Staff Workshop on Political, Economic, and Social Exclusion

Refugee Law Project

July 2-10, 2008
Purpose of the Report

- This report seeks to summarize activities, discussions, and themes surfaced during the workshop.
- It is written for the benefit of the RLP staff, and for other organizations that might be interested in holding a similar workshop.
Held at the Namirembe Guest House in Kampala, Uganda

RLP staff were split into 2 groups. The 3-day workshop was held twice with a final half-day for reflection and evaluation with the whole staff together.

The workshop was facilitated by Niki Kandirikirira and RLP Director Chris Dolan.
About the facilitator…

Niki Kandirikirira, Engender Executive Director, has 24 years experience in organisational, programme and project development, management and monitoring and evaluation internationally and in the UK. In Africa and Scotland she has worked with people to explore, articulate and address the causes, effects and intersections between gender; race; ethnicity; sexual orientation; gender identity; childhood, youth and identity; masculinities; gender violence; poverty; and mental health and wellbeing. The trade mark of Niki’s programming is transformation through a fusion of participatory research, participatory analysis and the arts that allows the authenticity of people’s voices to impact on policy, practice and attitudes and engenders change.
Day 1

Examining Exclusion from a Personal Perspective
Activity 1
Introductions & Labels
Activity Description

- Participants shared the first words that came to mind on the following themes: sex, status, values, location, race, and ethnicity.
- Then, they selected one word for each theme that “applies to them”. Participants then introduced themselves to the group using only the labels.
Response Examples

- **Sex:** gender, chicks, dudes, sir, madame, sis, bro, boy, girl, papa, mama, babes
- **Status:** loaded, chief, broke, married, HIV+, employed, professor, professional
- **Values:** family, religious, freedom, respectful, humble, generous, prudent
- **Location:** With friends, abroad, downtown, ghetto, at work, Kampala, comfort zone
- **Race:** black, African, Ugandan, caucasian, mixed, northerners, white, coconut, southerners
- **Ethnicity:** Tutsi, Bantu, Nilotic, Westerner, Arab, Acholi, Kakwa, Hamite, Londoner, American, Zulu, !Xhosa
After introducing themselves according to their labels, participants discussed how they felt about the process:

- One word and six attributes is not enough
- It was difficult to decide what to leave out
- It made everyone appear more similar than they really are because of the limited choices
- We do this type of labeling to people we meet all the time without realizing it
- Less powerful people are particularly vulnerable to labeling since they’re less able to prove the labels wrong
Activity 2
Getting it right
Activity Description

- This activity gave participants a chance to introduce themselves in a more meaningful way.
- Participants were asked to share with the group “what you see as your role in the world”, “what they bring to this conversation”, and “something that outrages you”.
Role in the world: social democrat, listener, the best I can, logistician, provider, advocate

Bring: change, ideas, an open mind, hope, my experiences, teaching skills

What outrages me: unserious people, failure to achieve, those who don’t except change, senses of entitlement, dishonesty, structural inequality, corruption, laziness
Activity 3

Where do you come from?
Activity Description

- Participants were broken up into small groups of 4-5 people and asked to discuss the following questions:
  - Where do you come from (location, family background, education)?
  - Where do you feel comfortable now?
  - How? Why? Are there contradictions between the two?

- Each group then presented the factors that led to these feelings, and the similarities seen between the various responses
Factors that lead to change

Factors:

- Social & global exposure to different ways of living
- Moving out of the village has caused cultural changes
- Secondary and tertiary education
- Having a team or community that you can trust
- Various institutions that have influence
Similarities between stories

- Doing similar type of work now
- Come from similar types of family backgrounds and social classes
- Education was the key difference
- Currently facing economic challenges
Discussion Highlights

- After the group presentations, participants held a discussion about the experience of moving from village life to a more urban and professional life.

- Points were made about how family back home view you with more status now, or about how you can be ridiculed for associating more with whites. A key finding was that we all struggle with our identities as we experience new things.
Activity 4
Setting Expectations
Activity Description

- Participants were given two post-it notes and asked to anonymously write two expectations they have for the workshop (i.e. what they hope to get out of it)
- Post-it notes were then posted on the wall and read aloud by the facilitator. The facilitator clustered similar responses into a set of common themes
Out of this workshop, we hope to:

- Improve staff relations
- Learn personal approaches for avoiding social exclusion
- Learn tools for teaching facilitation
- Managing both personal and systemic exclusion
- Understand different models for dealing with social exclusion
Activity 5
Power in the room
Activity Description

- Participants were broken up into small groups and asked to identify ways that social, political, and economic exclusion might manifest themselves within this group.
- Groups then presented ideas for preventing this exclusion from taking place.
Ways exclusion could happen

- Past workshop experience
- Educational background
- Religious beliefs
- Ugandans vs. foreigners
- Staff vs. students and volunteers
- Social networks among staff
- Between departments
- Cultural differences
- Tribalism between staff members
- Marital status and age
Strategies for avoiding exclusion

- Develop an organizational policy states forms of exclusion that are not allowed
- Have institutional frameworks that check power of the boss and facilitator
- Open attitude towards those who are different
- Respect boundaries and areas of disagreement
- Equal talking time for all participants
- Ensure confidentiality and safe space for sharing
- Have different people work together on activities
- Use a language that is commonly understood
Day 2

Examining Exclusion from a Social Perspective
Activity 1
Experiences of Exclusion
The facilitator asked participants to share stories about their experiences being both victims and perpetrators of discrimination. Groups then presented the feelings and reactions that resulted from these experiences.
Feelings of exclusion

- anger, frustration, dejection, isolation, indifference, humiliation, bitterness, disappointment, loneliness, hurt (emotionally and physically), cheated, cheapened, insecure, powerless, stereotyped, manipulated, unloved, vulnerable, trapped, marginalized, abandoned, sad, weak, isolated, aware of what the world is really like
Reactions to exclusion

- Work hard to prove people wrong
- React violently and seek vengeance
- Demand an apology and forgiveness
- Avoid those who exclude you
- Avoid those who exclude you
- Hope and pray that things will change
- Don’t take what you have for granted
- Evaluate the causes behind assumptions
- Develop a new value system of your own based on equality
Activity 2
Starting afresh
Activity Description

- Participants were broken up into small groups and given a sheet with 20 characters described using only a few words such as a “pregnant teacher” and a “South African doctor”
- Groups were asked to pick the 12 characters they would want to build a new society on a deserted island
- After groups presented their picks, the facilitator revealed that many of the assumptions groups made about the characters were not correct. For example, the doctor was actually a theologian and didn’t have medical experience and the teacher actually would have an abortion before coming the island
- The activity illustrated how easy it is for groups to make assumptions about people
Activity 3
The SEPE Model

Equal Participation
- encouragement
- self-reflection
ISMS: Social, Political, and Economic Exclusion

- Power relationships have been built over a long period of time.
- Economic exploitation is systematic.
- Many problems are a consequence of unbroken power by powerful groups over less powerful ones: white power over black, men over women, etc.
- It has entered the culture of both groups: men/women, black/white, old young, heterosexual/LGBT.
- To some extent it has been internalized by all groups.
- It helps the oppressors to feel good about themselves.
- It is self-reinforcing if not fought against actively.
Social exclusions begins with the assumptions and stereotypes we all hold about different groups of people. Discrimination occurs when we connect those feelings with a power to act on them. It can be direct or indirect and be a product of inaction. Discrimination prevents people from accessing resources, opportunities, services, and their own self respect. When discrimination is connected to a broadly held ideology of superiority, it becomes social exclusion. This ideology is supported by values, education systems, the media, and legislation. It is rooted in history, culture, socio-political norms, and economic structures.
Activity 4
Applying the model, Part 1
Participants were asked to go back to their groups and use the SEPE model to:

- Identify *who* is socially excluded in society
- What powers are used by people to exclude others?
- What cushions or justifications do people use to explain their reasons for excluding others?
Who is excluded?

- Ethnic and racial minorities
- Disabled people
- Refugees and immigrants
- The elderly
- Orphaned children
- Victims of gender-based violence
- Victims of HIV and AIDS
- LGBT community
- The poor
- Ex-convicts and ex-combatants
- Different religious communities
What gives you the “power to act”?

- Using status or position
- Language
- History and traditions
- Ignorance of laws and norms
- Claims of “experts” and “research”
- Various elite institutions
- Educational systems
What justifications do people use?

- “They asked for it with their behavior”
- “I do feel guilty afterwards”
- Whenever one example supports a stereotype, they can say “I told you so”
- It makes someone feel more powerful or special than they are
- “I’m just doing my job”
Activity 5
Applying the model, Part 2
Activity Description

- Participants read a story about two South African domestic workers who organized a birthday party for a domestic worker friend at a local restaurant
- When setting up for the party, several racist men committed various acts to prevent the party from happening
- In small groups, participants ranked the story’s characters based on how racist their actions were
Discussion Themes

- The activity revealed that discrimination can be overt, covert, violent, and collusive.
- Different groups focused on different factors when ranking discrimination:
  - The motivations behind their action
  - The level of harm the action resulted in
  - The amount of power the person had in the situation
  - Those who fear to speak up and allow discrimination because of their inaction
Day 3
Developing the Capacity to Fight Exclusion
Activity 1
A ship to Mars
Activity Description

- The group was broken up in half. Group 1 was a kingdom on Planet Mars. Group 2 was on a rocket ship traveling to Mars after fleeing Planet Earth, which had been destroyed.
- Groups were given a few minutes alone to plan how they would handle meeting the other.
- The facilitator told Group 1 that they should treat Group 2 according to a set of negative stereotypes.
- Then, groups performed a role play skit of their first encounter at the Martian border.
- The activity was intended to emulate the way refugees are excluded when they go through the asylum process.
The refugee group experienced high degrees of confusion about the situation. They expected to be greeted warmly and to be able to explain themselves, but weren’t allowed to do so. They were asked to perform tasks that weren’t familiar to them.

The Martian group refused to trust the refugees, and subjected them to a rigorous inquisition process.

The two groups spoke a different language and weren’t able to communicate openly.
Activity Lessons

- Language is a key way that refugees are socially excluded.
- Refugee organizations base treatment of refugees around a set of pre-existing stereotypes.
- Refugee organizations often assume that refugees aren’t being truthful about their experiences.
- Confusing and complicated processes are used to create situations of powerlessness for refugees.
Activity 2
Fighting “isms”
Activity Description

- Small groups were assigned a particular “ism” and asked to examine the assumptions and stereotypes specific to that “ism”
- Then, groups were asked to devise strategies for challenging the “ism”
Sexism

Assumptions & Discrimination
- Women should stay in the kitchen, shouldn’t drive, shouldn’t earn their own living, etc.
- Men shouldn’t show their feelings, shouldn’t stay home to care for children

Solutions
- Need to have discussions using the Behavior Change Communication (BCC) strategy which focuses on changing people’s knowledge, attitudes and practices
Racism

Assumptions & Discrimination
- People of different races are less intelligent, violent, weak, dependent, diseased
- Can be direct discrimination through language, price, access to jobs or voting
- Can be indirect through the education system or inaction by people

Strategy
- Identify and challenge assumptions
- Personal commitment to guard against it
- Implement integration at social and political level
Mental Health-ism

Assumptions & Discrimination
- Worthless, crazy, go to the loony bin, menace to society, bad luck, embarrassment to family
- Based on a lack of knowledge about mental health
- Results in separation from society, lack of access, abuse, neglect

Strategies
- Promote sensitive language
- Enact equality-focused legislation
- Integrate mentally ill into mainstream institutions
- Create awareness through education
Hetero-sexism

- Assumptions & Discrimination
  - Media depicts LGBT people in negative light
  - Religious institutions exclude LGBT people
  - Legislation prohibits homosexual acts
  - Workplaces limit job access
  - Families and cultures exclude LGBT people

- Strategies
  - Include LGBT characters in media and educational materials
  - Enact laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation
  - Ensure that necessary medical services for LGBT community are available
Activity 3
Connecting the dots
Small groups were asked to illustrate how the various “isms” in society relate to each other.

Groups were given triangle-shaped pieces of construction paper, scissors, glue, and markers.

The goal was for participants to offer their opinions about which “isms” are most influence in society, and how they connect to one another.
“isms” are fueled by the law, religion, culture, and education systems.

It's possible that “isms” function in society as a loop...with one feeding into the other. This makes it hard to find the root cause when fighting against them.

Racism and sexism were commonly reported to be the two key “isms” to challenge.
Applying Lessons Learned to the Refugee Law Project
Final Reflections

- The workshop should have been compressed to two days instead of three
- Should spend more time on issues relevant to RLP specifically
- Provide more space for honest discussion about people’s opinions of controversial issues like homosexuality
- More discussion of balance between fighting exclusion and imposing values
Next steps for Legal Aid & Counseling

Discrimination to address
- Sexism amongst clients
- Tribalism among staff and clients
- Bias on urban refugees over those in camps

Action steps
- Help MSM clients open files
- Work on constitutional discrimination on the freedom of movement
- Defend women who are asked for sex in exchange for help by refugee organizations
Next Steps for Research & Advocacy

- Discrimination to address
  - More males than females in department
  - Most interns and volunteers are white
  - Research topics seem to be focused on northern Uganda
  - Avoiding making assumptions in research and advocacy
  - Refugees don’t receive results of the research

- Action steps
  - Non-discrimination policy on website
  - More advance warning of intern/volunteer arrivals for general staff
  - Allow female staff to discuss sensitive matters with female superiors if necessary
Next Steps for Education & Training

- **Discrimination to address**
  - Over-representation of men compared to women in classes
  - Address tribalism, sexism, and segregation amongst class participants

- **Action steps**
  - Conduct research as to why more women don’t come to classes
  - Develop rights-based curriculum that connects literacy to topics about social exclusion and human rights
Next Steps for RLP Administration

- Discrimination to address
  - RLP name discriminates against IDPs
  - Lack of medical policy excludes sick workers
  - Urban IDPs given more attention than those in camps
  - More male staff than female staff
  - 9-5 work hours discriminate against varied personal obligations

- Action Steps
  - Develop non-discrimination policy
  - Create flex-hours for starting late or leaving early
  - Provide equal attention to all departments