

# URBAN MANAGEMENT SERIES FOR SOUTHERN SUDAN

Tools for Strengthening Leadership and  
Governance

Volume 3:  
Technical Guidelines

UN HABITAT



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### Tools for Strengthening Leadership and Governance

### Volume 3: Technical Guidelines



## United Nations Human Settlements Programme Nairobi 2011



### Urban Management Series for Southern Sudan

Tools for Strengthening Leadership and Governance

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## FORWARD



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**Joan Clos**  
**Executive Director, UN-HABITAT**

## PREFACE

Welcome to the Urban Management Series for Southern Sudan. The Series is intended to give direction and guidance on a wide range of urban management topics, but without saying exactly what to do – so it is not a manual. It aims to point Urban Managers in the right direction, by describing the factors and issues that need to be considered, and suggesting possible solutions in line with basic principles.

In this manner it provides a consistent background for all Urban Managers to approach their work. But it is fundamental that each reader decides what initiatives and actions are appropriate given the local circumstances and conditions, rather than just following a set formula.

### How to use the Series

This is not a document that needs to be read from start to finish – it is to be used like a reference book or encyclopaedia. It is fine to dip into it to read sections that are of interest. As the reader becomes more familiar with the structure and content, s/he will discover new topics of interest. And as topics arise in work, s/he can search out the relevant sections, and discover new areas of interest.

It is a document that is to be kept close at hand, on the desk or an open shelf in the office – not locked away in a drawer or cupboard. Copies should also be distributed widely among professional and technical staff, and not restricted only to senior staff.

### Regular Updating

These volumes have been prepared in 2011 – but the situation in Southern Sudan is constantly changing. It follows that they will need to be reviewed regularly, and updated to reflect actual current urban management priorities as well as changing political, institutional and social circumstances.

### Overview of the Urban Management Series

This volume is one of a three-volume series produced by UNHABITAT for use by urban managers in Southern Sudan.

### Current titles of this series, at the time of publication, include:

Volume 1: Urban Management Guidelines

Volume 2: Leadership for Urban Management

Volume 3: Enhancing Training in Land, Housing and Town Planning

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to Urban Management Roles and Competencies

**Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other. - John F. Kennedy**

Welcome to Urban Management Series section on Leadership Competencies, adopted from The Local Elected Leadership (LEL) Series. It is intended to increase leadership knowledge and skills, and to improve the performance of all urban managers. In addition, trainers can use this section to discover new ways to carry out the many roles and responsibilities associated with urban management. The section covers the following 12 roles and competencies that can be used to enhance Urban Management Leadership.

The section includes

- 2 Roles and 10 Competencies
- Two additional roles – representation and leadership
- principles of good urban governance, gender, as premise
- Recognition of the role of trainer and training manager

Figure 1.1: Leadership Roles and Competencies



### Expected Outcomes

- Organisation Behavioural change
- Performance Improvement
- Individual
- Organisation
- Impact on Citizens

### Learning Objectives

- Increased knowledge and understanding
- New or improved skills, either technical or relational
- New or altered attitudes and values;
- Creative acts

### Impart knowledge, skills and attitudes required for better:

- civic leadership,
- positive interaction with their central government agencies,
- local authority staff
- NGOs/CBOs
- Sustainable growth and management within a good governance context.



## Chapter 2: The Representation Role and Competency

### Introduction

*If particular care and attention is not paid to the ladies we are determined to foment a rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any laws in which we have no voice, or representation.*

Abigail Adams, in a letter to her husband John Adams, 2nd President of the United States of America (March 31, 1776)

Abigail Adams was a feisty co-conspirator with her husband and others in the American colonies' fight for independence from the British in the latter half of the 18th century. Her husband, with a handful of other remarkable men of their time, was in Philadelphia drafting a declaration of independence.

In spite of her fervent plea on behalf of women at this critical time, women in the United States did not get the right to vote until the early part of the twentieth century.

In that same letter she said, "Do not put unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could." A rather tough but prophetic statement, when we think about it. She could have been speaking for most women around the world when it comes to issues of representation. As you read this chapter, consider how women are represented both within your

local government's political process and by your governing process. By the way, John Adams's career didn't suffer because his wife was a woman's rights activist. He became the second president of the newly constituted United States.

### A reflective opportunity

Better yet, stop for a moment and jot down some reflections about the state of representation in your local government. How representative is your elected body of the overall population of your local government in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, age, disability, economic status, geography, and other key considerations? Think about the various boards, commissions and other citizen bodies your elected council has created over the years to help you govern more effectively. How representative are they of various segments of your community? In the space below, record your thoughts about the under-representation that may exist on your elected body, and the official boards and commissions of citizens that serve your local government.

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Representation is not just the presence of individuals who represent various sub-populations within your local government jurisdiction. Representation is also a measure of how well those various sub-populations are represented in your elected body's decisions; the allocation of public resources; programmes and services delivered by your government; the ranks of your government's employees; and other ways you can measure representation performance. Unfortunately, representation as the underlying operating principle and expectation associated with local self governance is too often damaged by special interests, personal orientations to the world around us, and, on occasion, personal and collective greed.

In most democratically elected governments, there are legal mechanisms, such as periodic elections, legal recourse when there is blatant misrepresentation, and various kinds of political pressures to foster and assure representation of all the citizens.

The art of leadership is to act as a representative of a much larger constituency than those who voted for you.

Sir Peter Parker, Former Chairman of British Rail

### What do we mean by representation?

As delegates, elected representatives try to express as clearly as possible the opinions of their constituents and seek to be guided by them in making decisions.

As trustees, elected representatives act in the interests of the community as a whole and use their judgment to do what they think is best for their constituents, whether the constituents are in agreement or not. Representative and participatory democracy

You will, on occasion, hear the term "participatory democracy" as well as other terms used to define the governing process. Representative democracy is a form of democracy wherein voters choose representatives to act in their interests. It also assumes that these representatives are given enough authority to exercise initiative in the face of changing circumstances.

### Representation in action

Representation involves a number of specific kinds of activities, and they in turn help determine the approaches elected officials take toward this role responsibility.

1. The first activity is the development and enforcement of local government policies. For example, an elected official may take a strong delegate stand on economic development, favouring certain large business constituents while ignoring the concerns of environmentalists.
2. The second representation activity involves the allocation of public goods and services. For example, public contracts might be awarded to certain firms or groups within your community based on their support of certain elected officials. In these

cases, the elected officials are most likely acting in the role of delegate.

3. Representation often involves intervening in the local governing system to assist individuals or groups in their interactions with local government staff and service deliverers.
4. Finally, representation involves continuous dialogue with all constituents of your community. These may include special interest groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community based organisations, those parts of your community that lack the resources to mobilise their collective voices so they can be heard, religious and ethnic groups, your political party affiliations if they exist, private sector interests and resources, and, of course, the individual man and woman.

Carrying out the representation role and responsibilities involves all the key competencies in this section. Furthermore, all of the competencies in this section are designed to help urban leaders to carry out the two most important roles: representation and leadership.

**Representation is not a one-way process**  
**You can't clap with one hand only.**  
**Chinese proverb**

Representation suggests a one-way flow of information, services, goods, and whatever else the people's representatives in government can offer

their diverse communities. While this may be the case in some authoritarian forms of government, it's not the case within a well functioning, local self-governance process. The local government that works best is one that engages in a constant flow of information, ideas, and resources in all directions, not just from the governing elite to the governed masses.

In order to better understand the importance and vitality of representation built on partnerships between local elected officials, their operating organisations, and their constituent.

As we look at these principles from the perspective of representation, it is helpful to keep two important factors in mind.

1. The effectiveness of elected men and women in fulfilling the representation role and responsibilities is largely dependent on the will and capacity of the local government organisation and staff to respond to constituent needs and interests.
2. Constituents are a highly diversified and eclectic mix of individuals and institutions. Among them are ordinary people who are often unorganised and therefore under-represented; special interest groups that cut across the spectrum of private enterprises, religious and ethnic institutions, and non-governmental and community-based organisations; and other public institutions within a political jurisdiction and beyond.

**Good governance and representation**  
*We make the path by walking it.*  
**Motto of the Mondragon Cooperative in Spain**

Let's review some of the accepted principles of good governance from the perspective of representation.

Civic engagement, citizenship, and participation:

We are talking about the active involvement of individuals; clusters of citizens; other public institutions; private, non-governmental and community-based organisations; and coalitions of willing partners in the governing process. Respect for the law or the rule of law.

Representation that ignores this principle is perhaps the biggest threat to the integrity of your local government and its long-term vitality. We are talking about corruption from bribing key elected and appointed officials to "greasing the hand" of the building inspector. Corruption undermines the principle and practice of elected representation more than any other factor. When representation goes to the highest briber, democratic self-governance no longer exists. Representation is dependent on governing by the rule of law.

**Equity and inclusiveness:**

As a local elected official, you need to ask yourself and your colleagues these questions on a regular basis:

- Are we doing everything we can to assure that all citizens, rich and poor

are being treated fairly and equally?

- Are we in any way discriminating against any segment of our community in the policies we proclaim and the programmes and services we deliver?
- Does every citizen have full and unfettered access to the decision-making processes of our local government?

**Transparency and accountability:**

Representation thrives on transparency and accountability provided these values and strategies flow both ways in citizen-elected leadership relationships.

**Effectiveness and efficiency:**

- Effectiveness involves "doing the right things" as a local government, and doing the right things is central to representation. For example, if you have street children in your community and you have developed programmes to assure their safety, alternative educational opportunities, and reasonable well-being, your local government is being effective.
- Efficiency involves "doing things right." If your local government has sub-contracted some of these services out to a local NGO that specialises in working with children, and the costs are less, and the level of services better than your local government could provide through its own staff, then your local government is being efficient.

One other good governance principle

we haven't mentioned is something the UN-HABITAT Global Campaign on Urban Governance calls Subsidiarity. In operational terms, it means the devolution of authority and resources to the closest appropriate level consistent with efficiency and cost-effective delivery of services. From a management point of view, subsidiarity is delegation and a whole lot easier to spell and explain.

**Subsidiarity and the leadership role of representation.**

One of the most effective ways to declare the "representation" commitment is to equip the local government so it can function at the closest appropriate level of operation possible to all your citizens. Operationally, this translates into mechanisms like neighbourhood policing, localised social service programmes such as those that address violence against women and girls, and something called neighbourhood city halls.

From a governance perspective, it is setting in motion processes like participatory budgeting and planning. The city of Porto Alegre, Brazil, for example, involves more than 45,000 citizens in the development of its annual budget.

**Representation is not limited to elected officials**

*He who would do great things should not attempt them all alone.*  
**Seneca, Roman statesman**

Representation truths and consequences  
If you let me set the constraints, I'll let you make the decisions.

Herbert Simon, Contemporary American Management Theoretician

Many decades ago there was a popular television show in the United States called Truth or Consequences. It came to mind as we were struggling with this difficult subject and how best to explore its many challenges from your perspective. Responsible representation, as an elected official, is not a matter of truth or consequences, but truths and consequences. Let's see if we can explain this riddle of terms.

**The truths:**

- Many competing interests are represented: economic, social, religious, ethnic, gender and age related, and geographically located, to name some of the more important and interesting variables.
- These competing interests often find it difficult to see the big picture.
- There are not enough public resources to meet all the needs and interests of all citizens. Elected representatives must therefore decide how to allocate these scarce resources among the many competing interests.

**The consequences:**

- Whatever the decisions are, there will be constituents who will be unhappy.
- Many constituents will believe they are either underrepresented by the decisions or not represented at all.

- Decisions by representatives may need to take into consideration citizens you are not represented, or citizens of a community. For example, there may be the need for inter-jurisdictional decisions on such issues as water, traffic flow, or environmental protection.
- Decisions may require balancing short-term needs with long-term consequences, and relative costs with benefits to be realised.

As you can see, representation is not only a role and responsibility shared with many other individuals, groups, and institutions; it is also a role and responsibility that embodies many truths and consequences. Strategies and tactics to enhance representation

All of the competencies covered in this Volume encompass representation strategies and tactics. Communicating, facilitating, enabling, financing, negotiating, overseeing, institution building, financing, using your power, and making quality decisions all have direct links to representation. While we will provide more in-depth ideas and examples about how to strengthen and use each of these competencies in the competency sections, we want to end this discussion with some ideas on how to exercise representation responsibilities. Probably your best representation strategies involve building partnerships or working at the grassroots level to deliver public programmes and services. Partnerships can be almost as diverse as your imagination allows. They can be with

other local government units, private sector firms, non-governmental and community-based organisations, schools, religious institutions, combinations of these organised entities, or collections of like-minded citizens

### Partnerships

Partnerships come in many configurations as we just mentioned. In an in-depth look at over fifty successful community partnerships, researchers David Chrislip and Carl Larson identified these basic conditions that contributed to their successes.

#### 1. **Create broad-based involvement:**

Reach into every segment of the community you expect to serve as well as those who will be affected by decision making. Don't wait until you are ready for implementation to get them involved.

#### 2. **Get to know each other and do some social contracting:**

Discuss each others interests, what they want to achieve, what personal resources they bring to the new partnership, their values, hopes, and, yes, concerns. It is important to establish a level of trust before delving into the midst of the new challenge.

#### 3. **Create a credible, open process:**

This is where the good governance principles of openness and transparency come into play. By getting people from all aspects of the community involved, you send a strong message that your process

is open and that it will be credible. Backroom political deal-making has no place in this kind of process.

#### 4. **Promote visible support from acknowledged leaders in the community:**

These kinds of community-based ventures rarely start out with their leadership already identified. In fact, that is often a disadvantage in forging partnerships at the grassroots level of governance. Leaders who will be acknowledged rightfully by those they serve will evolve from the process. The process establishes a new level of representation.

#### 5. **Gain the support of established authorities:**

This means, in most cases, the local government's elected leadership. Remember, we are talking about grassroots ventures. While you may be instrumental in planting the seeds of contemplation, we hope that these initiatives grow out of the community.

Remember, representation goes in all directions, not just from the elected officials down to the masses. While this kind of collaborative-partnering venture is best initiated from the ground up, this doesn't deny the involvement of elected bodies.

Before leaving the representation strategy of promoting partnerships, we want to call your attention to a valuable contribution to this discussion by the authors of A Sourcebook for Municipal Capacity

Building in Public-Private Partnerships. While the authors are talking about large-scale partnerships, many of the principles identified as crucial to success are important to all kinds of partnerships, big and small. They include:

- Transparency: Keeping stakeholders informed and involved, curtailing corruption, and ensuring transparency.
- Accountability: Can you do what you said you would do?
- Legitimacy and legality: The rule of law even reaches down to community-based partnerships.
- Stakeholder participation: Know your stakeholders and keep them involved.
- Equity and inclusiveness: Does your partnership treat everyone equally? Is your process inclusive of all who can be involved who will contribute and benefit from your partnership?
- Empowerment: Will your partnership empower poor people, the disenfranchised, and the marginalized members of your community?

Representation really works when citizens can see it, feel its presence, and get directly involved in making it happen. Representation, as we said in the beginning, is probably the most difficult, challenging and important role for an elected official.



## 2: The Communicating Competency

### Introduction

*Nature has given us one tongue, but two ears, that we may hear from others*  
*Epictetus, Roman Philosopher*

In Chapter 2, we said representation is the elected men and women's most important role. While we don't want to be quite that dogmatic about which of the ten competencies is most important, we believe communicating is among the elected official's most important skills. Communicating is also at the heart of effective and responsible representation. Why communicating competencies are so important

David Carnevale in his book *Trustworthy Government* defines communication as "an attempt to reduce uncertainty and ambiguity in a situation through the exchange of information and knowledge." He goes on to say that trust develops hand-in-hand with shared and truthful communication. And, shared information is vital to performance.

### Barriers to effective communication

Communications is an integral part of fulfilling the good governance mandate of elected officials. Unfortunately, there are some potential barriers to contend with that can take the edge off communicating competencies, such as:

- There may be different goals, values, and views.
- There may be difference in experience

and failure to recognize these differences when communicating.

- One's status may intimidate those you are communicating with or even alienate them if they resent the authority you represent.
- Even the physical set-up where the communication takes place may be a barrier to communicating with understanding. For example, the formal layout of many formal governing council chambers can create both a physical and psychological barrier between elected officials and local citizens.

### A reflective opportunity

*I would walk twenty miles to listen to my worst enemy if I could learn something.*  
*Gottfried Leibniz, 17th Century Mathematician*

### The interpersonal dimension of communicating

We want to focus on those communicating concepts and strategies that are associated with further developing your personal competencies as a communicator. Most fall into the interpersonal or inter-group categories of communication techniques. We will start with what many believe to be the most important interpersonal communicating competency, active listening. This will be followed by concepts and techniques in giving and receiving feedback which are closely associated with listening skills; the art of asking questions; how to say "no" and not

suffer the consequences of disappointing others; and something called the ladder of inference.

*Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice.*  
*William Shakespeare, 16th Century English Poet*

### Active listening

It's through listening that you hear and understand what your constituents want or don't want, what they are happy or angry about, and why.

Listening actively is a powerful leadership and governance tool.

We're not certain where the term "active listening" originated, but it is widely used to describe a process of communication designed to optimize the meaning and clarity of what another person is saying. The challenge is to work actively to hear as clearly as possible what is being said and to assure that what is being heard is what the other person is trying to say. In other words, active listening also involves reflecting back to the speaker assurances that what is being said is being heard. Before we talk about how to listen actively, let's look at why it's so easy not to hear what the other person is saying.

### What barriers do you use?

Before hearing what the experts have to say about listening roadblocks, take a moment and list the three or four most important reasons why you don't always listen to what others are saying.

1. ....
2. ....
3. ....
4. ....

The following descriptions identify barriers to effective listening.

- We're too busy thinking about other things. Sound familiar?
- We're distracted by some emotional word or phrase being used. Raise taxes!
- We disagree with what the other person is saying. So, we immediately switch our attention to figuring out what we will say in rebuttal. We suspect this is very common in those elected bodies where there are political divisions.
- We're listening for flaws in what the other person is saying. In some cultures our response to these flaws is known as "I gotcha."
- We want to express our own thoughts and views so we look for a way to intervene in the conversation as quickly as possible.
- We don't like the other man or woman for whatever reason. Prejudice steps into the conversation and effectively blocks what is being said.
- We assume that we won't understand so why listen. The city engineer is waxing poetically about some new complicated, scientific process to turn solid waste into building materials.
- We're just not interested. We're thinking, "That's the responsibility of the public health committee."



## Giving and receiving feedback

*Knowledge that is not used is abused.*  
*Cree proverb*

Verbal feedback has been identified in many cultures as an important communicating and learning competency. It is a process designed to bring information about a situation from someone who has access to it to the attention of someone who does not. The intent is to increase that person's understanding or awareness of the situation and thereby improve her capacity to perform more effectively. On the other hand, feedback has a directness about it that may be offensive in some cultures. Given this, we suggest you run this through your cultural filter and then ask yourself if it might be a positive addition to the ways you communicate as an elected official.

### Giving feedback:

Giving feedback under the right circumstances can have many individual and organisation benefits. In the scenarios described above, appropriate feedback to those involved could support many objectives of the local governments involved. Feedback is designed to address behaviours that are not supportive and should be modified in some way. Feedback given early enough might solve a problem before it becomes a crisis event. When used regularly, feedback can help to build healthy and trusting relationships among people as they become more aware of where they stand with each other.

Feedback is most effective when it meets the following criteria.

- Make it specific. Being clear about the information to be conveyed makes it easier for the other person to understand it and act on it. Vague generalities are not helpful.
- Be direct. Deliver the feedback yourself. No one wants to get the news via a third party, particularly if it is personal and not favourable.
- Be timely. Get the feedback to someone while there is still time to do something about it.
- Be descriptive, not evaluative. Name the behaviour and its consequences for the person and others without attacking or ridiculing the person receiving the feedback.
- Check for a response. Be sure the message has been received and is understood.
- Don't overlook the need for positive feedback. If you operate on the assumption that no news is good news, your silence may be conveying the message that "you don't care." Positive feedback is just as important as commenting on areas of needed improvement.

**Receiving feedback:** If you are on the other end of the feedback, the receiving end, there are some things for you to keep in mind:

- Don't become defensive. While it may be hard to avoid defensiveness, particularly when the message is unfavourable, don't be so busy putting up defences, such as the "yes,

but ..." routine, that the value of the feedback gets lost.

- Take it for what it's worth. Not everyone who gives feedback is skilled at doing it. So, relevant to you and discard what is not.
- Question the feedback. Don't hesitate to ask clarifying questions when receiving feedback and give the recipient the same opportunity if you are the one giving feedback.

*He who asks a question does not err easily.*  
*Mexican proverb*

### How to ask questions

There are skills involved in asking questions that make a difference. And making a strategic questions can open the door to discovery. They invite others to shift direction, to take into consideration new information, ideas, and possibilities. The why and how of asking questions We have already discussed the use of questions as part of your active listening skills.

**Here's more about the why and how of asking questions.**

### To learn:

Urban leaders are constantly being confronted with issues they aren't familiar with and presented with staff reports and recommendations that are often incomplete or include ambiguities. To learn more in these situations ask open-ended questions, the kind that avoid one-word responses like "yes" or "no".

### To get agreement:

There are many occasions in official discussions when it's time to see if there is agreement lurking in the shadows of the verbal exchanges taking place. "Does everyone agree that we....?"

### To express interest:

Use questions to show your interest and to get feedback.

### To probe:

Probing questions are designed to dig deeper into complex issues under consideration and requiring resolution. "Could you tell us more about why the crime rate in that part of the city keeps climbing?"

### To clarify:

Ask for clarification when confused about some aspect of an issue.

### To elaborate:

These are the questions that expand the exploration of options. "What would happen if we expanded our community policing program into the barrio just beyond our city boundary?"

To sort out what's relevant and what's not: Sound like a good idea? "We appreciate the wealth of information you have provided, but what are the three most important reasons why we should support your NGO?"

### To explore:

This is another reason to ask those hypothetical questions. "What is the worse thing that adopted the neighbourhood

budget sessions the finance director is recommending?"

**To provoke:**

This is not to make someone angry with you but to challenge conventional wisdom, to give free rein to doubt and scepticism. "Why do we keep insisting that citizens are not prepared to pay higher taxes?"

**To dream:**

One of the greatest political speeches of all times was Martin Luther King's "I have a dream". While it wasn't quite a series of questions to American citizens about racial discrimination, it provoked a lot of "what if's," and they are the questions that move us beyond where we are. Between active listening and strategic questions you have some of the most powerful tools available as an elected official.

**The important thing is never to stop questioning.**

*Albert Einstein, 20th Century American Scientist*

**A reflective opportunity**

Stop and think about your favourite questions i.e., "What would you do?" "Do you have any recommendations?" "What has been your experience?" Jot them down - and then, list one or two strategic-type questions you believe you need to begin asking more frequently at meetings with other urban leaders.

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**How to say "No"**

*But when the Town Crier cried, 'O yes! the people cried 'O No!'*

*Richard Barham, 19th Century British theologian, Misadventures at Margate*

Saying "No," may be one of the urban leaders' most difficult communicating tasks.

Three basic ways to say no are:

1. The unassertive "No." This is the no that is surrounded by weak excuses and rationalisations. It's the "no but...." routine.
2. The aggressive "No." This no is often delivered with an unhealthy dose of contempt, wrapped in personal attacks on the person(s) at the other end of the communication. It's as though you can hear the unspoken qualifiers like "you idiot."
3. The assertive "No." This response is simple and direct. "No, we won't be able to start a day-care centre in your community this year."

Strategies for saying "No" assertively are:

- Take time to think it over.
- Use whatever body language is appropriately in your culture to underline your "No". This could be a firm, but not aggressive voice, a shaking of the head, or other

appropriate gestures.

- Remember, "No" is an honourable and legitimate response, even for urban leaders .
- Start your response with "No." It's easier to keep the commitment and not to fall into any number of unassertive
- "No" traps if you start with just plain "No."

**My unhappiness was the unhappiness of a person who could not say no.**

*Tsushima Shuji, Japanese Author , From No Longer Human*

**The art and craft of dialogue**

The final tool to put a capstone on your communicating competencies is dialogue, what William Isaacs calls the fire of conversation. You need to engage in a widely shared inquiry, a way of thinking and reflecting together that lifts you, your colleagues, and other key stakeholders above the fray so you can gain new insights and discover new solutions. This shared inquiry is called a dialogue.

**The potential power of dialogue**

The power of dialogue is best described by example. William Isaacs in his book Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together describes a situation where sustained dialogue between two individuals produced phenomenal results for their country. President de Klerk of South Africa and Nelson Mandela met privately over a number of years while Mandela was still in prison. They were not meeting to negotiate Mandela's release or to solve

existing problems of that time. Rather they met to dialogue about how to create a shared future vision. The success that South Africa experienced in its peaceful transition to a full democratic society with equality for all is due in no small measure to these two men and their on-going dialogue about a new future for the country.

The process of dialogue is not for every situation although it can be an important communicating competency to add to your repertoire.

Daniel Yankelovich has spent more than four decades monitoring opinions and trends in local governments. Over time he came to value dialogue as a successful relationship building process that when conducted effectively, can lead to mutual understanding and respect. He has identified three distinct features that define successful dialogues.

These features are:

**1. Equality and the absence of coercive influences:**

All parties to the dialogue are treated as equals and there is no coercion of any kind.

**2. Listening with empathy:**

Again we see the value of active listening.

Empathy, according to Yankelovich, is the ability to think someone else's thoughts and feel someone else's feelings. In the hypothetical case of holding a dialogue with the leaders of community that has resorted to violence, would you be able to appreciate the circumstances that drove

them to using violence, and to understand their level of frustration in being ignored by other public leaders in the past.

**3. Bringing assumptions out in the open:** Be open about your assumptions and suspend judgement.

In addition to these three guiding principles and strategies that form the foundation for successful dialogues, Yankelovich has observed other qualities that aid the process.

Err on the side of including those who disagree.

- Initiate dialogue through a gesture of empathy.
- Check to assure that the three criteria we have just mentioned are in place and working.
- Minimize mistrust by getting into the heart of why you decided to hold the dialogue.
- Separate the acts of dialogue and decision-making.
- Use specific experiences to discuss general issues.
- Get assumptions on the table and clarify them.
- Focus on conflicts in values, not people.
- Expose the old scripts that have destroyed trust to a reality check. In other words, look at the assumptions, values, and norms that have created the circumstances that make dialogue imperative.

**Surveys:** another way to communicate with the community

Most local governments do not use citizen surveys as a way of “listening” to those in the depth information about:

- (a) the quality of services the local government is providing;
- (b) reasons why local citizens may not like certain services or why they may not be using certain programmes or services;
- (c) factual information that may be needed to design new projects or alter on-going ones;
- (d) ways to help local citizens become more aware of programmes and services; and
- (e) assessing demand for new services.

While there are various types of surveys you can conduct (telephone, mailed questionnaires and interviews), the interview makes the most sense, particularly to reach people in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods. (It is these parts of the community that often have the greatest difficulty being heard by those in “city hall.”)



### 3. The Facilitating Competency

#### Introduction

*If you have one good idea, people will lend you twenty.*

*Marie van Ebner-Eschenbach*

Roger Schwartz in *The Skilled Facilitator* says all kinds of groups can improve the way they work together by using facilitating skills. In its truest form, facilitating is a process where a person, who is acceptable to all the members of the group, substantively neutral and has no decision-making authority, intervenes to help the group improve the way it identifies and solves problems and makes decisions.<sup>30</sup> He goes on to say that facilitating can be divided into two types:

**1. Basic facilitation:** the facilitator helps a group work more effectively on a specific issue or problem, and the group remains dependent on the facilitator for future assistance.

**2. Developmental facilitation:** the facilitator helps the group work more effectively on a specific issue or problem and coaches them on how to provide their own facilitating skills to work on future issues and problems. This approach involves learning-by-doing. Group members learn facilitator skills so they can apply them to future group endeavours without the need for external assistance. In this chapter we assume elected leaders will perform as developmental facilitators whenever it is appropriate. You will not only help groups be more effective when you are working with them but provide them with the values and skills to work more effectively on their own.



by each other. The facilitator can play an important role in helping groups maintain a healthy balance between their task and relationship needs. The following are some of the key task and relationship characteristics that are important to effective group performance.

Relationship-related characteristics: Groups are effective when their members:

- Get acquainted with each other if they haven't worked together before.
- Agree on the group's purpose for working together;
- Collaborate on group tasks and responsibilities;
- Openly share information, ideas, and feedback;
- Support one another;
- Confront issues with care and courage;
- Respond constructively to feedback from one another; and
- Encourage everyone to contribute.

Task-related characteristics: The group's task effectiveness is enhanced when they:

- Are clear about what they want to achieve, in other words, why they have convened their collective resources;
- Clarify their individual roles and responsibilities as members of the group;
- Determine the need for external support and resources;
- Agree on how they will work

together;

- Establish some ground rules including such concerns as making decisions, staying on track; disagreeing openly, and sharing all relevant information;
- Prepare an agenda;
- Record accurately what happened during the meeting; and
- Manage their time in relation to the tasks to be performed.

*Music, to create harmony, must investigate discord.*  
*Plutarch, First Century Greek Moralist*

### Managing conflict

Conflict is one of those things that most of us avoid if we can. The problem is, the conflict, and whatever is causing it, usually doesn't go away. It just sits there and simmers - and simmers. Avoiding conflict can and does create a lot of problems in many organizations. We also know that different cultures deal with conflict differently, and what we have to say is from a Western management bias. Given this, we urge you to look at this aspect of using your facilitating competency based on your own experience and cultural norms.

### Know the source

Conflict can develop when there are differences in:

- Facts and perceptions (our communicated view of reality)
- Preferred goals and outcomes (how things ought to be, not how they currently are)
- Ways, or methods, for achieving those

goals

- Values (our fundamental beliefs)

Differences over facts and perceptions are usually easier to resolve than differences in goals, outcomes, and the methods used to achieve these results. Values are the most difficult differences to resolve or even to manage with any degree of long-term success.

### Conflict strategies

Different people have different ways of dealing with conflict. Many years ago, Kenneth Thomas, who is considered one of the leading experts on conflict management, identified five basic strategies individuals and groups employ when faced with conflict. These approaches are based on two primary dimensions of behaviour, "assertiveness," (the extent to which we attempt to satisfy our own concerns) and "co-operation," (the extent to which we attempt to satisfy the other person's concerns). Using a two dimensional model with high and low values on these two behaviours, he has defined five specific methods of dealing with conflict.

1. Avoidance: (unassertive and uncooperative) Individuals who adopt an avoidance approach to conflict don't pursue their own interests and concerns or those of their adversaries. They simply avoid conflict by such tactics as not showing up for the meeting or by postponing the issue until some undetermined future date.
2. Accommodation: (unassertive and cooperative) Those who adopt this

style neglect their own interests to satisfy the concerns of the other party. Tactics include such contrasting approaches as: yielding to the other side's point of view and selfless generosity.

3. Competition: (assertive and uncooperative) This style is the opposite of accommodation. It's a power-motivated strategy designed to win at any cost when confronted with a conflicting situation.
4. Collaboration: (assertive and cooperative) And, the opposite of avoidance. Collaboration, at its best, seeks to find win-win solutions to conflict. This involves solutions that satisfy the needs and concerns of both parties. Such a strategy involves an understanding of why the conflict exists and finding solutions that eliminate, or at least minimize, competition for resources.
5. Compromise: (somewhat assertive and cooperative) Parties tend to compromise when they are looking for fast, mutually acceptable solutions that partially satisfy both parties. Strategies include finding a middle ground everyone can live with and splitting the differences that exist between the conflicted bodies.

According to Thomas, there are no universal "right answers" when it comes to dealing with conflict. All five modes of behaviour are useful. It depends on the situation. It is believed that each of us tends to have a dominant style for dealing with conflict. For example, some

of us might avoid conflict at all cost while others may have a tendency to be competitive in conflict situations. Then again, we might resort to compromise or one of the other styles suggested by the Thomas model.

### Explore the difference

If you are going to help manage conflict, the best place to begin is with a better understanding of the issues behind the conflict. This means digging beneath the surface indicators of what might be causing the conflict. Facts are the easiest to confirm and reconcile. Perceptions are more difficult. They have a tendency to become distorted, partly because we have the tendency to attribute motives to other people's actions and "see" things that will confirm our own position.

Here are some things you can do to help facilitate the resolution of a conflict between two individuals or groups.

1. Help the individuals or groups see the conflict from the others' point of view. Here is a situation when "active listening" skills can be used.
2. Look for situations where the conflicting parties have made assumptions about the intentions of others based on their own fears. Often we assume the worst in conflict situations, and these fears drive us to entrenched positions.
3. Move the warring parties away from attacking each other and placing blame. When this happens, we usually become defensive, counter attack, and create more distortions.

4. Help them create additional options. Often the only alternatives they have available are the two over which they are at odds.
5. Let them vent their emotions. Sometimes the emotions are more important than the facts. By getting them out, the parties often are able to unload feelings that inhibit constructive discussion.
6. Help them find win-win solutions. Not everyone wins in the resolution of conflict, but it is surprising how many times conflicts can be resolved with both sides coming out as winners. This is where your ability to listen and help those in conflict generate new options can be invaluable.

Your best resources, in helping others resolve their differences are: (a) the raw materials (knowledge and emotions) they bring to the situation, and (b) your patience and empathy in helping the adversaries refine their raw materials into an agreement they can both live with.

### Gender issues in conflict resolution

The field of Conflict Resolution has traditionally not taken much notice of gender issues in either theory or practice. 'Gender' is a term used to describe the different socially-constructed roles usually, but not always, assigned to people based on their sex - their biological characteristics. Gender issues include questions related to both men and women, but gender is often seen to imply a focus on women because of a concern in the field with inequality and empowerment of socially disadvantaged

people - often women.

Local governments' recognition of women's role in conflict resolution can assist in lowering the level of conflict, and to identify and sustain avenues for the continual provision of municipal services. For example, as women are responsible for sustaining households, have children who are victims or agents of conflict, and as many women are active in community affairs, they have an interest in peace and the regular functioning of municipal services.

To reiterate, conflict is a potentially valuable resource in most organizations. Your facilitating competencies can help to resolve these conflicts and differences. If you haven't already been introduced to the UN-HABITAT, FPDL and LGI series entitled Building Bridges between Citizens and Local Governments through Managing Conflict and Differences we urge you to check out the UN-HABITAT website for access to them. [www.unhabitat.org](http://www.unhabitat.org)

*The stitch is lost unless the thread is knotted.*  
*Italian proverb*

### Facilitating and mediating

In many ways, the processes of facilitating and mediating are similar. Both are efforts to improve the quality of thinking and acting among the parties involved and to help them reach decisions acceptable to all members. In most situations these two processes also involve neutral third party interventions. In other words, the

facilitator or mediator is on the outside looking in, not involved directly in decision making.

The major difference between these two processes is the issue of conflict. Mediation assumes the parties involved are in conflict. They haven't been able to resolve their differences and have sought the services of a mediator. In the case of facilitation, there may be conflict within the group but it isn't the reason why the group agreed to have someone help facilitate their interactions. The focus in facilitated sessions is primarily on making better decisions and solving problems.

We provided a definition of facilitation earlier in this discussion. You might want to compare it with the following definition of mediation. According to Carl Moore, mediation is the intervention into a dispute or negotiation by an acceptable, impartial, and neutral third party who has no authoritative decision-making power to assist disputing parties in voluntarily reaching their own mutually acceptable settlement of issues in dispute.

*If we keep following the idea of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, we will end up with an eyeless and toothless world.*

*Gandhi, 20th Century Indian National Leader*

We want to encourage you to take advantage of the joint publication by UN-HABITAT and other interested parties called Building Bridges between Citizens and Local Governments through



Managing Conflicts and Differences. It provides a much more thorough discussion of various ways to manage conflict and differences. You can find it on the UN-HABITAT website.

### When is mediation appropriate?

There are some generally accepted conditions that make mediation an appropriate intervention.

Mediation is appropriate when:

- Strong emotions have muddled judgement.
- The parties know each other.
- There is no great disparity in the power relationship between parties.
- Maintaining the relationship between the parties is important.
- Those in conflict see the need to have a third party help them resolve their differences.
- There is a need for a quick decision.
- Lots of people are affected, e.g., a neighbourhood dispute.
- The parties involved want to avoid a costly, formal, public procedure like litigation.

There are also some conditions that make mediation an inappropriate intervention. These may be even more important to consider!

### Don't consider mediation when:

- There are indications that one party intends to use the mediation to further enflame the conflict or to

achieve an ulterior motive.

- It is evident in preliminary discussions that the parties are not willing to listen to each other.
- Parties are too disturbed to work toward a collaborative agreement.
- There is a power imbalance between the feuding parties that makes mutual decision making unlikely.
- Key persons or parties are unwilling to participate in the process.
- It is unlikely that any agreement that has been reached will be implemented.

These conditions suggest that the decision to mediate should be based on a clear understanding of the circumstances that exist between those in conflict.

### The "how-to" of mediation

There are many models of mediation to consider. We have summarized below a practical and commonly used approach to mediation.

#### Stage One: Pre-mediation planning

Once the parties agree to work with a mediator, help them to understand the process and trust both you and the process. This includes gaining a mutual understanding of how the process will work; understanding the guidelines of engagement such as confidentiality and who makes the decisions, considering logistics such as where the mediation will take place, and developing a rapport among the parties to the mediation. Planning should also include selection of

a venue that provides privacy and rooms for holding joint meetings with those in dispute as well as smaller rooms for meeting with them separately. Anything you can learn about what has created the disagreement or conflict will be important, not for making up your mind ahead of time but to help you understand the circumstances that have resulted in the dispute.

#### Stage Two: Beginning the mediation

This initial stage covers introductions (you can assume the warring parties know each other), ground rules you think are important, logistics such as the time you think it will take to reach an agreement and where to get a cup of coffee, and how the process works, i.e., the possibility that you might want to meet separately with the parties to explore options for resolution.

#### Stage Three: Defining the issues

This is also referred to by some as providing "uninterrupted time" for those in dispute to tell their side of the story. It will be important to help them understand the importance of listening to each other in as courteous manner as possible given the circumstances. It is advisable to ask the most agitated party to speak first. There are to be no interruptions or rebuttals during the time each person is speaking.

#### Stage Four: Exchange time

After the individual presentations, it's time to begin the dialogue to help all concerned better understand the nature of the conflict. This is the time to ask questions, explore assumptions behind

the conflict, and look for common ground. As mediator, you will want to control this session, make sure that each party to the conflict has an opportunity to contribute, and look for understanding and opportunities for resolution.

You may also want to hold separate meetings with the parties to the conflict if it looks like this might help. You might want to check out a person's concerns more thoroughly, perhaps confront unhelpful behaviour, or help them think through their options.

#### Stage Five: Generating options to resolve the dispute

At this point, you might want to summarize what you see as the issues to be resolved. List them on a blackboard or newsprint so they can be seen by both sides. Elicit options for resolving each issue, evaluate and refine them, and test for agreement on each. This is the stage where you can bring into use the tools in Chapter Five on Decision Making.

#### Stage Six: Get it in writing

This is the time to build the agreement with the disputing parties. Detail who will do what and when. Emphasize positive, doable, acceptable actions. Make sure the agreement is even-handed and not conditional. Have all parties sign copies of the agreement. Close the session.

Mediation is an important tool for elected men and women to have in their tool box. And, there are many ways to mediate disputes. While the literature on conflict resolution is rich in options, don't be

discouraged. Most of us have developed skills over time in helping those who are caught up in disputes and conflict. Rely on your experience. If the conflict is too explosive and deep-seated, you will probably want to call in professional mediators.

Otherwise, sharpen your own facilitating and mediating tools and let people know you are willing to help them resolve their differences.

*To think justly, we must understand what others mean; to know the value of our own thoughts, we must try their effect on other minds.*

*William Hazlitt, 19th Century English Essayist*

### Meetings, meetings, meetings

*Meetings are indispensable when you don't want to do anything.*

*John Kenneth Galbraith, 20th Century American Economist, Author, Diplomat*

You probably spend more time in meetings than almost any other thing you do as an urban leader. Given this reality, it's time to take on meetings as your next facilitating challenge. Before considering what you can do to make meetings more effective and obviously more efficient, let's spend a moment or two identifying some of the problems that plague meetings the world over.

- The goals and expectations are unclear.
- The meeting was scheduled to start

an hour ago.

- Nobody seems to be in charge.
- There's no agenda.
- The discussion drifts from one issue to another without bringing closure to anything.
- Everyone seems to be talking at once.
- You're always sitting where you can't see what's going on.
- Somebody always seems to dominate the discussion.
- You feel manipulated - like a "rubber stamp" - since you didn't know what the meeting was about.
- The person responsible for chairing the meeting is out of town. Unfortunately, she didn't tell anyone the meeting was to be cancelled.

In order to better manage meetings, here are some suggestions:

- Start the meeting on time even though some who have been invited aren't there. To do otherwise punishes the diligent and rewards the tardy. Rewarding tardiness encourages tardiness the next time you meet.
- If is a small enough group and many don't know each other, take time for introductions. If there are newcomers to an established group, make sure they are introduced and acknowledged.
- Review the meeting objectives and agenda, ask for comments, and make any appropriate changes.
- If there are rules, you might want to go

over them briefly. They could include showing respect for other people's opinions, providing opportunities for others to speak, something on giving appropriate feedback if it's that kind of meeting, timing refreshment breaks, etc.

- If you see the need for either a timekeeper or note taker, you might want to ask for volunteers or better yet have them identified in advance. If you have, introduce these individuals and their respective roles. Otherwise, someone might think they are secret agents.
- Stick to your agenda but don't be dogmatic about this if one of your agenda items enflames the audience either positively or otherwise.
- Create and maintain a productive climate. Encourage active listening by listening actively to others. Speak frankly. Encourage feedback. Don't dominate the meeting.
- Encourage participation and pay particular attention to people from communities who have been culturally or conventionally excluded from participation and decision making.
- Use the questioning techniques covered in the Communicating Chapter. Encourage others to question as well.
- Give and get clarification of vague and complicated statements.
- Protect minority and unpopular opinions.

- Keep participants on track when they start to stray or begin to use the meeting as their personal "soapbox."
- Reduce tensions when conflict between others looks like it could get out of hand.
- Keep a watchful eye on the group's body language. It will tell you much about their collective frustration, boredom, or need for a break.
- Provide breaks before this happens.
- Don't give up control of the meeting.
- Bring the meeting to a close like you promised in the beginning unless the majority of participants want to continue. But before you do, summarize what happened and any actions agreed upon; decide on future meetings of the group and tie down the dates and venue if possible, and thank them for their participation.

We end our discussion of meetings where we began; trying to make the most of what many of you must feel is an elected official affliction. In spite of the negative reputation that meetings have garnered over the centuries, they remain a vital part of governing. As we have demonstrated, they can be improved, they can be managed, and they can be productive. Meetings don't have to be places where you keep minutes and throw away hours.

We're all in this together. If we succeed, we all succeed. If we fail, we all fail.

## Teams and team building

- Teams consist of two or more individuals working together based on the assumption that their collective achievements equal more than the sum of what they could achieve by working alone. It's called synergy.
- Teams share a common purpose or goal that is clear to all members of the team. This is often referred to as focus.
- Teams coordinate their activities, and collaborate with each other to achieve their purpose and goals.
- Teams just don't happen. The individuals have to work hard to achieve the quality of synergy, focus, coordination, and collaboration that is recognized by each member and by those who observe their work that they are in fact a team.
- Teams develop and use individual and collective work habits and personal values that define and drive the quality of their contributions and work together. It's known as teamwork.

Understanding teams and how to develop teams so they can work more efficiently and effectively are also important when working with community-

## 4: The Using Power Competency

### Introduction

***Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.***  
***Lord Acton, (1834-1902) British statesman***

We've decided to start this essay with the Lord Acton quote because it may be the most frequently used statement to describe power. It would be dishonest to ignore power's decidedly bad reputation, particularly when it comes to governance. While power is essential to the political process, it scares many of us because it is so often misused by those in public office. In spite of these ominous signs, we believe that power is at the heart of your ability to lead as an elected official. It can also be one of your most respected competencies in the judgment of others, when used with principle and compassion.

The historian, James MacGregor Burns, helps provide the context for this discussion about the positive attributes of power. In his seminal book on leadership, Burns says, "We must see power - and leadership - not as things but as relationships and to analyze power in the context of human motives and physical constraints.

The arena of power is no longer the exclusive preserve of a power elite or an establishment or persons clothed with legitimacy. Power is ubiquitous; it permeates human relationships. It exists whether or not it is quested for. It is the

glory and the burden of most of humanity. Nearly all human beings can stand adversity, but, if you want to test their character, give them power.

Abe Lincoln, 16th President of the United States of America

### A reality check

Power dominates political and governance processes.

And it is the one competency that is abused most often by those who yield power.

For example, if an elected official: steals money from the public treasury,

- takes a bribe,
- bends the rules so only his friends can bid on a huge public contract,
- pressures local government staff to fix traffic tickets, or
- pays off the police to ignore a prostitution ring he operates in the city;

There would probably be little disagreement that these are all examples of misuse of political and position power. While you may argue about the seriousness of each example, we believe you would agree that they all represent the misuse of power and a violation of the public trust.

Now the good news: All these examples can be turned around by elected officials who use their many sources of power to serve the public good in principled and

courageous ways. In other words, using power cuts both ways. While power is often misused within local governments, those same sources of power can be directed to build strong, truly representative and responsive local governments. Before we look at how you can use power as an urban leader, we need to spend a few moments talking about those components that make up your personal power base.

### What is power?

James Lucas says power is a human force for achievement or obstruction that can be used individually or collectively for the constructive good, or the destruction, of other people and institutions. It is important to see power not as a commodity to be used but as a relationship to be honoured. Those relationships involve the use of a rich mix of power using strategies available to elected officials. We will explore those options in a moment but first, here's an opportunity to reflect on what has just been said.

***There is almost no troubled situation that cannot be improved by rearranging it to distribute power more equally.***

***Virginia Satir, 20th Century American Author***

***42 Lucas, James, Balance of Power, (New York: American Management Association, 1998) p.13.***

### The link between corruption and the culture of power

While the corruption of public institutions has been described in many ways, we want to talk about it in terms of the

misuse of various kinds of elected leadership power. Corruption can be fuelled by the misuse of your legitimate powers as elected representatives of the people, by the rewards that you can provide to your friends, by coercion through the misuse of the “powers” of your office, by manipulating information in less than transparent ways, and in your connections with those who connive with public officials to exploit the public trust for personal gain.

### Sources of power available to urban leaders

We have divided the various sources of potential power into three categories. They include your: legitimate power sources which come with the office of elected service; personal power sources which more often than not depend on others believing you possess them; and creative power sources which rely on your ability to combine resources and various other power sources to get things done.

### Legitimate power sources

Elected officials by virtue of their office have authority to act on behalf of their constituents. Authority is the legal framework within which they work to get things accomplished on behalf of the community. This legal mechanism is the system that gives the power to formulate and implement collective values. This authority to act, the basis to use legitimate power, can also be described in terms of two other types of power: reward power and coercive power. In other words, a body of elected officials has the right and ability to reward and punish others.

### 1. Reward Power.

The use of your legitimate Reward Power is initiated and implemented either individually or collectively by members of the elected body. Elected officials can reward constituents by doing favours, recognizing the efforts of others, helping them get access to various public facilities and services, and recommending individuals for appointments to various local government boards and commissions.

Collectively, elected bodies can use their legitimate powers to dole out all kinds of rewards: contracts, changes in land-use zoning that often result in instant financial gain to individuals and groups, official recognition to individuals and groups for all sorts of reasons, jobs and promotions to select individuals, building new schools and health centres in select neighbourhoods, and providing a myriad of services from garbage pickup to police protection. Reward powers are only constrained by the resources that can be garnered and an official’s imagination. It is also one of those power sources that is most susceptible to misuse.

### 2. Coercive Power.

Local government elected bodies through their institutional powers of authority can arrest individuals, impose fines and penalties, make legitimate decisions that are meant to harm certain parties i.e. location of public facilities, take away privileges, dismiss employees who aren’t associated with their political parties, charge fees designed to intimidate businesses they believe are undesirable,

and order police actions that are designed to target selected audiences. If you think legitimate power can be coercive, consider the potential power of using legitimate powers illegitimately. It’s not beyond the imagination of some unscrupulous elected officials.

### Personal power sources

The next four sources of power based on expertise, information and ideas, image, and the right contacts, are only available to use as power sources if other people believe you possess them. In other words, if you believe you are an expert in some area of specialization but no one else thinks you are, it is hardly a source of power to exploit.

In other words, these sources require a transactional relationship between you and others before they become empowering options you can employ to get things done.

### 3. Expertise Power.

Expertise can be individual or institutional. Elected bodies develop over time various kinds of expertise that give them power. An individual elected official, also has the opportunity to develop specialized expertise, or might be elected based on previous expertise. Physicians often run for office to use their medical expertise to bring about reforms or to fight for more health-related expenditures from the local government’s budget.

### 4. Information and Idea Power.

This power source is both individual and collective. Most elected officials run for

office on a platform of ideas and possible policy reforms. If they are elected based on these ideas, it demonstrates the power of ideas. Information is potentially powerful if it can be used to provide evidence for elected bodies to take certain actions.

Information can also be withheld which is a negative use of this source of power. The internet has become an enormous source of political power in some places based on its ability to get information to thousands of people simultaneously. While this has more direct application to larger units of government, it is an informational source that can also be tapped by local governments and elected men and women to increase their power bases.

### 5. Image Power.

Image power is largely in the eyes of the beholder but nevertheless a source of power to many elected officials. Officials who engender respect, obedience, and allegiance from their constituents can use this adoration to promote policies that might otherwise be difficult to adopt within a community.

### 6. Proximity power.

The right contacts and connections can make you more powerful. This could be an elected official who was a close friend of the country’s president or some other dignitary, who was married to a person who is a popular radio talk show host, or who has connections with a large ethnic community within your municipality that is beginning to develop political clout? The potential power these connections

and contacts can bring to an individual who is serving on an elected body is enormous.

### **Creative power sources**

The final three sources of power, catalytic, shared, and holistic, depend on your creative talents to visualize how various combinations of resources and power sources can help you accomplish your goals.

#### **7. Catalytic power.**

This source of power results from your ability to put two or more sources of power together, each of which may not be sufficient to produce results by themselves. For example, many policy changes which represent the use of your legitimate power base as elected officials might not be possible without expert, information, and even contact power. Information power is magnified greatly when fused with legitimate power. Sound policies demonstrate this truism.

#### **8. Shared power.**

This power source has become popular in recent years as individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions in various combinations come together to forge alliances and to interact for the purpose of achieving their separate or collective goals.

#### **9. Holistic power.**

This power source becomes possible not by combining other power sources which defines catalytic power but rather in combining several of the other competencies we have been talking

about in this series. For example, you may combine your communicating, policy-making, and institution-building skills to create a new organization to work with street children. By pulling together your various competencies as individual and collective elected officials, you are able to accomplish goals that were previously impossible. Thinking and acting in holistic fashion can be powerful.

### **Connecting the power competency with good governance**

#### ***We can do noble acts without ruling earth and sea.***

***Aristotle, 3rd Century BC Greek Philosopher***

Using power in a principled and strategic manner is fundamental to good governance. It is also an important leadership competency in relation to others like decision making, policy making, overseeing and negotiating. We will look at the inter-linkage between the various competencies in a moment, but first, a look at the links between using power and the principles of good governance.

### **Participation and civic engagement.**

Effective leaders make it possible for their citizens to get involved and do good works. To accomplish this, leaders empower others to act not by hoarding the power they have but by giving it away. Authentic civic engagement requires local governing bodies to share information and resources. Both are at the heart of using power. To hoard these powers or use them unilaterally encourages the

ultimate abuse of power.

### **Transparency and accountability.**

When the mechanisms are in place to assure transparency and accountability, it is more difficult to be corrupt, to manipulate resources for personal or political gain. On the other hand, corruption practices can become so pervasive and institutionalized that everybody in the organization and community simply acknowledges their existence and operates accordingly.

- Equity and diversity that assures access to decision-making and the basic necessities of life by all citizens creates a built-in mechanism for assuring openness and accountability. They become the other set of gatekeepers that make misuse of political powers nearly impossible.
- Efficiency in the delivery of public services is incompatible with abuse of power. Corruption is costly, creating shadowy mechanisms for siphoning off public funds and resources.
- When efficiency is working as a local government norm of operation, misuse of power involving tangible goods and resources is nearly impossible.
- Subsidiarity, the delegation of authority and resources to the closest appropriate level within the community for programme and service delivery, while admirable, has the potential to harbour the misuse of power. Deals can be cut between elected officials and local politicians that undercut the

intent of subsidiarity. These political shenanigans become more difficult for unscrupulous officials to use when the other principles of good governance are being implemented effectively.

Using power in an effective and principled manner also creates a synergistic relationship with other leadership competencies in this series. As we mentioned earlier, the application of more than one competency can result in the generation of holistic power. Let's look briefly at some of the possibilities. Mix and match your competencies and power sources

Elected men and women have the opportunity to combine their individual and collective competencies and potential power sources to serve their local governments and communities. For example:

- The decision-making competencies of an elected body are increased significantly by using the expert and information powers of your elected colleagues and local government staff.
- Policy-making is dependent on the use of legitimate powers to reward those who abide by legislative mandates and to punish those who stray.
- The negotiation competency can be more successful when it taps any one of several elected leadership power sources i.e. image, connections, and expertise.

- The financing competency is highly dependent on the legitimate powers to reward and punish. For example, enforcing taxes, rewarding high performance employees, collecting fines, and providing incentives for sustainable development within the community.
- The overseeing competency is fuelled by information power.
- Institution-building is complex and can benefit substantially from catalytic and shared power inputs.
- The enabling competency and power sharing are synonyms for effective elected leadership.
- The facilitating competency is enhanced by image and expert power by those who use it.

The urban leader's potential to build holistic power bases is dependent on the skilful use of each of the competencies in combination with appropriate sources of individual and collective power.

### What about empowerment?

*In our age, independence and the ability to get things done are often mutually exclusive.*

*Robert Dilenschneider*

Empowerment has become the mantra for many individuals and institutions that promote decentralization, subsidiarity, and, yes, democracy. These conceptual strategies only work when the devolution of responsibility and resources are married to accountability.

### Power and gender

*I do not wish women to have power over men; but over themselves.*

*Mary Wollstonecraft, 18th Century English Author and Women's Rights Advocate, (1759-1797)*

In a world where nearly half of the population is disenfranchised for one reason or another, it would be blatantly wrong to talk about using power as an elected official competency without calling your attention to the importance of gender equality. In many patriarchal societies, the use of power is largely seen as a prerogative of the male species.

To provide a narrow window of opportunity to better understand how this issue might manifest itself within your elected body, we turn to research by Beth Vanfossen on gender differences in communication. According to Dr. Vanfossen's research, there are certain gender patterns in communication that take place in formal groups like city council meetings.

- Men tend to gain the "floor" more often and to keep it for longer periods of time than women.
- Men with expertise tend to talk longer than women with expertise. This is perhaps important when expertise is a source of power.
- Men initiate more interaction than women.
- Men are more likely than women to interrupt the speaking of others.

- Women are more likely to be interrupted than men.
- Talking time is related both to gender and organization power.

The more powerful spend more time talking than the less powerful.<sup>50</sup>  
50 Vanfossen, Beth, Gender Differences in Communication, a paper presented to the Women and Expression Conference at Towson University Institute for Teaching and Research on Women, Maryland, USA. 1998

Whether you agree with these findings may not be as important as thinking about how you and your colleagues communicate on issues that involve power and gender. Do these conversations differ when gender is involved? Are women at a disadvantage in communicating during your elected body proceedings? If so, why? What might you and others do to address the issues of gender as they relate to the use of power within your elected body, and more importantly, within your local government as an institution representing all citizens?

### Issues of power and administration

There is another critical relationship to be considered in terms of power and authority. This is the relationship of elected officials with the local government officers and staff, those responsible for administering your local government and its programmes and services. While the power and authority of an elected official comes from the electorate through the ballot box, the ability to deliver the attributes of power is largely in the hands

of those they employ to manage and deliver policies, services, and programmes within their jurisdiction.

Many of the things already said about using power as an elected official also apply to relationships with the local government's officers and staff.

On the other hand, the local government staff male and female members are not without their own power base. Let's take a brief look at some of sources of power they have available.

1. The staff represents knowledge, skills and experience that are difficult to replace.
2. Key staff members have expert knowledge and information about the organization, its operation, and the community that are invaluable to the ongoing implementation of programmes and services.
3. Local government employees are in a unique position to mobilize a network of friends and supporters who can be used to counterbalance elected decisions and actions if the employees think you are being unfair in your use of legislated authority.
4. Those who work for local government have many ways to divert or sabotage the good intentions of council-enacted programmes and services, if they so choose.
5. If all else fails, they can run against an elected official in the next election.

### Forging a shared power partnership.

The relationship between the elected officials and employees of local government should be seen as an interdependent partnership. They need each other to be successful, and their goals should be largely congruent. This doesn't mean there won't be disagreements or conflicts, but they should be addressed in the spirit of mutual trust and respect. Here are some thoughts on how to keep the power partnership between these two arms of local government fine-tuned and operating effectively.

1. First and foremost, the officers and male and female staff of the local government need to be delegated the authority, responsibilities, and resources to do what is required of them. And they must be held accountable in the use of these attributes of governance.

2. Channels of communication should be kept open between urban leaders and the staff. There should be minimal "surprises" on both sides of this relationship.
3. Leaders should be goal-directed with their programmes and services and direct in their relationship with the staff.
4. Acts of coercion invite acts of resistance and retaliation. They are both attempts to unbalance or re-balance the power relationship, and they rarely work.
5. Sharing power is not the same as giving it away. Some elected officials seem reluctant to share their power of the public trust and responsibility with others, particularly those who work for them.



## 5: The Decision-making Competency

### Introduction

*Decisiveness is "biting through" the entirety of the situation and not nibbling around the edges, or just pulling off what is loose around the bone.*

*Bob Messing, 20th Century American Author*

### *(The Tao of Management)*

We all make decisions, individually and collectively, hundreds of times a day. So, what's there to talk about? Plenty! Individuals, groups like urban leaders, organizations, even countries, make bad decisions not just some of the time but frequently. It's often difficult to hold those who make bad decisions accountable, particularly if the decision has been through a bunch of legalistic, bureaucratic, and public relations type filters.

Making decisions is a cross-cutting competency

The political process is about making decisions on behalf of those you represent. Decision-making is at the centre of your elected leadership roles and responsibilities. When we think about your financing, overseeing, institution-building, negotiating, and policy-making competencies, these all are based on making sound and principled decisions. These are the "what" aspects of elected leadership. Every one of these competencies is dependent on elected officials exercising their individual and

joint decision-making powers and responsibilities. They represent decisions about:

- Allocating scarce financial and other resources;
- Holding others accountable;
- Building the institutional capacity of your local government to be more responsive and responsible;
- Negotiating to get the best deal for your local government and its citizens; and
- Most importantly, establishing local laws that define the present and future boundaries of public and private behaviours

More often than not, fulfilling each of these "what" competencies requires: 1) individual decisions which define your personal choices on specific issues; and 2) group decisions that represent a collective will to act on behalf of your constituents.

The other competencies of communicating, facilitating, enabling, and using power are associated with the "how" aspects of decision-making. We could also include negotiating as one of these competencies. Of all these competencies, using power may be the competency that is most intertwined with decision-making. Through your elected body's legitimate power sources, the policy-making, financing, and overseeing responsibilities that come with the office of elected leadership, you have a number of decision choices.

*People know what they do; they*

*frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does.*

*Michel Foucault*

Decision-making and good governance  
The decision-making competency is very much linked to the principles of good governance espoused by institutions like UN-HABITAT and others. Let's spend a few moments looking at these principles as they relate to decision-making.

52 Lucas, James R. Balance of Power, (New York, American Management Association, 1998), pp. 14-5.

- Participation or civic engagement is at the heart of participatory decision-making.
- The rule of law as a guiding principle should never be questioned when making public decisions or private ones for that matter.
- Transparency and accountability are principles that are often ignored by local elected officials.
- Decision-making should be responsive, and we might add timely. These are not only good governance principles, but they also represent good management practices.
- Equity and inclusiveness may be two of the most difficult governance principles to factor into your decision-making as elected officials.
- Efficiency and effectiveness are bottom-line concerns with all major public decisions. Effectiveness is doing the right things, those

decisions more associated with policies and long-range planning. Efficiency is doing things right, the decisions more often aligned with the competencies of financing and overseeing.

Decision-making is at the core of being an elected official. Making decisions that adhere to the principles of good governance is at the heart of urban leadership.

**A reflective opportunity**

Before you move on, it is time to reflect on the many ideas about decision-making that have just been presented. We suggest you take the good governance qualities just discussed and jot down examples of decisions your local elected body has made recently that fit these categories. For example, were there decisions involving issues of inclusiveness, civic engagement, transparency, efficiency, or other principles of good governance? If so, make a note of them below.

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**The art of making effective decisions**

Having good intentions and a sound understanding and commitment to the principles of good governance and gender balance aren't enough. It also takes analytical skills, an understanding of

information and data and how to organize it, the ability to reason and engage in critical inquiry, and knowing how to use your experience and observations to reach logical and workable conclusions. In Smart Choices, the authors say that an effective decision-making process fulfils six criteria:

54 Eagly, Alice, Gender and Leadership: A Review of Pertinent Research (Evanston, Ill. Harmony: Forum of the Symphony Orchestra Institute, April 1998), p. 103.

1. It focuses on what's important.
2. It is logical and consistent.
3. It acknowledges both subjective and objective factors and blends analytical with intuitive thinking.
4. It requires only as much information and analysis as is necessary to resolve a particular dilemma.
5. It encourages and guides the gathering of relevant information and informed opinion.
6. It is straightforward, reliable, easy to use, and flexible.<sup>55</sup>

In order to fulfil these criteria, we are suggesting the following seven-step decision-making process.

55 Hammond, John, Ralph Keeney, and Howard Raiffa, Smart Choices, (New York. Broadway Books, 1999), p. 4.

1. Awareness and vision
2. Building decision-making coalitions
3. Focusing in on the problem or opportunity

4. Determining your goals and objectives
5. Developing options
6. Deciding on a course of action
7. Implementation readiness

**Step one: Awareness and vision**

Awareness and vision often starts with problems and opportunities. Awareness and vision is more like an attitude or a mindset, a way of looking at things as an elected official. For example, solving problems begins with the basic awareness that something is wrong in the organization or community, or about to be, and needs to be addressed. A vision, on the other hand, is about a future state that is an improvement on the current situation.

Like problems and opportunities, awareness and vision lend themselves to description by contrast:

- Awareness is seeing "what is." Vision is seeing what "can be."
- Awareness is more tactical, short-term, and specific. Vision is long-term and strategic in its perspective.
- Awareness looks at the details; vision paints the "big picture."
- Awareness involves convergent thinking or focusing in. Vision is at its best when our thoughts diverge from the beaten path.



### **Step two: Building decision-making coalitions**

*You never plough a field by turning it over in your mind.*  
*Irish proverb*

It's never too early to think about expanding your circle of decision-makers to solve problems and seize opportunities at various levels of the local government organization and the larger community. Another way to describe that circle of decision-makers is through the commonly used term, stakeholders. Stakeholders in decision-making can involve not just individuals but groups and organizations as well. They can be many citizens, young and old and from different income, ethnic, and cultural communities of your local government. They are those who may be either the cause of an issue, like pollution, or those who suffer the consequences. They are also those who will support your elected body in matters of public policy making, and those who oppose your initiatives.

### **Step three: Focusing in on the problem or opportunity**

*Thinking is preparation for action. People who are afraid of action, increase the preparation.*  
*Otto Fenichel*

One way to make better decisions when the decisions involve problems is to ask your problem a series of simple questions. This dialogue with your problem is perhaps the easiest way to understand

whether you have a problem and whether or not you want to do something about it. Sometimes the best solution is not to solve the problem.

Here are some questions to ask your problem:

- What is the problem, the real problem?
- Why is it a problem? Or, what is causing the problem? Some street maintenance departments spend a lot of time fixing potholes and never stop to ask why the potholes are there in the first place.
- The Why? question is one worth repeating over and over until you get to the bottom of the problem.

### **Step four: Determining your goals and objectives**

We like to think of the goal as being the summation of a set of objectives. In other words, it is the global objective, less specific, less measurable, etc. Defining objectives and putting them into descriptive words that clearly state what you want to accomplish requires a kind of discipline that some of the other steps do not. As you write those objectives, ask yourself if they are:

- Measurable
- Specific
- Result-oriented
- Realistic and attainable
- Time bound

### **Step five: Developing options**

Once you have defined where you want to go by stating your objective, it is

time to analyze the forces surrounding the objective and the changes you want to accomplish by achieving your objective(s). We achieve our objective, e.g., problem solved or opportunity seized, by unbalancing these forces and shifting the equilibrium in the desired direction. Three processes are involved:

- **Diagnosis:** Identify the major forces, driving and restraining, that are helping to maintain the current level of activity.
- **Unfreezing:** Changing the different strengths of the individual forces, both pro and con.
- **Redefining:** Re-freezing the situation at a new, desired level of achievement-based on intended results.

There are three basic decision-making strategies for bringing about change to achieve your objectives. You can:

- **Add to the driving forces.** This generally is less desirable since adding driving forces usually results in more opposing forces, which increases tension.
- **Remove or reduce restraining forces.** This is usually more desirable and less obvious.
- **Add driving forces and eliminate or reduce restraining forces.** This is probably the most frequently used strategy.

### **Step six: Deciding on a course of action**

The analysis stage of your decision-making, problem-solving, opportunity-seizing process should provide you with

emerging options. Options, by their very nature, require more decision-making. In an environment of scarce resources, it is important to consider what economists call the "opportunity costs" of your decisions.

For example, what are the opportunity costs if your local government decides to spend scarce funds on a heart transplant centre at the university hospital rather than an AIDS prevention educational programme?

Decisions with multiple objectives cannot be resolved by focusing on only one of the objectives. More often than not, you are obliged for political and other reasons to seek a satisfactory solution, to not let the "best" become the enemy of the good. Herbert Simon, who has written extensively about decision-making in public settings, calls this the "satisficing" solution. Recognizing the need to engage in "satisficing" decision-making, it is important to resist the pressures that often force us to take the first available satisfactory solution to a problem. Finding new options to old problems is how the future gets invented.

### **Step seven: Implementation readiness**

The decision-making process doesn't end with making decisions. You also want to be assured that your decisions will become effective actions. Two dimensions are relevant in assessing the potential effectiveness of your decision. These are (a) the quality of the decision, and (b) its acceptance by those who either have to execute it or will be affected by it.

Both of these will have an impact on the final outcome, which also needs to be considered as you move towards a final decision. The quality of the decision will depend on a number of factors. These factors could include, for example:

- Goal focus
- Resource availability
- Timing
- Feasibility
- Adequacy
- Acceptance

#### Group decision-making options

Edgar Schein describes the following ways that groups make decisions.

Decision by formal authority or self-authorization: This type of decision-making is central to the role and responsibility of an elected official.

1. Decision by minority: Have you ever felt coerced into silently supporting a decision by someone else? It happens frequently when individuals get together to make decisions.
2. Decision by majority rule: This involves voting and/or polling of those who have the authority to vote.
3. Decision by lack of response: This is when someone suggests an idea and nobody responds to it. By not responding, the group has made a decision not to support the idea or the contributor.
4. Decision by consensus. While making decisions by consensus can be time consuming, it is one of the most

effective ways to make decisions because it builds commitment into implementing the decision.

5. Consensus is not the same as unanimity. There may still be differences of opinion, but these differences have been heard, and those who hold them are prepared to support the decision.
6. Decision by unanimous consent. In this case, everyone agrees on the course of action to be taken. Sounds good but here is a word of caution about coming to a quick unanimous decision. Group decision-makers are sometimes the victims of something called "groupthink." Groupthink is the mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence-seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive in-group that it tends to override realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action.

#### Some final thoughts about decisions and decision-making

Since one of your primary and most important roles as elected officials is policy-making and policy-making is all about making decisions, we will continue looking at this fascinating competency from a slightly different perspective in the chapter on policy-making. But first we'll hear from Peter Drucker, a world treasure when it comes to telling us what we should know about things like decision-making. According to Peter Drucker, a world treasure when it comes to telling us what we should know about things like decision-making,

A decision is a judgment. It is a choice

between alternatives. It is rarely a choice between right and wrong. It is at best a choice between 'almost right' and "almost wrong" - but much more often a choice between two courses of action neither of which is provably more nearly right than the other."

Perhaps because decisions are largely judgements made by mere mortals, Drucker emphasizes the importance of hearing dissenting points of view. He lists three reasons why dissent is needed.

- First, it safeguards the decision-makers against becoming prisoners of the institution.
- Second, "disagreement alone can provide alternatives to a decision. And a decision without an alternative is a desperate gambler's throw, no matter how carefully thought out it might be."
- Finally, "disagreement is needed to stimulate the imagination.

*The effective decision-maker, therefore encourages and seeks out dissent..*

*57 Schein, Edgar H., Process Consultation, Volume One. (Reading, MA., Addison-Wesley, 1988), pp.69-74.*

*58 Drucker, Peter, Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices. (New York, Harper and Row, 1973), p. 470.*

*59 Drucker, p. 473.*

