

## **Facilitating Collective Decision-Making**

*Task 1:* How might a coordinator manage the following situations?

*Task 2:* How might a coordinator mitigate or prevent such situations or behaviour in the first place?

### **The Difficult Group**

You co-lead a working group and one of your responsibilities is to chair the bi-weekly meetings. The group is pretty big, with attendance averaging 25 people. Participants represent a wider mix than most coordinators prefer. The NGOs send people who are too senior, while the UN sends people who are too junior. One UN agency is represented by at least five people every time. An NGO appears to have nobody who can communicate. Your co-lead happily allows you to chair but insists on “summarizing” each issue. One group member contributes little but complains about everything. One is capable but shy, another effective but rude. One is skeptical, one is bored and one dominates discussions while remaining completely lost. In private, some group members express frustration with what they regard as inflexible, untrustworthy and domineering counterparts. They point to behaviour that borders on reckless bullying. It would be a miracle if anyone could chair these meetings effectively. Nevertheless, that is what you need to do.

### **It's Planning Time**

It's RRP time again and chaos reigns. The Steering Committee has revised guidance more times than anyone cares to count. Nobody can agree on what “needs-based” really means. The NGOs think the UN is arrogant and inflexible. The UN thinks the NGOs are naive and impractical. Everyone thinks UNHCR “pre-cooks” issues to their benefit. Rumours of donor fatigue abound. As planning gets serious and deadlines loom, overt competition bordering on conflict has emerged among partners. The working group needs to submit one plan but all issues seem polarized. Deadlock is the new norm. To make matters worse, at least once a partner's headquarters contradicted commitments made by cooperative local representatives. The headquarters aggressively pushes an agenda that favors its public image and fundraising interests. This makes other group members question their own engagement in, and commitment to, the planning process. As sector lead, you need to get consensus from the group on its RRP strategy submission, a prospect that keeps you up at night.