

9 August, 2011

Dear Friends,

The purpose of this week's Newsflash is to introduce you to an inspiring methodology called *Reflect*, or *Reflect-Action*. *Reflect* is an extremely rich and dynamic approach to social change, and we encourage you to explore its resource-filled website.

We realize that today's Newsflash has a lot of text and that it is easy to grow confused and overwhelmed while reading it. But it's worth it!!! We will try to help explain the basics of *Reflect*, however, we encourage you to spend time looking through the activities and resources it provides. *Reflect* is meant for organizations like yours, and was designed to be adaptable to diverse contexts.

Information on the website is available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.

We are happy to share *Reflect* with you and hope that you find it valuable.

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

(Call for Applications) National Endowment for Democracy invites applications for 2012-2013 Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellows Program
(Call for Nominations) Nominations invited for Make a Difference Award 2012 to be presented in Hong Kong
(Call for Applications) USIP seeks applications for the 2011 Annual Grant Competition (From the Archives)
(Resource) Reflect

National Endowment for Democracy invites applications for 2012-2013 Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellows Program
Deadline: 1 November 2011

The Reagan-Fascell Democracy Fellows Program is an international exchange program that offers practitioners, scholars, and journalists from around the world the opportunity to spend five months at the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), in Washington DC...

<http://www.fundsforgos.org/fellowships-2/national-endowment-democracy-invites-applications-20122013-reaganfascell-democracy-fellows-program/>

Nominations invited for Make a Difference Award 2012 to be presented in Hong Kong

Deadline: 3 October 2011

All Countries

Make a Difference (MaD) Award was first introduced in 2010 to honour the creators of high potential ventures/projects that are able to produce economic, social and environmental benefits for the common people in a sustainable manner and make a positive difference to the world...

<http://www.fundsforngos.org/awards-and-prizes/nominations-invited-difference-award-2012-presented-hong-kong/>

USIP seeks applications for the 2011 Annual Grant Competition (From the Archives)

Deadline: 3 October 2011

All Countries

United States Institute of Peace's (USIP) Grant Program is aimed at increasing the breadth and depth of the Institute's work by supporting peacebuilding projects managed by non-profit organizations including educational institutions, research institutions, and civil society organizations...

<http://www.fundsforngos.org/latest-funds-for-ngos/usip-seeks-applications-2011-annual-grant-competition/>

Reflect

--What is *Reflect* and how does it work?

--What are the Core Principles of *Reflect*?

--Where is *Reflect* being used?

--What is an example of a *Reflect* tool?

Reflect Website: <http://www.reflect-action.org>

What is Reflect and how does it work?

Reflect is an innovative approach to adult learning and social change, which fuses the theories of [Paolo Freire](#) with the methodologies of [participatory rural appraisal](#). Originally developed in pilot projects in Bangladesh, El Salvador and Uganda between 1993-95, *Reflect* is now used by over 500 organisations in around 70 countries worldwide.

Reflect provides an on-going democratic space for a group of people to meet and discuss issues relevant to them. The participants choose the topics themselves,

according to their own priorities and supported by a local facilitator. They also decide where and when to meet.

Underpinning the approach is a huge (and ever expanding) range of participatory methods. Prominent among these are graphics such as calendars, maps, matrices, rivers and trees, which enable participants to communicate their knowledge, experience and feelings without being restricted by literacy and language barriers. Drama, storytelling and songs are also used to identify and analyse social, economic, cultural and political issues. In this process the development of literacy and other communication skills are closely linked to the engagement of people in wider processes of development and social change.

What are the core principles of Reflect?

Reflect is based on a series of core principles, derived both from the theoretical foundations of Freire and Participatory Rural Appraisal and through practical experience.

... power and voice

Reflect is a process that aims to strengthen people's capacity to communicate by whatever means are most relevant to them. Although part of the process may be about learning new communication skills, the focus is on using these in a meaningful way. It is through focusing on the practical use that real learning takes place.

... a political process

Reflect is premised on the recognition that achieving social change and greater social justice is a fundamentally political process. *Reflect* is not a neutral approach. It seeks to help people in the struggle to assert their rights, challenge injustice and change their position in society. As such it requires us to explicitly align ourselves with the poorest and most marginalised. It involves working with people rather than for them.

... a democratic space

Reflect involves creating a democratic space – one in which everyone’s voice is given equal weight. This needs to be actively constructed, as it does not naturally exist. As such it is counter-cultural – challenging the power relationships and stratification that have created inequality. It is never easy and may never be perfectly achieved, but it should be a constant focus.

... an intensive and extensive process

Reflect is rarely a short or one-off process. Groups usually meet for about two years, and sometimes continue indefinitely. Often they meet three times a week – sometimes up to six times a week and rarely less than once a week. Each meeting may take about two hours. This intensity of contact on an ongoing basis is one of the fundamental ingredients for a process that seeks to achieve serious social or political change.

... grounded in existing knowledge

Reflect begins with respecting and valuing people’s existing knowledge and experiences. However this does not mean accepting opinions or prejudices without challenge. Whatsoever, there will always be a part of the process in which participants are enabled to access new information and ideas from new sources. The key is to give people control.

... linking reflection and action

Reflect involves a continual cycle of reflection and action. It is not about reflection or learning for the sake of it, but rather reflection for the purpose of change. Neither is it about action isolated from reflection, as pure activism rapidly loses direction. It is the fusion of these elements, and it can start with either.

... using participatory tools

A wide range of participatory tools is used within a *Reflect* process to help create an open, democratic environment in which everyone is able to contribute. Visualisation approaches are of particular importance (calendars, diagrams, maps, etc...) and can provide a structure for the process. However, many other participatory methods and processes are also used, including theatre, role-play, song, dance, video or photography.

... power awareness

All participatory tools can be distorted, manipulated or used in exploitative ways if they are not linked to an awareness of power relationships. *Reflect* is a political process in which the multiple dimensions of power and stratification are always the focus of reflection, and actions are oriented towards changing inequitable power relationships whatever their basis. A structural analysis is needed to ensure that issues are not dealt with at a superficial level. Only through such analysis can effective strategic actions be determined.

... coherence and self-organisation

Reflect needs to be used systematically. The same principles and processes that apply to the participants also apply to us, within our own institutions and even our personal lives. It is important that the facilitator engage in the process alongside the participants, subjecting her/his behaviour, experiences and opinions to the same analysis, rather than standing outside as teacher and judge. Ideally, the focus of the process should be towards self-organisation, so that groups are self-managed where possible rather than being facilitated by, or dependent on, outsiders.

Where is Reflect being used?

People are practicing *Reflect* all around the world. It is used throughout Africa, and many people in your own countries (as well as many of your neighbors) are already using it!

To find out about what *Reflect* means in action and to read what individuals participating in *Reflect* processes have to say, follow this link: <http://www.reflect-action.org/where> and select the region from the left-side of the page.

What is an example of a Reflect tool?

Calendars and Timelines

Time visualisation tools such as calendars and timelines can be used to track changes, document histories and processes or analyse routines.

Why? Time is an important dimension of most issues: looking at how something

came about, learning from experience, or anticipating what might happen. Many problems are experienced in a very immediate way - but responding to them effectively requires a long-term perspective, recognising the factors that led to the situation in order to ensure sustainable solutions. Visualising these in the form of a calendar or timeline can be very effective.

Examination of routine uses of time can clearly show differences in individuals' patterns of work or behaviour, encouraging shared analysis, debate and in many cases assisting planning for change.

When? A time dimension is useful in analysis of nearly any issue or situation, and can be introduced at any point.

How? Three main graphics can be used to add a time dimension to analysis. *Calendars* can be used to map and analyse seasonal patterns and variations, for example looking at workload during different times of year or price fluctuations, while *timelines* are an effective way of tracking changes in relation to a particular issue over time and predicting future events on the basis of past experience. Both bring out powerfully associations between cause and effect, and can be used to improve planning and preparedness, looking ahead and determining, for example, small steps that, over a period of time, might add up to a large change.

In contrast to the longer view of timelines, *daily charts* can help participants to focus on the micro use of time, allowing for shared analysis of patterns in workload or behaviour. Through highlighting differences, or convergences, in routine activities and duties, the charts are useful for encouraging debate of division of labour or opportunities for collaboration. This type of individual graphic is particularly powerful when examining gender issues and power relations.

As with any visualisation exercise, calendars and timelines should be used to deepen analysis of an issue arising from group discussion. Common themes include agriculture, health, food security, income and gender relations, although a long-term perspective of any situation can be useful. Depending on the issue or situation to be analysed, different units of time will be appropriate, whether hours, days, months, years or decades. In some cases, this will relate to a specific period, and in others it will be general: months of the year or hours of the day.

Once the time units have been determined, a basic calendar or timeline can be drawn up, with locally appropriate symbols used for the different units of time.

This can either be done individually or as a group. Participants then place symbols or words representing relevant events in the appropriate place on the graphic. If done as a group, the decisions of which events are relevant, and when they occur, may in itself be cause for revealing debate. Group analysis and discussion of the resulting calendar can form the basis for drawing up strategies for coping with, or preventing, regularly occurring problems.

As a group builds up a series of calendars and timelines these can be compared to enable participants to observe interrelationships between apparently distinct events, such as changes in the local economy and patterns of disease.

Examples from practice:

Health Calendar

Health calendars were used in Nepal to provoke discussion of the causes of common illnesses on a seasonal basis. Through completion of the calendar, considerable discussion was generated on why the illnesses were common, whether they changed from year to year, the causes which were or weren't seasonal, how the illnesses were spread, how they could be prevented or reduced and how medicines or funerals could be better afforded or planned for.

In Uganda hunger and abundance calendars were used to plot the availability of food and income through the year, to determine the times of year when there were serious shortages and the times of abundance. The reasons for shortage were explored and discussion focused on survival strategies and ideas for improving them. Ideas for action included introducing new crops, improving storage, bulk purchasing, cooperative selling, irrigation, income-generation projects etc.

Calendars and timelines have also been used in the following ways:

- Gender workload calendars in Uganda
- Cooperative history timelines in Honduras
- Village history timelines in Bangladesh

Daily routines of boys and girls of different castes in India.

There are MANY MANY more resources on the main website. Once again, visit <http://www.reflect-action.org/> for more information!!

As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website: <http://www.firelightfoundation.org/newsflash.php>.

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at newsletter@firelightfoundation.org.