't just read what the handbook says. Feel free to ask questions or disagree.

7. Language

The handbook is only available in English. You can use any language for discussion in your study circle. Remember that translation takes time. Your study circle meetings might be longer if you need to do lots of translating.

8. Timing

There is a suggested time for each step in the meeting guides. You don't have to stick to these times exactly, but use them as a guide. For example, if it says "10 minutes," don't go too deep with your discussion. If it says "30 minutes" or "40 minutes" you can go deeper, but check how many questions there are. It can be helpful to have a time-keeper in the circle.

9. Adapt

Use the meeting guides in a way that helps your group to reach its goals. You can decide if you want to take more time to discuss some things, or less time. Bring extra material like articles or videos, if that will be helpful.

You can drop some meetings if you want to run a shorter course. They are all useful in different ways, so you need to decide as a group which ones are the most important for you.

This handbook has four new meetings: Democracy, Equality, IDPs and Corruption (meetings 2, 4, 7 and 8). These ones add more detail on some of the other themes. Be sure not to drop the last two meetings (11 and 12). They wrap up the course and lead to action.

10. Evaluate

Evaluate every meeting as a group. It takes time and effort to learn to work together in a study circle. Talk about how you are doing, and how you can do better. Thank people for interesting questions and ideas. Be honest about challenges, and try to solve them together. Remember your learning goals. Check if you are making good progress. Evaluation is how you can be accountable to each other for making the study circle work.

Dealing with difference

1. Education Levels

People in the study circle will probably have different levels of education. The leader's job is to help balance them.

Work hard to build respect in your study circle. Do not let the most educated members talk much more than the others.

Encourage educated members to learn from those with less education. Even people who cannot read have lots of experience and ideas. Everyone's life story is unique. There is always lots to learn from other people's stories.

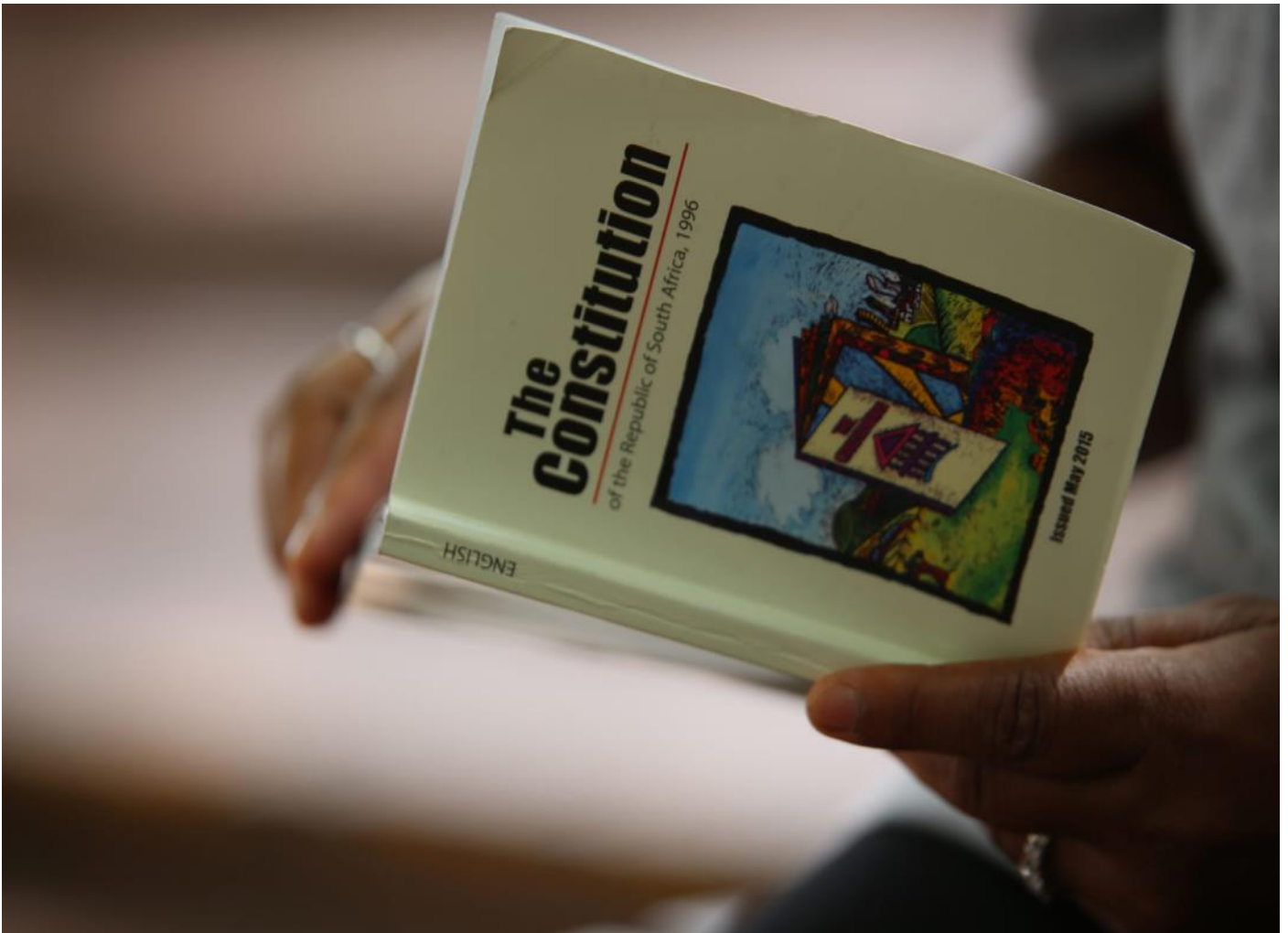
2. Disagreements

It is normal for people to disagree sometimes in a group. Do not be afraid of arguments. Help the study circle members to relax and learn from disagreements.

At all times, encourage people to respect each other, even if they have different positions. It is possible for people to argue respectfully.

Disagreements can feel uncomfortable, but exploring differences helps to clarify ideas. The study circle will be more interesting if people feel free to discuss different points of view.

Be patient. Listen carefully. Be open and curious. Put yourself in the other person's shoes. Don't judge. Difference is part of being human!



Meeting 1

The Constitution



Welcome to the study circle.

Everyone should have a copy of this handbook. It contains guidelines for 12 meetings. Here you will find instructions and resources for your discussions.

At the beginning of each section there is a suggested time in brackets. Add some extra time to catch up with each other at the beginning of each meeting. If you follow the times, the study will last an hour and a half. It is good not to rush the discussions, so you can take longer if you want to.

Check if this is okay with everyone in the circle. You can use any language for your discussions. You can also change some of the questions or activities if that will help you to reach your goals as a group. Negotiate this together.

The circle belongs to everyone in it.

Step 1 / Introductions and goals *(15 minutes)*

Go around the circle and introduce yourselves briefly, one by one.

Give your name and explain why you have joined the study circle.

- What do you hope to learn?
- What do you hope to do with what you learn?

Ask someone in the circle to write down what everyone hopes to learn and do. Afterwards, read through these hopes again. Are there some shared hopes? Let these be the goals of your study circle. Keep them and work together to reach them.



Note to leader: Share the learning goals of this study circle course. See page 7 in the introduction. Discuss how these goals match up with the group's goals. Clarify if certain goals cannot be achieved in this course.

Step 2

How study circles work (10 minutes)



Note to leader: Explain briefly how study circles work and what makes them different to other ways of learning. See pages 8 - 11.

Here are the two main things to remember:

1. Study circle members learn from each other by sharing ideas, questions and experiences.
2. The study circle leader helps to keep the group together and move it along. But the leader is also a learner, not a teacher.



Question for discussion

What are some basic rules we should follow for this to be a good learning experience for everyone?

After sharing your own rules, check page 10 to see if there are any other things that study circle members should do.

Step 3

What is the Constitution? (5 minutes)

In Chapter 1 of the Constitution, it says that the Constitution is the “supreme law” of the Republic of South Africa.



Question for discussion

What do you think it means for the Constitution to be the highest law of the land?

Step 4

The Preamble (10 minutes)

The Preamble is the introduction to the Constitution. It states the purpose and basic values of the Constitution.



Let a few people read the Preamble aloud. Read it two or three times, in different languages if you can. Here it is in English.

For other languages see <https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/preamble.html>

We, the people of South Africa,

- + Recognise the injustices of our past;
- + Honour those who suffered for justice and freedom in our land;
- + Respect those who have worked to build and develop our country; and
- + Believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.

We therefore, through our freely elected representatives, adopt this Constitution as the supreme law of the Republic so as to –

- Heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights;
- Lay the foundations for a democratic and open society in which government is based on the will of the people and every citizen is equally protected by law;
- Improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person;
- Build a united and democratic South Africa able to take its rightful place as a sovereign state in the family of nations.

May God protect our people.

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika. Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso. God seën Suid-Afrika. God bless South Africa. Mudzimu fhatutshedza Afurika. Hosi katekisa Afrika.

Step 5 Responding to the Preamble *(10 minutes)*

First sit quietly for a moment and think about the following question.



Personal reflection

Which word or sentence in the Preamble to the Constitution feels most important to you? Why?

Share your thoughts in the circle. Make sure that everyone has a chance to speak briefly (about 1 minute each).

Step 6 Constitutional Values *(15 minutes)*

Turn to somebody sitting next to you to form a pair (group of 2). Then talk briefly about the following two questions with your partner.



Questions for discussion

1. Why do you think the Preamble begins with “We the people of South Africa”?
2. Who is part of this “We”? Do you feel part of it? Explain your answer.

Together in the circle, take a closer look at the four sentences in the Preamble marked with +. Read them again. These are the basic values that support the Constitution. Values are the beliefs and standards that form the foundation for our lives.

Discuss the four + sentences one by one. Each time, let a few people in the circle answer the question below.



Question for discussion

Why is this value important for our community?

Finally, think about all these values and discuss the next question together.



Question for discussion

What can we do to make these constitutional values part of our lives in this place every day?

Step 7 / Purposes of the Constitution *(15 minutes)*

The Preamble explains why the Constitution was written and adopted by Parliament.

Take another look at the four sentences in the Preamble marked with ■. Read them again. These are the basic purposes or goals of the Constitution.



Questions for discussion

1. How many times do you see the word “democratic” in the goals of the Constitution?
2. Is the Constitution on its own enough to build a democratic society?
3. What can we do and what can the government do meet this goal? Share just a few ideas.

Step 8

Evaluation (8 minutes)

Always evaluate your meeting at the end. This helps to make you accountable to each other. In this way, everyone takes responsibility for making the study circle work well. Do not be afraid to suggest how things can improve. Everyone will benefit.

Go around the circle and answer these simple evaluation questions.



Questions for evaluation

1. What did you like about the meeting today?
2. What must we change so that the next meeting can be better?

Next Steps (2 minutes)

Before the next meeting, tell two people something you learned today about the Preamble to the Constitution.

Who will you talk to about what you have learned today? Write their names:



For the next meeting, see if someone in the circle can get a full copy of the Constitution. Maybe you can find one in the library. Some people still have small pocket-size copies that were handed out all across the country when the Constitution first became law. You can also find the Constitution online. See <https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/index.html>.



Meeting 2

Democracy



Note to leader: If you can, try to get a full copy of the Constitution for this meeting so that people can look at it.

Before you begin this meeting, briefly remind each other of some main points in the Preamble to the Constitution that you studied last time. This meeting allows you to spend more time learning about the Constitution.

Step 1 The story of the Constitution *(20 minutes)*



Start by reading the box, and then respond to the questions afterwards.

Parliament adopted our Constitution in 1996. These days a lot of people don't know the story of how it was written. We need to keep that story alive. It is the foundation of our democracy. It is like an inheritance to be passed down from one generation to the next.

During the struggle against Apartheid, several generations dreamed about living in a democratic South Africa. In 1955 at the Congress of the People, the Freedom Charter was written. It provided a vision for a new South Africa. When the transition to democracy began in 1990, people from all political parties started to negotiate around these ideas. The negotiations took place in many different forums. Often they were long and difficult. An Interim (or temporary) Constitution was adopted before the first democratic election in 1994. After that, it took another two years for the new Constitution to be written and become law.

A huge number of people were involved in the process of writing the Constitution – politicians, lawyers and other citizens. Some international experts came to help. Leaders from different political parties travelled together to other countries to learn from their constitutions. All South Africans were invited to offer ideas. They sent letters and petitions and attended public meetings. Over two million citizens participated in the process in some way.

The Constitution was born out of struggle. Here are some examples:

- Black South Africans knew what it was like not to be treated as equal human beings, so equality is the first right in the Bill of Rights.
- Women and men struggled together to end Apartheid. The Constitution says that women and men have the same rights and must be treated equally.
- Many activists spent time in prison, so they made sure that the rights of arrested and detained people would be protected in the future.
- Many gay people participated in the struggle against Apartheid because they understood what it was like not to be free. The Constitution recognises their rights.
- People who left the country and lived in exile knew what it was like to be a refugee in another country. The Constitution says that certain rights belong to everyone in South Africa, which includes foreigners.

All around the world, people admire the Constitution of South Africa. They say that it is one of the best. It provides a model for other countries now.



Questions for discussion

1. If you were part of the struggle against Apartheid, what does the Constitution mean to you?
2. If you are a younger South African, do you feel that the Constitution belongs to you? Why or why not?
3. What do you think about the examples of how people's struggles helped to shape the Constitution?

Step 2 / Democratic Government (30 minutes)

In the next box you will find information about how the Constitution sets out the main structures and systems of democracy in South Africa.



Take 5 minutes to read and discuss each point in the box .

The Constitution provides a **basic guide** for the “democratic machinery” of our country. There are many other laws that build on the Constitution and give more detail on how these structures and systems must work.

1. Three spheres of government

The three “spheres” or areas of government are National, Provincial and Local. Each sphere has different responsibilities. The three spheres must also co-operate with each other from top to bottom and bottom to top. Local governments must co-operate with each other, and provinces too.



Discuss: How do you think having three spheres of government supports democracy in South Africa?

2. Three branches of government

Each sphere of government is divided into three separate branches called the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. The Legislature passes laws. The Executive puts laws into action. The Judiciary (the courts) resolves arguments about the law. The three branches are independent so that they can hold each other accountable and prevent abuses of power.



Discuss: How do you think it supports our democracy to have three separate branches in each sphere of government?

3. The Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights is a tool to guide all the work of the government. It also sets standards for how we all treat each other. The next meeting will look at the Bill of Rights in detail. It sets out the basic human rights that must be respected and protected in South Africa. It covers basic freedoms, like the freedom to think what you like, or to join any organisation you like. It also covers basic needs, like water and medical care.



Discuss: How would you explain the connection between democracy and human rights?

4. Chapter 9 institutions

Chapter 9 of the Constitution sets out six special structures to help protect and promote human rights and democracy in South Africa. These structures are independent from the government and must be accessible to citizens. They include the Human Rights Commission, the Gender Commission and the Independent Electoral Commission (the IEC). The Public Protector investigates complaints about all branches and spheres of government.



Discuss: Have you heard about any of these structures?
How do you think they can serve you as a citizen?

5. Constitutional Court

The Constitutional Court is the highest court in the country. It makes sure that the laws passed by each sphere of government are in line with the Constitution. It also decides whether the work of government departments meets the demands of the Constitution. It judges whether government is doing enough to protect the rights of South Africans according to the Bill of Rights. Any person or group can take a case to the Constitutional Court, especially if it sets an example for the whole country.



Discuss: Have you heard about any cases that have gone before the Constitutional Court? Why were these cases important for our democracy?

Step 3

Democratic Society (30 minutes)

Now it is time to think about your role in our democracy. Divide into pairs (groups of two) so that everyone has time to share their answers to the questions that follow. Take 5 or 6 minutes for this.



Questions for discussion

1. What is the role of people outside of government in making democracy work?
2. Do you think there is a difference between a democratic government and a democratic society? Explain your answer.



Without reporting, move on to read the next box together in the whole circle.

Democracy is not only the work of government. It is the work of the whole society. It involves all of us. The Constitution takes the participation of citizens in South Africa's democracy very seriously. Almost every chapter mentions ways for citizens to get involved. The people must guide the work of government. It is our job to hold politicians accountable. We are the ones who build a **culture of democracy** in our communities and in our society.

The original meaning of the word **democracy** was “**people's power.**” The Constitution gets its power from us. We are the ones who make it come alive. Otherwise it is just a document. We have to love it and act on it in order for it to work. The Constitution makes space for people to become empowered and take action to improve their lives. It is there to encourage us. We must work with each other and with government to build better communities and make our democracy strong.

Let each person think quietly about the next question for a minute or two.



Personal reflection

What does a “culture of democracy” mean for you? Think of three words to describe it.

Go around the circle so that each person can share the three words they came up with. Don’t take time to explain. Just give your three words.

Finally, take another 10 or 15 minutes to discuss the following questions in the whole circle.



Questions for discussion

1. What do you feel when you hear that “democracy is about us”?
2. What can you do this week to help build democracy in this place? Let everyone answer.

Step 4 / Evaluation *(8 minutes)*

Discuss how this meeting went. This will help you to capture key lessons and ideas for how to improve next time.



Questions for evaluation

1. What did you like about today’s meeting?
2. What can we change so that the next meeting can be better?

Next Steps *(2 minutes)*

Write down something you will do this week to help build a culture of democracy in the community.





Meeting 3

The Bill of Rights

Before you begin this study, briefly remind each other what you did last time.

Step 1 Introduction (5 minutes)

Chapter 2 of the Constitution is the Bill of Rights. This is how it begins:

"This bill of rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom."



Question for discussion

Who do you think the Bill of Rights applies to?

Share a few very quick answers. The rest of this meeting will explore this further.

Step 2 Whose rights? (25 minutes)



In the box is a summary of the Bill of Rights. Read it aloud together. Go around the circle, if you like, so that each person can read a few rights.

As you read, notice the things that make you feel excited or surprised. Afterwards, discuss the questions that follow in the whole circle.

Summary of the South African Bill of Rights

1. **Equality:** Everyone has the right to be treated equally. Discrimination because of race, gender, sex, language, religion, disability and many other reasons is not allowed.
2. **Human Dignity:** Everyone has the right to be treated with respect as a human being.
3. **Life:** Everyone has the right to life.
4. **Freedom and security of the person:** Everyone has the right to freedom and physical security, and to control their own body. This includes the right to be free from all forms of violence. No-one can be arrested without good reason, or held in prison without trial.
5. **Slavery and forced labour:** Everyone has the right not to be taken into slavery. You cannot be forced to work under the threat of punishment or violence.
6. **Privacy:** Everyone has the right to privacy. You cannot have your home or possessions searched. Your personal communications are private.
7. **Freedom of religion, belief and opinion:** Everyone can believe and think whatever they want to. You can choose your religion, or have no religion.
8. **Freedom of expression:** Everyone (including journalists for newspapers, radio and TV) can say whatever they want to. But no-one can encourage violence or use “hate speech”.
9. **Assembly:** Everyone is free to organise and take part in public meetings and demonstrations, and to present petitions. This must be done peacefully.
10. **Freedom of association:** Everyone can meet with or be friends with whomever they like.
11. **Political rights:** All citizens of South Africa can support the political party of their choice. Citizens aged 18 years or older have the right to vote.
12. **Citizenship:** South African citizens cannot have their citizenship taken away.

13. **Freedom of movement and residence:** Everyone is free to move from one place to another in South Africa. All citizens are free to live anywhere in the country.
14. **Freedom of trade, occupation and profession:** All citizens have the right to do whatever work they choose.
15. **Labour relations:** Everyone has the right to be treated fairly at work. Workers may join trade unions and go on strike.
16. **Environment:** Everyone has the right to a healthy environment.
17. **Property:** Everyone has the right to own property. Your property can only be taken away from you if the proper rules are followed.
18. **Housing:** Everyone has the right to have access to adequate housing. The government must take reasonable steps to help people get housing. You cannot be kicked out of your home unless the proper rules are followed.
19. **Health care, food, water and social security:** Everyone has the right to health care, food and water. The government must take reasonable steps to fulfill these rights. People who cannot support themselves can have access to grants.
20. **Children:** All children under the age of 18 have special rights, including the right to proper care and the right not to be physically or sexually abused.
21. **Education:** Everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education, in their own language if this is possible.
22. **Language and culture:** Everyone can use the language they want to use and follow the culture they choose. They must respect the Bill of Rights while doing so.
23. **Cultural, religious and linguistic communities:** All communities with the same culture, religion or language are free to enjoy their culture, practise their religion and use their language. They must respect the Bill of Rights while doing so.
24. **Access to information:** Everyone has the right to any information that the government holds. You have the right to information held by other people if you need it to protect your own rights.

25. **Just administrative action:** Everyone has the right to be treated fairly by the government at every level.
26. **Access to courts:** Everyone has the right to have a legal problem decided by a court, or a similar structure.
27. **Arrested, detained and accused persons:** Everyone who is arrested, held in jail or accused of a crime has certain rights specific to their situation.



*Note: This summary has been written in simple English. Some details have been left out. **This is not a legal document.** Find a copy of the Constitution if you want to read the Bill of Rights in full. You can also read it online: <https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/chp02.html>*



Questions for discussion

1. Did you learn something about your rights that you didn't know before? What? Share one new thing.
2. Which rights belong to everyone in South Africa? Look carefully.
3. Which rights belong to citizens only?
4. What do you find interesting about the rights for everyone and the rights for citizens?

Step 3

Socio-economic Rights *(10 minutes)*

Socio-economic rights have to do with people's basic needs.



Read the information in the box to learn more.

When people cannot meet their most basic needs, they lose their dignity and freedom. Socio-economic rights recognise that everyone has the right to food, water, housing and health care. Everyone has the right to basic education so that they can gain skills and look after themselves. If people cannot support themselves, they have the right to receive some support from the government to help them meet their basic needs.

The Bill of Rights says that the government must do everything it can to fulfill people's rights to food, water, housing, health care and education. But the Bill of Rights recognises that the government does not have enough money to fulfill everyone's socio-economic rights immediately. The government must work gradually to improve people's basic way of life, step by step. It must continue to show that it is serious about meeting this goal.



Questions for discussion

1. What has the government already done in this place to fulfill people's right to food, water, housing, health care and education?
2. Do you think the government has done enough to promote socio-economic rights here, or not? Explain your answer.
3. What do people need most in this place to have a feeling of dignity and freedom?

Step 4

Human Rights Around the World (10 minutes)

South Africa is not the only country with a Bill of Rights. People have been struggling and working for human rights around the world for a very long time.



Question for discussion:

Where do you think the idea comes from that all people have basic human rights?



After a few brief answers, read the text in the box below.

Many societies have traditions that encourage people to treat others the way they want to be treated themselves. Ubuntu and the respect for people's humanity is one example. Some religious traditions also support human rights.

Unfortunately, human rights are often abused. Because of this, people started to think of ways to make human rights part of the law. The United Nations led the way with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The Organisation of African Unity developed the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights in 1981. Every single African country has signed this Charter. It encourages each country to develop its own national bill of rights.

There are many international and regional documents that provide detailed guidance on promoting specific human rights. Two examples are the 1969 Organisation of African Unity convention on refugees, and the 1999 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. When a country officially adopts such conventions and charters, it makes a commitment to following their guidelines for protecting these rights.

Step 5 / Balancing Rights *(20 minutes)*

Sometimes human rights can bump up against each other. In these situations, it can be difficult to decide whose rights are more important.

Divide into three small groups. Let each group discuss a different example (only one), using the questions below. Go back to the summary of the Bill of Rights in your discussion.



Questions for discussion

1. What are the rights of the different people in this situation?
2. Whose position do you support?
3. Is it possible to balance these rights? If so, how?

Come together in the circle after 7 or 8 minutes to share your ideas. Read each example aloud before the group reports.

Example 1: The Protest Marches

There are often service delivery protests in a town. People march down the main road from the township to the municipality. Shop owners along the main road lose a lot of business because people don't shop on the days of the marches. Sometimes there is violence and shops are damaged. Now the shop owners want the local council to ban marches in the centre of town. Township leaders are angry and do not support the idea.

Example 2: The Factory

On the edge of a town there is a big factory. It has been there for more than 50 years. A lot of people work there. The union is strong and the salaries are not bad. But the factory dumps all its waste in the river nearby. The water is very polluted. It is not safe to drink. A lot of people in the town have died of cancer. Doctors say it is because of the water. Now many people say that the factory must close. The workers do not agree.

Example 3: The Rally

A speaker at a political rally makes an angry speech about refugees and immigrants. He says they are criminals and are causing many problems in the community. He says that the police have been too slow to act and the community should chase these people out themselves. The crowd starts to get excited. A few hours later, the police arrest the speaker. They say this is necessary to protect the community. Party members are very unhappy.

Step 6 / Limiting Rights *(10 minutes)*



Question for discussion

Do you think it is okay for people's rights to be limited in some situations, like the ones you have just discussed?
Explain your answer.

Have a short discussion in the circle and then read the box below.

The Constitution says that people's rights can sometimes be limited in order to protect the rights of others. Sometimes it is necessary to limit certain rights in order to protect the security of the country, the safety of the public, or the health of the community. The decision to limit human rights must be taken very carefully, often by a judge. The Bill of Rights is a living document. It does not always apply in the same way in every situation. Whatever happens, democratic values must be respected.

According to the Constitution, in South Africa some rights can **never** be limited, including these ones:

- right to dignity
- right to life
- right not to be tortured
- right not to be taken into slavery
- right to a fair trial
- most children's rights

Step 7

Evaluation (8 minutes)

Evaluate today's meeting together.



Questions for evaluation

1. What was the most interesting thing you learned today?
2. Is everyone participating actively in the discussions?
If not, what will make it easier for them to do so?

Next Steps (2 minutes)

Before the next meeting, memorise what the Bill of Rights says about dignity. Here is the full statement:

"Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected."*



Note: * "Dignity" means to be worthy of respect. "Inherent dignity" means that dignity is an essential part of being human.



Meeting 4

Equality and empowerment

The first two points in the Bill of Rights are about equality and dignity. These are the two most basic rights of any human being. In this meeting we will think about how they apply to both men and women.



Decide as a group:

For many people, it can be difficult to talk openly about women's struggles and women's rights. The discussions in this meeting will probably make everyone feel uncomfortable at some point. But these issues are important as we think about how to build better communities and a stronger democracy. Do you feel ready as a group to tackle these discussions together? If so, agree to be respectful and patient with each other. If not, rather skip this meeting until you feel ready and move on to the next one.

Step 1

Dignity and equality (10 minutes)

The homework after the last meeting was to memorise what the Bill of Rights says about dignity. Check who managed to do this. Ask them to join together and say it aloud. Otherwise, read it again on page 40.



Now read the box. This is a summary of what the Bill of Rights says about equality. Read it aloud together in the circle. Then have a short discussion in response to the questions.

Everyone is **equal** before the law and has the right to be **equally** protected by the law. No-one can discriminate* against another person because of their race, gender, sex, colour, age, disability, religion, culture, or language. Discriminating against others because they are from another tribe or country, poor, married, unmarried or divorced, gay or lesbian is also not allowed.

* **Note:** to discriminate means to act unfairly against a person or group, or to put them down.



Questions for discussion

1. How far do you think we have come on the road to equality in this community?
2. In particular, do you think men and women are treated equally? Share just a few thoughts. The discussion will go deeper later.

Step 2

Gender equality (25 minutes)



Question for discussion

What is gender?



First see if one or two members of the circle can explain.
Then read the box to clarify.

Gender is about the behaviour that we expect from men and women. It is shaped by tradition and society. Gender roles develop from an early age at home, at school and in the community. Girls are expected to do certain things, while boys are expected to do other things. These gender roles differ from one society to another. For example, in some societies only men are farmers, but in other societies women do the farming. Gender roles can also change over time. These days, in many countries both men and women are involved in farming. Only men used to drive cars, but then women started driving too. Respecting human rights and building a culture of democracy changes some of the ways we think about gender.

In the whole circle, respond to the first three questions. When you have about 5 minutes left, divide into pairs (groups of 2), and answer the last question.



Questions for discussion

1. Our Bill of Rights tells us that men and women must be treated equally. How does this challenge some of the old ways of doing things at home?
2. How does gender equality challenge what we do at work?
3. How does gender equality challenge the way we do politics?
4. Do you find it easy or difficult to accept these changes?
Briefly explain your answer to one other person in the circle.

Step 3

Men, women and power (45 minutes)



First read the box. Let everyone read it aloud together in the circle. Make sure everyone understands. Then move straight on and read the instructions for the next exercise.

Point 4 in the Bill of Rights is about Freedom and Security of the Person. It covers many rights, including these ones:

- Everyone has the right to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources.
- Everyone has the right not to be treated in a cruel or inhuman way.
- Everyone has the right to feel safe in their own body, and to control their own body.



Note to leader: Please read the following paragraph aloud.

What follows is a short play with a conversation between two friends, Bongani and Simphiwe. They touch on some very sensitive issues. The play can allow people in the circle to talk about these issues without feeling pressure to talk about their own experience. But it can still be difficult. Are we ready to support every member of the circle, both women and men, as we read the conversation and discuss it? We might not like how some people react, but let's allow each other to deal with the issues in our own ways. Change can start right here in the group if we agree to be patient and respectful towards each other.

First, check that everyone agrees to continue with the play. Invite two people to start reading it aloud. The readers can be men or women – remember they are just acting. You will stop twice to discuss some questions and change readers.

Bongani: Eh eh eh, Simphiwe, I saw you with a beautiful girl on Saturday!

Simphiwe: Ja, Mfethu, she's my new girlfriend, Tshidi.

Bongani: Wow, where did you pick her up? I haven't had much luck with girls lately. Women these days, they are different.

Simphiwe: Hau, Mfethu, what do you mean?

Bongani: Akere, it's all this stuff about gender equality. It is changing our women.

Simphiwe: Ah Mfethu, maybe you also need to change, Bra wam.

Women are not ours. We don't own them.

Bongani: You know me, Simphiwe, Mfethu. I used to have magic with the girls. I could have anyone I wanted. Now they give me a hard time. All I hear is no, no, and no, mxm! I am running out of ideas for how to get myself a woman. They don't want to play around with me any more. They don't laugh at my sexy jokes. They don't like my free kisses. One woman even said no to me after I bought her airtime more than once. I think the only way is just to give a woman lots to drink. Then at least from there I can do what I want with her.

Simphiwe: Haai, Bongani, Mfethu, if a woman says no, it means no. She is not asking you to try some clever new tricks. I think us men have taken this thing too far.

Bongani: Eh eh, you have changed, my brother! So what happened to all the tricks you taught me?



Questions for discussion:

1. How does Bongani fail to respect the dignity and rights of women?
2. What do you think about the way Simphiwe responds?

Check that everyone feels okay to continue reading the conversation as a group. If so, let two new people read the parts of Bongani and Simphiwe. Remember that either men or women can read.

Simphiwe: Ja, you are right that I have changed. Let me tell you, I learned from my last girlfriend. I was serious about her. We were even talking about getting married. But then I started to act as if I owned her. Telling her what to do left and right. Thinking she was there to serve me if she was going to be my wife. One day she was getting ready to go out with her sister. She put on a nice short dress and beautiful shoes. I was not happy. I did not want other men trying to pick her up.

Bongani: I'm with you, my brother.

Simphiwe: So I told her she could not go out unless she changed her clothes. She told me straight that it was not my right to tell her what to wear. And that women do not have to wear plain clothes to stop men from getting excited. That day we had such a huge fight. Things were not the same with us after that.

Bongani: Haai, sorry, Simphiwe!

Simphiwe: It was bad. We had so many arguments. And then one night she refused to have sex with me. That was too much. I hit her. I hit her hard, my brother. I was drunk. I didn't care. The next morning she told me it was over. She didn't want to see me again.

Bongani: See how women are, Mfethu! So grand grand! She didn't understand that she made trouble for herself. She blamed you. This is the problem we are facing.

Simphiwe: She was a strong woman, Bongani. She told me that I did not own her. Her body did not belong to me. I had no right to hurt her. She left me, just like that. I was angry and sad, my bra. I did not want to lose her, but she was gone.

Bongani: Sorry! But such a woman can only give you problems. She won't do what you say. She won't give you sex when you need it. Just imagine! I don't want to ask a woman, Can I kiss you? Can I go further? This is nonsense! A man must be in charge.



Questions for discussion

1. How did Simphiwe fail to respect the dignity and rights of his old girlfriend?
2. What do you think about the way Bongani responds?

Now finish reading the conversation if everyone is still happy to go on. Once again, let two new people read the parts of Bongani and Simphiwe.

Simphiwe: Bongani, that break-up made me think a lot. I lost a woman I loved. I messed up that relationship.

Bongani: Wena, you must think again!

Simphiwe: I'm telling you. For some time after I didn't have a girlfriend. So I was drinking and listening to other guys talking about their girlfriends. All of them were laughing about beating women to put them right. It sounded bad, man. I started to see why women were angry. I joined a group for men who want to stop this behaviour.

Bongani: Serious, Mfethu? What kind of men are in such a group?

Simphiwe: You will be surprised, my brother. They are like you and me. We are learning together. We try to understand where that violence comes from inside us. We give each other courage to look into our own hearts. It takes time. I feel better about myself these days. Now with my new girlfriend, Tshidi, I am trying to talk openly and honestly. I want a healthy relationship. Respect comes first. I am learning.

Bongani: Yo! I'm not sure I can change. The old way was good, my bra. What about our tradition? Now women are empowered. They talk about their rights. But I think it is making more problems.

Simphiwe: Bongani, if I can change, nawe you can change. Maybe then you can even build a good relationship with a woman. And be a role model for younger boys. There is too much violence in our community, especially violence against women.

Bongani: Now you sound like our President! Even he is complaining about it. I heard there was some campaign about a State of Emergency.

Simphiwe: Ja my bra, I helped to collect signatures for that petition. Ramaphosa says that the government will take stronger action. There is a lot that must change to deal with this problem: police, courts, clinics. But the most important change must come from us, Bongani, from us men. We are the ones who can make the biggest difference when it comes to ending gender-based violence. Don't you want to be part of building a better, safer South Africa for everyone: men, women and children?

Bongani: I can see that you are making a difference, Simphiwe. Even with me, your old friend, you have stood up for women's rights. You have given me lots to think about.



Note to leader: It is important that the roles of Bongani and Simphiwe do not stick to the readers. Before you begin the final discussion, thank them all by name. Ask the rest of the group to join you, as follows:

For those who read Bongani's part, say, "Thank you [readers' names], you are not Bongani. You are one of us."

For those who read Simphiwe's part, say, "Thank you [readers' names], you are not Simphiwe. You are one of us."



Questions for discussion

1. Why do you think Bongani struggles to accept that women have rights?
2. What do you think of the way Simphiwe has changed?
3. When you read this conversation, who do you think has the most power? Why do you say so?
4. If women are empowered, do you think it is true that men have less power? Explain your answer.
5. If you are a woman, who would you like to have as your partner – Bongani or Simphiwe?
6. If you are a man, did this conversation help you to understand something new about women, or about yourself? Share with the circle if you would like to.

Step 5 / Evaluation *(8 minutes)*

It is hard to talk about the problems between men and women. Maybe this meeting was stressful or even painful for you. Thank each other for tackling this difficult issue. Recognise each other's contributions.



Questions for evaluation

1. How well do you think you managed to discuss the issues of gender equality and women's empowerment as a group?
2. Women: What did the men in the group do to help this meeting move forward in a good way?
3. Men: How did the women in the group help with this discussion?

Next Steps *(2 minutes)*

In the coming week, look for resources to help men and women deal with the problem of gender-based violence.

Specifically, if women in the study circle need support, help them make a plan for where they can go or who they can talk to in your community. Find out about support groups, counsellors, shelters, organisations that provide training programmes, and other forms of support.



Meeting 5

Building a good community



Note to leader: For this meeting, you will need a big piece of paper. If possible, stick 6 or 9 pieces of ordinary paper together, or get some flipchart. You also need a pen, pencil or crayon for everyone.

The Preamble to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights gave us a vision of who we are and what we value in South Africa. In this meeting we start to think about how to make this vision real.

Step 1

Public Service *(20 minutes)*



Start by reading the box aloud.

There are two ways to think about public service. First, it is about meeting the basic needs of the public, or the community. It is what we often call **service delivery**. This is one of the main tasks of government. There are many different kinds of public service jobs, for example in a local municipality, a school or a hospital, or the police and the army. A person who has a public service job in government is called a **public servant**.

We can also think about public service as **a way of working**, or an attitude. In other words, it is about people being **willing to serve** the community. Being a public servant is more than a job. It is a commitment to responding to the needs of the public, and to do it well.

Answer questions 1, 2 and 3 quickly, and spend a bit more time on question 4.



Questions for discussion

1. What do you think about when you hear the word “servant”?
2. Does it feel like the government workers you meet are there to serve you? Explain.
3. Do you think people who are not government workers can do public service? If so, give some examples.
4. What do you think a good public servant should be like?
As you answer this question, get someone to draw a very simple picture of a person in the middle of a big piece of paper. Write your ideas about a good public servant all around the picture.



Note to leader: Read the following instructions aloud while everyone in the circle sits quietly. Read slowly, and pause for a moment at the end of each sentence.

Close your eyes. Think of a busy public place that you know. It could be a taxi rank, a shopping centre, or another place like that. With your mind's eye, see the people coming and going. See the men. See the women. See the children. Are some of them wearing strange clothes? Are some of them wearing party T-shirts? Which party? Do some look richer than others? Why? Do you see any local leaders? How many people do you know in this busy place? Now imagine that you are sitting in a community meeting with about 30 of them. Most of them are strangers to you. Focus on how you feel about those who support a different political party to you. How do you feel about being with foreigners in the meeting? What about those of a different race or religion? How do you feel about participating in this meeting where everyone has very different opinions from you? Think about this for a few more seconds. Now open your eyes.

Without talking to each other, now let everyone think about the questions that follow. For each question, circle one of the emojis to show how you feel. Be honest with yourself. You don't have to show anyone which emojis you choose, unless you want to. Take just 2 or 3 minutes to do this.



Questions for personal reflection

1. How do you feel when you are with people from a different political party?



2. How do you feel when you are with people from a different country?



3. How do you feel when you are with people of a different race?



4. How do you feel when you are with people of a different religion to yours, or people who are not religious at all?



5. How do you feel when you are with people who disagree with your ideas about how to solve a problem in the community?



When everyone has finished capturing their responses, divide into pairs (groups of 2). If there is an odd number of people in the circle, make one group of 3. Spend about 8 minutes reflecting together, using the next two questions. There will be no reports.



Questions for discussion

1. Which types of people do you find the most challenging to be with? Why?
2. Do you spend most of your time with people like you, or unlike you? Why?

After this, come together as a whole circle to discuss the two questions that follow. Take about 10 minutes for this.



Questions for discussion

1. If public life is where we mix with people who are different, what are the good things about it, and what are the challenges?
2. Working together can be a better way to get to know people who are different, rather than just talking to them. Do you agree with this statement? Explain your answer.



Read the box. Afterwards, let a few people say what they think about it.

We enter public life when we focus on public issues and get involved with people outside our private world of family and friends. **Public life is open.** It forces us to be with people from different backgrounds who have different ideas and opinions. This can be interesting, but it is not always easy! The most important thing is to **show respect** for each other.

Public life allows us to grow if we can open ourselves to learn from others and see the world through their eyes. One of the best ways to do this is to work with people in the community to solve a shared problem or create something that everyone will benefit from. While working together, we begin to discover that everyone has talents and can make a contribution. This is how we build our democracy.

Step 3

Public work (35 minutes)

Here are three examples from real life of people coming together to solve problems in the community. Divide into three small groups to discuss them. Let each group take a different example (only one). Spend about 15 minutes in these groups. Use the following questions to guide your discussion.



Questions for discussion

1. What problem do people try to solve in this example?
2. Who takes the first step to solve the problem?
3. Who else gets involved?
4. What makes change happen in this story?
5. Do you think something like this could happen in your community? Explain.

Example 1: South Africa

Lerato was worried about AIDS orphans in her township. She talked to two of her friends. They agreed to help her start an after-school care programme. They went door-to-door asking if people would donate food or money for the children's lunch. One man said they could use the big, empty garage next to his house for free. Soon, there were 30 children participating in the programme. Lerato and her friends trained a group of unemployed young people to be leaders. They helped the children with their homework. They also organised games and other activities. The orphans made a lot of progress. Lerato became bolder and told the Department of Social Development about the programme. The Department decided to support the work. They provided funding and new space so the programme could grow. They also started to look for ways to set up similar programmes in other townships.

Example 2: Pakistan

In a very large informal settlement, people were getting sick all the time because there was no proper sewerage*. There were only bucket toilets. Often people threw their toilet waste into open ditches along the lanes between the shacks. Politicians kept promising a proper sewerage system, but nothing happened. Then a local organisation developed a plan for how residents could help to build the sewerage system, in partnership with the municipality. Most residents supported the idea straight away. They were keen to improve their community. Every household agreed to give some money, as they were able. Many people volunteered to dig and lay pipes in their lanes. Other residents monitored the work. The municipality was slow to come on board at first, but the people's energy pushed them to act. They could not refuse to play their part. They helped to guide people's efforts. They also laid the big pipes connecting the lanes and built a new sewerage factory to clean the waste.

**Note: sewerage is the underground pipe system that takes toilet waste and other used water to places where it can be cleaned.*

Example 3: Burundi

A group of musicians and choir leaders decided to create a music festival in their town. The mood was low. There was lots of conflict. The musicians believed that encouraging people to make music together would help to change this. They looked for partners all across the town. Churches offered their meeting places for concerts. Many people got involved in the organising committees. The festival had sections for choirs and bands from schools, churches and other parts of the community. It was quite small when it started, but it grew bigger over time. People of all ages enjoyed the concerts. Seats were very cheap and sometimes free. The festival began to change the culture of the town. There was more collaboration. Young people especially were keen to participate. They started up new choirs, drumming groups and bands. Although there were still many problems in the town, the music festival somehow made people feel stronger and more united.

After discussing these stories in small groups, come together again in the circle. Let someone from each group read their example and report briefly on some of the main points from their discussion. If you have enough time, other people can also add comments.



Finally, read the box together. Afterwards, briefly discuss what you think about the idea of public work.

Public work is the **joint effort** of people from **different backgrounds** to solve a problem that affects them all. It builds something valuable for the community. **Public work happens when people are willing to work together to improve their situation, rather than waiting for someone else to do it for them.** Many people are keen to see change, but don't know what to do. Public work is a way of tapping into this energy in an organised way. It helps people to feel more powerful and positive. Working together builds respect between people from different backgrounds as they share their ideas and skills.

Often public work involves people from government and the community working together. It can take a lot of time and effort to build these partnerships. There can be ups and downs. Nevertheless, the results are usually better than one-way, top-down service delivery from government. People can also do public work that improves the community without government getting directly involved.

Step 4

Evaluation *(8 minutes)*

Don't forget to evaluate today's meeting.



Questions for evaluation

1. Who said something you found interesting or helpful today?
Thank them.
2. Did people have different opinions in today's discussion?
Are you making space for different ideas? Can you do better?

Next steps *(2 minutes)*

In the coming week, have a conversation with someone who is different from you. Be open and see how it goes! Try not to argue. Rather, see what you can learn. Also, look out for good examples of public work and public service in the community.



Meeting 6

Service delivery

Before you begin this study, briefly remind each other what you did last time.

Delivering services to communities is a multi-layered process. It involves many different government structures. Citizens also have a role to play by communicating with government and keeping it accountable.

Step 1 Structures of government *(20 minutes)*



Start by reading the information in the box together.
Then discuss the questions that follow.

In South Africa, there are three “**spheres**” or areas of government: **national**, **provincial** and **local**. These spheres of government are separate, but they also overlap with each other in many ways.

Each sphere of government has a Legislature, an Executive, and several departments.

1. The **Legislature** includes members from the majority party and several opposition parties. They are all elected by citizens to be part of the government. Together their job is to debate and pass laws. They also debate and approve policies and budgets. The Legislature is supposed to monitor the Executive.
2. The **Executive** develops policies, laws and budgets, with the help of committees. It sends these to the Legislature to be debated and passed. It also oversees the rolling out of these policies and laws by the departments. Members of the Executive are chosen from among the elected members of the Legislature.
3. The departments implement government policies and deliver services. The directors and staff of government departments are appointed, not elected. The departments are sometimes referred to as the **Administration**.

Here's a summary of what this looks like in each sphere of government:

A. National government

Legislature = Parliament

Executive = President and Cabinet (made up of Ministers)

Administration = Director General of each department, Directors and all other staff.

B. Provincial government

Legislature = Provincial Legislature

Executive = Premier and Executive Council (sometimes also called Cabinet, made up of M.E.Cs)

Administration = Director General of province, Heads of departments and all other staff.

C. Local government

Legislature = Council

Executive = Mayor and Mayoral Committee or Executive Committee (made up of councillors). In some very small municipalities, the whole council is also the Exco.

Administration = Municipal Manager, Heads of departments and all other staff.

The courts, sometimes called the **Judiciary**, also form part of government. The Judiciary includes judges, magistrates and prosecutors. They make sure that government and citizens follow the law. The Judiciary, the Executive and the Legislature form what are called the three **branches** of government.



Questions for discussion

1. Why do you think is it useful to have 3 different spheres of government (national, provincial and local) to meet the needs of citizens?
2. Sometimes all 3 spheres of government are responsible for the same thing, like roads, for example. How do you think they share their responsibilities?

Step 2 / Who delivers services? (20 minutes)



Read the box together and then briefly share your learnings.

There are more than 30 national departments, but most of them do not deliver services directly to citizens. Some deal with important issues that need to be managed at national level, like taxes, defending the country and international relations. Many national departments provide “umbrella policies” to guide the other spheres of government. One national department that does provide services to the public is the Department of Home Affairs.

Provincial governments are all structured a bit differently. They usually have about 10 or 12 departments. Only some of these are involved with direct service delivery to the public. Schools, hospitals and housing fall under provincial government.

Most basic public services are delivered by local government. These include the following:

electricity	street cleaning	cemeteries
water	fire-fighting	markets
rubbish removal	traffic control	public facilities (e.g. town hall)
local clinics	libraries	licences for street trading
local roads	parks	approval of building plans
street lighting	sports facilities	sewerage and sanitation



Question for discussion

Did you learn something new or useful about service delivery here?
If so, what?

Step 3 Structures of local government *(15 minutes)*



Read the box for some more information about local government. Then test how well you know the local government structures in your area.

In South Africa, local government is made up of three different kinds of municipalities.

- **Metropolitan municipalities** (or “metros”) cover the areas in and around big cities.
- The rest of the country is divided into **district municipalities**. They are quite large.
- Each district covers a number of **local municipalities**.

Every municipality is governed by an elected council. Councils can be quite big or quite small, depending on the size of the municipality.

Local municipalities are divided into **wards**. One councillor is elected to represent each ward. Together, **ward councillors** make up half of the local council. The other half of the councillors are elected by proportional representation (**PR**) when people vote for a party.

Each ward councillor is responsible for chairing a **ward committee**. The committee is supposed to be elected by residents of the ward. It should represent different interest groups in the area (for example, youth, women, business). Anyone is allowed to attend ward committee meetings or council meetings. You can ask your ward councillor to table a question for you at a council meeting.

Local councils send some of their councillors to represent them on their district municipality council. These local representatives make up 60% of the district council. The other 40% of district councillors are elected by PR when voters across the district vote for a party.

Local municipalities and district municipalities share the job of delivering services in their area. In rural areas, district municipalities often have more responsibility for service delivery.

Quickly do the following quiz together in the circle.

1. Who is the mayor of your local municipality?

2. How many members are there in your local council?

3. When does your council meet?

4. Where do council meetings happen?

5. Which parties are represented in your local council?

6. Who is the ward councillor who represents your area?

7. Do you know any members of your ward committee?

8. What district does your local municipality belong to?

(Note: If you live in a "metro," then your municipality does not belong to a district)

9. Where is the main office of your district municipality?

10. Who is the mayor of your district municipality?

If you don't know the answers to some of these questions, discuss where you can go or who you can ask for more information.

Step 4

Us and them (25 minutes)

Service delivery depends on a working relationship between government and the people. Think about how this works in your own community.

Quietly complete this chart for yourself. Put a cross in the column that gives the answer for you personally. Work quickly. Spend only 5 minutes on this.

	Never	Sometimes	Always
1. Do you have a good relationship with your local government?			
2. Does government consult your community about service delivery?			
3. Do you feel that local government responds to your needs?			
4. Does the ward committee in your area reach out to the community?			
5. Do you reach out to members of the ward committee?			
6. Do community development workers make contact with you?			
7. Do you attend community meetings with government officials?			
8. Do you join with others to take action about service delivery?			
9. Do you think that people should pay for basic services like water and electricity?			
10. Do you feel that your voice can be heard?			

If you have time, go around the circle and count how many people answered “never,” “sometimes,” or “always” for each question. You can write the score in your chart. Do this as quickly as you can.



Questions for discussion

1. What makes local government feel close to the people, or far away from them?
2. What steps should local government take to reach out better to this community?
3. What steps can we take as a community to build a better relationship with local government?

Step 5

Evaluation *(8 minutes)*

Don't skip the evaluation! This is how you hold each other accountable.



Questions for evaluation

1. There was a lot of information in today's meeting. Are there still some things you don't understand properly? How can you find out more?
2. People sometimes say “information is power.” What did you learn today that makes you feel more powerful?

Next steps *(2 minutes)*

Think about attending a meeting of your local council, or a ward committee meeting. Find out when the next one happens. A few of you can go together. Maybe you won't follow everything that is going on, but you will get a better idea of the work they do and how they go about it.



Meeting 7

Understanding IDPs

This meeting goes deeper into how local government works.

Step 1 / What is an IDP? (15 minutes)

To begin this meeting, respond briefly to the following questions.



Questions for discussion

1. Who in the circle has heard about the IDP?
2. What is the IDP? Let a few people explain.
3. Who has attended meetings about the IDP? What were they like?



After sharing what you know, read the box together for some more information.

Every municipality has an IDP to guide local development and service delivery. IDP stands for Integrated Development Plan. It pulls together the development plans for all the wards and municipal departments into **one well-organised plan for the whole town or district**.

An integrated plan helps the municipality to roll out development projects in the **right order** and in an **affordable** way. In the past, municipal departments had their own budgets and programmes and did not always co-operate very well. The IDP helps the departments to think and plan together all the time. It aims to **balance the needs of different areas**. It makes sure that all plans deal with **important umbrella issues** like poverty, gender and protecting the environment.

District municipalities and provincial government also get actively involved in the IDP process. The development plans for this town must fit in with the plans for other towns nearby. Major development projects like a new dam or a big new road must be integrated and managed across a whole district.

Step 2 / Doing integrated planning (35 minutes)

Divide the circle into four small groups. Let each group focus on a different example (only one), using the following question. Take 5 minutes for this.



Question for discussion

How could an integrated development plan (IDP) help to prevent the problems in this example?

Example 1

In Town One, the local council was in a rush to show people that it was doing something in every ward. It decided to build pavements so that people could walk more safely. The project also made it possible for some people to get jobs. But the budget was small, so they could only build one short pavement in each ward. Nobody was happy with the results.

Example 2

Town Two is situated on a river. The council decided to start a big vegetable farming project along the river to help local people to earn money. They provided fertilizer and farming equipment. Three other towns further up the river started similar projects. Soon people started to get sick because the water in the river contained too much fertilizer from the farms.

Example 3

In Town Three, the municipality set aside a large piece of land for new housing. After measuring the plots, they started to build outdoor toilets. Quite soon, there were more than 100 toilet buildings standing in neat rows. But there were no underground water pipes yet, or streets. Then the building stopped. The toilets stood for years in the veld with no houses nearby.

Example 4

In Town Four, the municipality tarred all the streets in a very poor old township area. They also put up street lights and planted trees. It looked nice. Then they planned to make a big, beautiful park in the township. They said people from all over the town would be welcome to use it. But people in a nearby informal settlement were angry because they had no electricity or water.

After 5 minutes, come together again in the circle. Invite each group to read its example and report back on its discussion. Then other people can add their ideas.

Wrap up your discussion by responding to the next two questions.



Questions for discussion

1. All citizens want to see improvements in their own streets and wards. How can the municipality make everyone happy at the same time?
2. What are some ways to keep people together even if they see progress in one part of town, but not in their own area?

Step 3

The IDP Process *(15 minutes)*



Here is some information about the IDP process. Read it together. Then together discuss the questions at the end.

When a new local council is elected, it is time for a new IDP. This is how the process is supposed to work. First, the municipality has to prepare an **IDP Process Plan**. It tells people when each step of the IDP process will happen.

The municipality must help to set up an **IDP Representative Forum**. The Forum should have representatives from ward committees and organised stakeholder groups (like people with disabilities). It can also include traditional leaders, people who can speak for marginalised groups that are not organised, and other local resource people. The IDP Representative Forum and the ward committees are the two key structures that must co-ordinate community participation.

The main **opportunities for public participation** in the IDP process are at the beginning. Ward committees and the IDP Representative Forum organise meetings to gather information on community needs. They might also organise public debates on different ways to address these needs. They sometimes hold consultations with specific groups. Later in the IDP process when detailed project plans are developed and integrated, the municipality works directly with the IDP Representative Forum and certain stakeholders when necessary. Finally, when the draft IDP is ready, it is presented to the community in open meetings so that people can have a chance to comment on it. Then the council votes to adopt it.

The **IDP lasts for five years**, until the next election. **Every year, the municipality must check and revise the IDP**. It has to consult the community about new needs and necessary changes. Each municipality sets up its own timetable for public participation. This is when you can expect some things to happen:

- From January to March, the community can offer ideas for the revised IDP via the ward committee.
- In February or March, there are public meetings to discuss the municipality's Annual Report. This is the report on how the IDP was rolled out in the last year.
- In April or May, the community can comment on the revised IDP and the budget for the coming year.
- Throughout the year the community can help to monitor the rolling out of the IDP.

Every year, the municipality must develop a **Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP)**, in line with the IDP. It runs from 1 July to 30 June. It must be available to the public via the municipality's website. The SDBIP lays out **detailed targets and budgets** for service delivery month by month. Only projects that are included in the SDBIP will be rolled out. It is the key tool for holding managers and departments accountable inside the municipality. They have to give monthly and quarterly (3-monthly) reports to the council on their progress. The quarterly reports should be available to the public. The SDBIP is the most useful document for citizens who want to monitor the implementation of the IDP.



Questions for discussion

1. In your experience, how well does your municipality follow the rules for the IDP process as it is described here?
2. Are there things you can do as citizens to make the IDP process work better in your town? If so, share some ideas.

Step 4

Let's be real (15 minutes)

To end this meeting, divide into three small groups. Let each group answer a different question (only one). Each question touches on a different problem with IDPs. There is not enough time to go deeply into these problems here, but it is important to recognise that they exist. Spend just 5 minutes or so in groups. Then come together to report back.



Questions for discussion

1. What are some of the problems inside municipalities that weaken the IDP process? One problem is poor reporting. Can you think of others?
2. When local leaders consult communities on the IDP, how seriously do you think they take the suggestions from citizens? Why do you say so?
3. How do you think corruption creeps into the IDP?

After sharing your responses to the first three questions, briefly debate the next one in the full circle:

4. Do you think it is worth participating in the IDP process even if it is not perfect? Explain your position.



Finally, read the box.

The IDP process might sound good, but once people start putting it into practice all kinds of things can go wrong. It is not enough just to know the rules for how the IDP is supposed to work. They give us an idea of how things should be. But as citizens we also need to be aware of how the world really works. To make change happen, we have to work in that tricky space between **the world as it is** and **the world as it should be**. We need to be wise and strategic, building partnerships with others so that we can be stronger together. In the next few meetings, we will look more closely at how to do this.

Step 5 Evaluation (8 minutes)

Think about everything you have discussed in this meeting. There was a lot of information. Evaluate it briefly by answering these questions.



Questions for evaluation

1. Do you feel hopeful or down about the IDP after this meeting? Explain.
2. What questions do you still have about local government and the IDP?



Next steps (2 minutes)

Think of someone who can answer at least one of your questions. How can you contact him or her in the coming week to find out more?



In a few weeks' time, there will be space for one or two community leaders to attend Meeting 11. Start to think about leaders you would like to invite to join you.



Meeting 8

Fighting corruption

The Constitution and the IDP process provide good foundations for democracy and development in South Africa. But things can go wrong, especially when corruption creeps in. In this meeting we look at what citizens can do when this happens.

Step 1 / Fighting corruption *(10 minutes)*

Start by having an open discussion in the circle.



Question for discussion

Do you think it is up to government or citizens to take the lead in fighting against corruption? Explain your answer.



To wrap up, read the box. Say if you agree or not.

Most countries have official anti-corruption structures and laws. In some places these are quite strong, but in many places they are weak. In South Africa, we have an Anti-Corruption Task Team made up of all the different bodies that have power to fight corruption. Experience tells us that these kinds of structures have more success when citizens are also actively involved in fighting corruption. It is about **building a culture of honesty and accountability** across the whole society. Every citizen has to play a role. First, they must act honestly themselves. Then they must keep their eyes open and work together to hold corrupt people and structures accountable. **Corruption cannot end without organised “people power”.**

Step 2 / People Power *(40 minutes)*

Look at the real-life examples that follow from around the world. Divide into three groups and let each group take a different example (only one). Everyone should use the same questions for discussion. Spend about 25 minutes in the groups. Then get back together to report.



Questions for discussion

1. What partnerships do people form to fight corruption in this example?
2. What is the role of ordinary citizens?
3. What is the role of experts?
4. What is the role of government?
5. What makes the anti-corruption strategies work in this story?
6. Could we adapt these strategies to address other kinds of corruption here? Share some ideas.

Example 1: Philippines

In the 1990s, the Department of Education was one of the most corrupt institutions in the Philippines (a group of large islands off the coast of South-East Asia). Due to corruption, textbooks were in such short supply that up to eight learners had to share a single book. A new government was elected in 2001 and promised to take serious action against corruption. A senior official in the Department of Education began a campaign to clean up the process of ordering and distributing textbooks. Book publishers had been over-charging the Department. In the space of a few years, the price of textbooks went down by half as education officials tackled problems with the tender process.

At the same time, two NGOs took the lead in monitoring the production and delivery of textbooks. First, they formed a large coalition of community-based organisations and trained hundreds of volunteers how to inspect the quality of textbooks. The volunteers reported on problems with the paper, printing and covers. The publishers were forced to stop taking shortcuts and using cheap materials. Then delivery schedules were provided to community partners in school districts across the country. Thousands of volunteers, especially young people from churches, scout groups and other youth organisations, were present at school district offices when textbooks were delivered. They opened every box and checked the contents. They reported the mistakes and shortages.

Before long, the right numbers of books started to be delivered on time. The Coca Cola Company agreed to transport books to far rural areas, together with their own deliveries. In towns across the country, community groups organised “textbook walks” to transfer books from district offices to the schools themselves. These were joyful community events involving hundreds of people. Learners, teachers, parents and other community members carried textbooks on their heads, on bicycles and on carts. In some places, motorbike owners and bakkie owners also got involved. In the space of three years, the problem of textbook corruption almost completely disappeared. The anti-corruption campaign also helped to raise awareness about the need for other improvements in education in the Philippines.

Example 2: Afghanistan

All across Afghanistan (a war-torn country in Central Asia), efforts to rebuild rural villages were troubled with corruption. Construction companies took shortcuts. Officials demanded bribes and turned a blind eye. In 2008, an NGO started to work with citizens who were frustrated with the poor quality of development projects in their villages. At first, each community chose one construction project to monitor. Projects included clinics, roads and irrigation channels. They elected two local volunteers to be trained as monitors by the NGO. The monitors learned how to do site inspections and check if projects were being rolled out according to plan. They had to promise not to accept bribes and to be accountable to the community.

The NGO negotiated shaky support from a few provincial officials. This was enough to help the monitors gain access to project documents and construction sites. The monitors did inspections once a week. They gathered information from the engineers and other contractors. Community forums took place every week and the monitors gave detailed reports. Some monitors formed good relationships with officials and contractors who wanted to do a good job.

When there were problems, the communities used various methods to push for change. Sometimes talking to people in charge of the projects was enough. If not, they asked outside experts to do further monitoring. They invited donors, religious leaders and political leaders to join site inspections and attend community forums. In one place, villagers organised a non-violent sit-in on the construction site of a school because contractors were using very poor quality bricks.

The aim was to win people over from within the corrupt system by showing them that good, accountable work was better for everyone. Success was mixed. In some places no big problems were found, but officials and contractors learned to work more collaboratively with villagers. In many villages, big problems were solved through community pressure. In other places the monitoring campaigns did not succeed for various reasons, including lack of access to construction sites. In every village, citizens started to believe that they could work together to improve their lives.

Example 3: Serbia

After many years of dictatorship and economic suffering in Serbia (a country in Eastern Europe), the public mood was very low. Corruption was everywhere. Hardly anyone believed things could change. In 2009, a group of young professionals (doctors, businesspeople, government workers and academics) formed an organisation called Serbia on the Move. They decided to tackle corruption in the health care system. Doctors in government hospitals were paid low salaries. As a result, some of them asked for bribes from patients. Serbia on the Move trained nearly 300 volunteers, mainly students, to interview 1000 doctors to understand the situation better. They discovered that most doctors were not corrupt. They felt stuck and ashamed because they had such a bad reputation in the public eye.

Instead of focusing on corrupt behaviour, Serbia on the Move designed a campaign to lift up positive examples. Nearly 700 doctors agreed to sign an anti-corruption declaration. They wore buttons saying, “I do not take money – I work for a salary.” This was a way to recognise the corruption problem while making a positive statement about themselves.

Then the campaign created a website called “What’s Your Doctor Like?” It had the names of all doctors in every government hospital. People could score their doctor’s services and say if they had to pay a bribe. Although a government commissioner gave official approval for the website at first, it was closed down after ten days because doctors complained. Even so, over 30 000 people participated and 13 000 doctors were evaluated. Again, responses showed that most doctors were honest. Corrupt doctors were exposed.

After the website was closed, people protested with their mouths taped shut on International Anti-Corruption Day (9 December). Citizens were learning that they did not have to put up with corruption and that they could make a difference. Soon afterwards, Serbia on the Move made it possible for citizens to continue reporting corrupt doctors by SMS. Surprisingly, the Ministry of Health said that it wanted to support the SMS campaign. Officials realised that it would look better if they supported the rights of citizens.

After wrapping up your discussion in groups, come back together. Let someone from each group summarise their example and report briefly on each of the questions.

Step 3 Forming partnerships *(25 minutes)*



Together read the story in the next box.

In Vrotfontein, the dam that is supposed to supply water to the town is empty because the dam wall is badly damaged. Repairs to the wall were supposed to take one year to complete, but almost two years have passed and not much progress has been made. Contractors keep running out of money and asking the municipality for more. Two companies were fired from the project because they did not have the necessary skills. Sometimes workers on the site stop working because they haven't been paid. In the meantime, the budget for the dam wall just keeps on growing.

A group of young people in the township decides to investigate the project to fix the dam wall. They know they must form partnerships to develop people power. They start to make a list of strategic people to contact.

- a. Retired engineer: was once mayor of the town during the apartheid years.
- b. Director of local government research centre at the nearby university.
- c. Chairperson of the Residents' Association in former white part of town.
- d. Journalist: writes for the local newspaper and runs a radio talk-show.
- e. Priest: also the chairperson of the association of local church ministers.
- f. Chairperson of Chamber of Commerce, the association of local businesses.



Questions for discussion

1. Do you think corruption might be happening in this story? How and where?
2. Go through the contact list in the story. What can each person do to help?
3. In your own town, are there people you have never worked with before who might be able to help with an anti-corruption campaign? Give some examples.



Read the box to wrap up this discussion, and share a few thoughts about it.

Forming partnerships is one of the most important ways of building people power. This is how we make change happen in our communities. Such partnerships can be called “public relationships.” They are based on a **shared interest** in public issues, and a **shared commitment** to building a better community. Public relationships are not the same as private friendships. They must above all be **respectful** and **accountable**. Public relationships are practical, working relationships. They do not have to be warm or loving. It is possible for people to work together for change even if they don’t like each other, or if they are very different. But respect is essential. It comes from recognising the valuable contributions that different people can make towards solving a problem that they are all concerned about.

Step 4 / Evaluation *(8 minutes)*

Briefly reflect on your mood as you prepare to leave the meeting. Remember to encourage each other.



Questions for evaluation

1. Name one thing that gave you hope during today’s meeting. If you still feel hopeless, say why.
2. Are you ready to work together with others to build people power? Why, or why not?

Step 4

Next steps *(2 minutes)*

Who do you know? Identify two people you can reach out to who have access to information, structures or power. Think about a relative, a neighbour, a friend from school, someone in your church, or an employer, for example. Write down the names of these two people here.



Before the next meeting, contact at least one of these people to tell them about your experiences in this study circle. Take time to connect with them without making specific requests. Ask them how they feel about corruption and other problems in the community. Check their mood and energy. See if they share your interests and concerns. Think about whether you could form a partnership with them in the future to work for change.



Meeting 9

People power

It is easy to feel powerless when we think about problems in our community. But in the last meeting we started to focus on people power. In this meeting we will explore a tool to analyse a problem and develop our power to make change.

Step 1 / Thinking about power *(15 minutes)*

Start with a brief discussion to dig into the idea of power.



Questions for discussion

1. Who do you think has power in this community? And in this society?
2. What makes these people powerful?



Now read the box, and talk about it together.

Usually when we think about powerful people, we think about those in important positions, or people with money. It feels as though they have the power to control our lives. In other words, they exercise **power over** us. This power is real. It is also scarce – some people have it, but most people don't.

There is also a different way to think about power. Power is the **capacity to do things or to act in the world. This is power that people can build together.** It does not only belong to those with money or big titles. All of us can develop our capacity to act, especially if we work with others.

If we think strategically, we can find sources of power everywhere. Young people have amazing energy and ideas, for example. Creative arts like singing, acting and dancing are powerful. Technology (like cellphones and computers) can expand our power. In almost any situation, it is possible to discover power in ourselves and in the people around us. We build people power by **tapping into each other's talents and forming partnerships** to work for change.



Question for reflection

How do you feel about becoming empowered to work for change? Think of one or two words. Be honest with yourself. Sometimes people are scared of having power.

Go around the circle and let each person share the words (only one or two) that describe their feelings about being empowered.

Step 2 / How does change happen? *(20 minutes)*

People make change when they work with other people. Change doesn't only come from leaders at the top. It can also come from the bottom up, or when top and bottom work together.



Read the story that follows.

Imagine an informal settlement called Boxtown. For more than a year, a huge illegal waste dump has been growing on the edge of the settlement. People come from nearby townships to dump all kinds of things there – building rubble, broken equipment and other rubbish. They come with bakkie loads every day. Many residents of Boxtown dump household waste there, as rubbish removal seldom happens. The dump has become a big problem. There is a terrible smell. Flies, cockroaches and rats are everywhere. A municipal health inspector wrote a report saying that the dump creates many health problems in the community. The ward councillor is also worried. People who live on that side of Boxtown are angry about the dump, but those who live further away don't care. Recently, two boys died after injuring themselves while playing there. Now mothers in the area fear for their children. Some young people have an idea to create a soccer field on the site, but the dump must first be removed. Pressure is growing to stop the illegal dumping in Boxtown.

Two women who have been trained as community organisers invite a group of Boxtown residents to talk about solving the problem. They use a tool called “force field analysis.” After much discussion, this is what the group comes up with.



Questions for discussion

1. What is the change that this group of residents wants to see in Boxtown?
2. Why are the points on the left-hand side “driving change”?
3. Why are the points on the right-hand side “holding back change”?
4. Which forces seem stronger – the ones driving change, or holding back change?

Step 3 Practising force field analysis (25 minutes)

Force field analysis is a tool for making change. It helps us to understand the forces driving change and holding back change, as we saw in the Boxtown example. This can guide us as we develop partnerships and strategies for action.

Now, working together in the circle, do your own force field analysis.

Instructions for force field analysis


1. Identify a problem in your community that you would like to address. Choose something specific. "Bad service delivery" is too broad.
2. What change do you want to see? Write this as your goal at the top of the blank chart on this page.
3. What are "forces" in the community that support this change?

Tip: These forces can be people, organisations, institutions, laws, available resources, attitudes, traditions, special events, etc. Write them on the left-hand side of the chart.

4. What are "forces" that will resist change, or make it more difficult?

Tip: These forces can be other people, institutions and organisations, costs, old habits, attitudes, etc. Write them on the right-hand side of the chart.

Goal: _____

Forces driving change			Forces holding back change
_____			_____
_____			_____
_____			_____
_____			_____
_____			_____
_____			_____
_____			_____
_____			_____
_____			_____

Step 4 / Developing strategies for change (15 minutes)

Things are the way they are because the forces for change and the forces against change are more or less balanced. **Change happens when the forces driving change become stronger than the forces holding back change.** Good strategies can make this happen.

Take another look at your force field analysis and respond to the next set of questions. Just share a few ideas. There isn't time to develop a complete strategy today, but you can come back to it later.



Questions for discussion

1. What are some ways to strengthen the forces driving change?
2. What are some ways to weaken the forces holding back change?
3. Are there ways to help people move from the right-hand side to the left-hand side? In other words, can some people who currently resist change become people who help to drive change?
4. Who are people and organisations you can work with to implement these strategies?

Step 5 Evaluation (8 minutes)

As always, end the meeting by evaluating your progress in the circle.



Questions for evaluation

1. Have your feelings about power changed during this meeting? If so, explain how.
2. What is the next step you must take to feel more empowered? How can this study circle help?

Next steps (7 minutes)



Important note: Today you must spend more time discussing next steps.

Identify one or two local leaders to invite to join this study circle for Meeting 11 (in two weeks' time). You can choose a leader from local government, the ward committee, the local peace structure, or a community organisation. Other possibilities include a school principal, the head of a clinic, or a religious leader who is involved in public issues. Be bold! Many leaders welcome the opportunity to connect with community groups.

Decide who will invite the leader (s), and how. Talk about how you can support each other in this task. It is important to take action before the next meeting.



Meeting 10

Dealing with conflict

Working for change means that we must be ready to deal with conflict. Some people will oppose our efforts. Even our partnerships might be difficult at times. People are all different and this sometimes creates tension. We need to learn how to deal with tension and conflict in positive ways. This is true for both our public relationships and our personal relationships.

Step 1

Experiencing conflict (15 minutes)



Note to leader: Slowly read the following instructions to the group while they sit quietly.

Close your eyes. Think of a difficult argument you had with someone. Remember the scene. Where were you? Who was involved? What were you arguing about? Why was the argument so difficult? How did you behave? How did the other person behave? How did it end? How did you feel when it was over? How do you feel now as you think back to it? Now open your eyes.

Form pairs (only one group of three if necessary) and respond to the following questions. Don't share the details of your argument – that can be too personal. You will not report back to the circle afterwards.



Questions for discussion

1. Did you feel that the person you were arguing with heard what you were trying to say? If not, why not? Focus on how the two of you were communicating, not on what you were arguing about.
2. Do you think you heard what the other person was really trying to say? Yes or no? Again, focus on how you were communicating, not on the topic of the argument.

3. In the end, did you manage to resolve the conflict? If yes, how?
If not, why not?
4. If you managed to resolve the conflict, how did you feel about your relationship with this person afterwards?
5. Do you think that conflict can play a useful role in relationships, or is it always harmful? Explain.

Step 2 Active listening (30 minutes)



This section will focus on practising listening skills. First read the box and make sure that everyone understands.

Conflict cannot be resolved without good communication. It is important for people on all sides to feel “heard.” Trust can only develop if people really listen to each other, and understand each other’s true interests and concerns.

Active listening is a useful skill to improve communication. It helps us to understand people’s deeper feelings and interests. These are often hidden or unspoken. People struggle to say exactly why they are upset. It takes careful listening to discover what they really think and feel.

With active listening, we **try to understand what a speaker says and why**. We listen not only with our ears, but also with our eyes and our hearts.

- **Ears:** Listen to the speaker’s **voice**, not only to her **words**. How does she sound?
- **Eyes:** What expressions do you see in the speaker’s **face**? Does his **body** look relaxed or tense?
- **Heart:** What **feelings** do you pick up in the speaker’s words, voice, face and body?

With active listening, we also show the speaker that we are **paying careful attention** to him or her. We do this with our bodies as well as with our words. For example:

- “Body language” like smiling, nodding and sitting forward.
- Short words and sounds like “yes,” “oh,” “aha.”
- Asking follow-up questions.
- Repeating or summarising what the speaker says.
- **Not speaking too much ourselves.**

The next exercise involves one-to-one interviews. This is a useful tool for practising active listening and discovering people's interests.

Instructions for the interviews:

Form pairs (groups of 2) in the circle. Try to join up with someone who is different to you, or someone you do not know so well.

If there is one person without a partner, he or she should walk around and observe the pairs during the interviews. Note how people are sitting, speaking and listening. The observer is also free to listen to the interviews here and there.

In the pairs, let one partner interview the other. During this time the interviewer may only ask questions. This is not a two-way conversation! Practise active listening. There are a few questions below to get you going. You can also add your own questions. Do not stop listening until 10 minutes are up. Ask someone in the circle to keep time.

After 10 minutes, swap roles, even if the interview isn't finished. You are just "tasting" the process. Now it is time for the interviewers to be interviewed. Repeat the exercise for another 10 minutes.



Questions for interview

Here are four basic questions to ask. Add your own questions to go deeper.

1. What 3 changes would you most like to see in this community?
2. Why do you care about these things?
3. What makes you the person you are?
4. What group or groups do you feel closest to? Why?

Step 3 / Hearing each other (20 minutes)

When the interviewing time is over, come together again in the circle. Think about the interviewing process, using the questions below.

First, if someone was observing the process, let him or her report on what happened. If there wasn't an observer, skip to the next set of questions.



Questions for the observer

1. Did you see people listening actively? How could you notice this?
2. Did you see people getting involved in two-way conversation with their partners? Why do you think this happened?



Questions for discussion

1. What was it like to be interviewed? Did you find it easy or difficult? Why?
2. What was it like to interview your partner? Did you find it easy or difficult? Why?
3. Were you able to "hear" what your partner really cares about? Share an example.



Read the box together.

People's interests are the deep concerns, fears, hopes and passions that really motivate them. We can identify people's interests by listening for the things that make them angry, upset or excited. These feelings help to show us what people really care about.

When there is conflict, it is helpful to try and understand the interests of the people involved. We also need to learn to express our own interests clearly in conflict situations. Conflict often results from competing interests. Resolving conflict usually involves trying to satisfy at least some of people's interests on both sides.

People's deepest interests are connected to their life story. For example, someone who thinks improving road safety is more important than building a soccer stadium might have been involved in a bad accident. **Try to listen for the story behind a person's opinions and actions.** Too often we judge others without knowing their story. This is especially true when they come from a different background to ours (for example race, tribe or country).

One-to-one interviews and active listening are not only useful for helping to resolve conflict. They are important tools for organising communities. **Strong partnerships and people's movements are based on shared interests.** Effective agents of change never stop doing one-to-one interviews to better understand the community's problems and identify potential partners.

If you have enough time, reflect on the last paragraph in the box.



Question for discussion

Think back to the last few study circle meetings (IDP, Corruption, People Power). How can you use one-to-one interviews to start taking action on what you have learned?

Step 4 Preparing for the next meeting (20 minutes)

The next time you meet (Meeting 11), you will have a chance to talk to one or two community leaders. Hopefully you have already managed to invite them. They can be representatives from local government, local peace structures or local organisations and institutions (for example: a school, clinic, or police station). A business person who is active in public life is another possibility. The goal is to understand their interests and find out how you can work together to build a better community.

It is important to prepare well for the next meeting so that it runs smoothly.



Questions for planning

1. Have you already invited one or two local leaders to attend the next study circle meeting?
2. If so, have they agreed to attend?
3. If yes, who will follow up with them to confirm the arrangements?
4. If nobody has accepted your invitation yet, who else can you invite? Who will do this?
5. Who will welcome and introduce the leader(s) at the beginning of the meeting?
6. Who will “chair” the discussion? Remember, the circle belongs to you.
7. What would you like to ask the leader(s)?

If you have time, prepare some questions to pose to the leader(s). Think about how to discover their interests. It is helpful to do this now, so that you feel confident and ready for the meeting. Write your questions here:



Step 5

Evaluation (8 minutes)

Take some time to share what you have learned during this meeting.

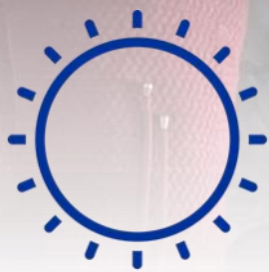


Questions for evaluation

1. Did you learn something about yourself today? If so, what?
2. What did you learn by listening actively to others in the circle?

Next steps (2 minutes)

It is important to be ready as a group to host your guest(s) in the next meeting. Once again, clarify who is responsible for doing what. Think about how you can follow up with each other during the week to make sure that all the plans are coming together.



Meeting 11

Engaging leaders

Today you will be joined by one or two community leaders who you have invited to be your guests.

This meeting will be a bit different from usual. The main aim is to get to know each other, and to explore possibilities for working together in the future. You are building public relationships, focused on your shared interest in public issues.

Step 1 / Introductions and background *(15 minutes)*

First introduce the guest(s). A brief introduction is fine. They will share more later, but they will start by listening to your experiences in the circle. Remember, this is your meeting and you should control it.

Go around the circle and let each member introduce herself or himself by name. As you do this, share one of the most useful things you have learned in this study circle. Try not to repeat what others say. This will help to give your guest(s) a better idea of what you have been doing in the study circle.

Step 2 / **Community leaders' stories** *(20-30 minutes)*

Now it is time to make space for your guest(s) to share some of their experiences as community leaders, and some of their concerns.

First use the questions below to guide your guest's contribution to the meeting. After that, pose some of the other questions that you prepared in advance, if they have not yet been answered.

Remember to practise active listening in the circle! Try to pick up the deep interests that motivate the leader(s) in their work.



Questions for community leaders

1. What led you into this work and this leadership role?
2. What were your hopes when you started?
3. What have been difficulties and frustrations for you?
4. What successes are you proud of?
5. What goals do you still hope to achieve as a leader in this community?

Step 3 Working together *(20 minutes)*

Now open up the conversation to everyone in the group. Think about the local problems that you have discussed in the study circle. Talk about how you might be able to work together to build a better community.



Questions for discussion

1. What concerns about our community do we as a circle share with our guest(s)?
2. What are steps we could take together to address one (or more) of these problems?
3. Who are other people or groups we should form relationships with in order to make change?

Step 4

Evaluation *(13 minutes)*

Evaluate the meeting with your guest(s). Good public relationships depend on respect and accountability. Think about what you have done to reach this goal today. Also think about how you will build on today's meeting.



Questions for evaluation

1. What are new things that you understand about each other after today's meeting?
2. What is one thing the guest(s) will do to act on today's discussions?
3. What will study circle members do to act on today's discussions?
4. How will you hold each other accountable?

Next steps *(2 minutes)*

The next meeting will be the last one. Come with ideas for how you can share what you have learned with other people in the community. You will plan a public presentation together.



Meeting 12

Here we are

This is the last meeting in this study circle programme. It will be a time of story-telling. We will look back at where we started, and look forward to what we would like to achieve.



As background to this session, first read the box.

There are three steps in today's story-telling exercise:

1. The story of **ME**
2. The story of **US**
3. The story of **HERE and NOW**

This 3-step process is another tool for people who want to organise their communities to work for change. It has been used all over the world in different kinds of campaigns. First, people meet in small groups to tell the story of why they personally want to become involved (ME). Second, they identify shared interests and what each of them can contribute (US). Third, they describe and analyse the problems of the moment and the place (HERE and NOW). Then they make plans for how they can respond to the needs of the time, and join with others to take action for change.

Step 1 / My story *(35 minutes)*

To begin, take 5 minutes to think quietly on your own about the questions that follow. You can write down your thoughts if you want to.



Questions for personal reflection

1. For yourself as a resident of this place, what are the three most important things that you have learned in this study circle?

2. Have you become a more public person after participating in this study circle? Explain your answer.

3. What do you still want to learn to develop your public life and become a more effective agent of change?

Using the three questions, let everyone share their story of how the study circle has shaped their public life in this place. Allow 3 to 4 minutes per person.

Step 2 / Our story *(25 minutes)*

Now think about yourselves as a study circle. Focus especially on how you have worked together as a group of learners. Use the questions to help you tell your “group story.”



Questions for group reflection

1. How have we grown as a group? What was the circle like at the beginning? Is the group different now? If so, explain how this happened.
2. What challenges did we face as a group? How did we handle these together? What can we learn from this?
3. What has each person given to the life and learning of the study circle? To answer this question, go around the circle in a clockwise direction. One by one, let everyone name something that the person sitting on their left has given to the group. Thank them!

Step 3 / This place's story *(15 minutes)*

The story of a place develops over time. It is shaped by history, but it is also shaped by who tells the story. There can be many stories about a place, but if one story is told often enough, it gradually becomes the story that everybody tells. One of the ways for people to **shape the future** of a place is to help **shape the story** of the place.



Questions for discussion

1. How do your leaders talk about this community? Do they see it as a place of hope, or a place of failure?
2. What kinds of stories do the media (TV, radio, newspapers, Twitter) tell about this community – stories of possibility or despair?
3. How do the people who live here talk about this place? Are their stories positive, or hopeless?
4. What can you do as a group to help shape the story of this community? Let this question lead you into the discussion about next steps.

Next steps *(15 minutes)*

This group has completed its study, but there is still lots of work to be done. Now it is time to plan a public presentation to share the story of how you have learned together, and what you have learned. Use the following questions to guide your planning.

First think about what you want to share:

1. In your presentation, how can you join your personal stories coming out of the study circle, and your group's story, with the story of this community? Remember the 3-step process you followed in this meeting.
2. As a group, what are the most important lessons you want to share?

Then think about who will contribute to the presentation, and how:

3. Will every member of the study circle speak?

4. What other roles can circle members can play?

Find a way for everyone to be involved. This is another way to develop public skills.

Finally, think about practical arrangements:

5. Who will be the audience?

- Who do you want to tell about the study circle?
- What is a good number of people to invite? Share the job.
- Do you want to invite special guests? Who will do this?
- Be strategic. This can be a useful way to build public relationships.

6. Where will the presentation happen?

Think about a church, school, or community hall. Who can arrange the venue?

7. Would you like to record the presentation to share it with others? If so, how will you do this?

Planning an event takes time. Planning a presentation also takes time. After sharing a few ideas, decide when you will meet again to make more detailed plans.

Work together with other community partners to make this public presentation a success.

This handbook has covered many ideas about what it means to build a better community and a democratic society. It has also introduced you to some useful skills for organising others to work for change.

If you have completed this course in your study circle, you should be able to do the following things:

- work in a group and make decisions together
- listen actively, using ears, eyes and heart
- use one-to-one interviews to discover people's interests
- respect and appreciate different ideas and opinions
- identify partners with different skills, and reach out to them
- use force field analysis to understand what is driving or holding back change
- plan a meeting with a leader
- plan and make a public presentation
- use 3-step story-telling to motivate people: me → we → here and now
- evaluate meetings and public actions
- hold each other accountable in order to reach shared goals together

It takes time to master these skills, but every time you use them, you will get better.

These skills are useful in a lot of jobs as well as for active citizens. Keep a record of your Study Group leader's contact details in case you want a reference of the work you have done together.

Study Group Leader _____

Contact Phone Number _____

Date I started this course _____

Date I completed this course _____



Notes

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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This study circle handbook is for people who want to gain control of their lives and work with others to improve their local community. It will introduce you to the Constitution of South Africa and the Bill of Rights. It contains information about how government works. It also teaches basic skills and presents inspiring examples of how to build “people power” and deepen democracy.

Any small group of people wanting to feel more informed and empowered can use this handbook to learn together through a self-study course. It consists of twelve meetings each lasting about two hours. Groups using the handbook will be able to participate more actively in building a community for all who live in it.

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