

Troubleshooting coordination

Challenging situations and people

Coordinators maybe challenged by a person who, for instance:

1. Is unreasonable and intransigent, causing frequent deadlocks in decision-making
2. Rejects current coordination approaches and/or the coordinator
3. Is aggrieved at not receiving sufficient 'space', visibility and funding
4. Has been offended by another partner
5. Objects to a public statement related to the group
6. Disagrees with the strategy
7. Withdraws frequently from the coordination and contributes inadequately
8. Pushes others unduly or bullies them or is seriously rude or ungracious with others
9. Dominates discussions, without solid inputs
10. Is incoherent and a particularly bad communicator
11. Is generally destructive to the coordination effort

A trouble-shooting checklist

Possible responses to these and other such challenges:

1. Use standard facilitation techniques
2. Invoke power-brokers or peers (donors, etc. who may be able to influence)
3. Nominate a small group to resolve the issue
4. Confront the person openly and publically, to resolve the issue once and for all (an extreme and risky approach, but which may be effective)
5. Handle the problem privately
6. Make a sub-group to resolve the issue
7. Call on others with influence
8. Go to arbitration
9. Seek mediation
10. Take a cooling off period – postpone the decision
11. Co-opt critics into processes whereby they have to contribute to solutions

Facilitating a reconciliation process

A frequently used method for reconciling positions and addressing differences and tensions in a group is to:

- a. Get agreement through, for example, one-to-one discussions, that a reconciliation effort should be made
- b. Similarly, get agreement on the ground rules for the process – to listen, propose solutions, respect the other’s right to express opinions, etc.
- c. Convene the group
- d. Agree shared objectives for the group (e.g. to protect and assist refugees)
- e. Conduct a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the group regarding its effectiveness in reaching those objectives
- f. Identify targets and actions for the group based on each of the conclusions emanating from the above
- g. Agree on how the group will operate together to address these targets and actions, etc.
- h. If appropriate, get all to overtly ratify and commit to this approach (a covenant)

Mitigation and Prevention

The risk of such people and situations emerging can be reduced through:

1. Appropriately designed and agreed group rules, SOPS and TORs, especially from the beginning of the process. These should include procedures for arbitration, mediation
2. Good communication skills
3. Regular Quality Assessment consultations
4. Networking – regular one-to-one exchanges
5. Strong leadership skills
6. Continual teambuilding activities – joint professional and recreational activities, etc.
