

TIPS FOR FACILITATING PHE CASE STUDIES

These short, story-like case studies offer a great deal of flexibility in their use in various settings. As real-life illustrations of various strategies used in development project implementation, they can be used either in one- to three-hour workshops or as a supplement to lectures and activities within a multiday training program. Although their reader-friendly format and structured discussion questions will allow them to be used with little preparation on the part of the facilitator, spending a little time planning for their use is likely to make the experience even more rewarding for users.

The ideal length for a workshop in which one of the case studies would be investigated is two to three hours. However, it is possible to run an abbreviated workshop in one hour if the participants read the case study in advance. For sample workshop agendas, see page 4.

The role of the facilitator: The facilitator's role in teaching a case study is different than the role of a teacher in a traditional lecture. In a traditional lecture, the teacher has responsibility for analyzing information and conveying it to students. In using these case studies, the facilitator manages a process in which the students analyze information through discussion with each other. By framing the discussion, stimulating interaction, and bringing the discussion back to the key issues if it gets off track, a good facilitator will optimize students' potential for learning.

A few things to keep in mind as you prepare to teach one or more of these case studies:

- ▶ **Identify your main goals.** What do you want participants to learn from reading and discussing this case study? Are there particular key issues you'd like them to focus on? The teaching notes on pages 6–14 highlight the key themes of each case and the discussion questions that delve into them. As you plan your workshop, you may want to allocate time to focus on those questions.
- ▶ **Think about your students/participants.** Will there be a range of experiences within the group? Do people know each other? To make the sharing of personal experiences more meaningful, you may want to take time for each participant to introduce him/herself if they do not already know each other.
- ▶ **Forming subgroups.** We have found that when these case studies are used in large groups, breaking participants into smaller groups for discussion can be an effective way to ensure that each person feels she/he is able to share their own experiences. Small groups can then report their key discussion points to the larger group, where additional meaningful sharing can take place. If you are planning to break into subgroups, think carefully about the makeup of each of these groups. Do you want people who work together to be in the same group? Would it be useful to have people with different levels of experience in the same group? What about the gender breakdown in each group? Preparing lists of subgroups ahead of time can avoid confusion and time delays during your workshop.
- ▶ **Reading time.** Is it possible for participants to receive and read the case study in advance of the workshop? If the participants have time to reflect on the action of the case before they come together in the workshop, it can allow for a richer discussion and sharing of personal experiences.
- ▶ **Allocating time in the workshop.** Each part of the case studies is of a differing length, and some discussion questions will require more time. Being familiar with the case study's content and discussion questions will help you plan for the time allocations in the workshop. For sample workshop agendas, see page 4.
- ▶ **Materials.** Give some thought to what kinds of materials you would like to use during the discussion. Do you plan to write key discussion points on a blackboard? Will you ask subgroups to record their discussion points on flipcharts that they can use when reporting to the larger group? Do you need markers, pens, chalk, erasers, or self-sticking notes? How many copies of the case study will you need? Keep in mind that people might forget to bring their copy to the workshop.

- ▶ **Room arrangement.** What kind of room arrangement will be most conducive for discussion? Will participants be able to move chairs and desks to break into subgroups for discussion? If not, how else might you handle the discussion?
- ▶ **Prepare strategies for bringing discussion back on track.** These case studies cover a wide range of issues, and it is not uncommon for participants to stray away from the main action of the case or from your

predetermined goals. How will you handle this situation when it arises? Some facilitators find it useful to designate a section of the board/flip-chart paper as a “parking lot.” As the discussion gets off track, the facilitator can identify the issue that is unrelated to the current discussion, acknowledge that it is of interest to one or more participants, and ask permission to put the issue in the “parking lot.” You can then designate time later in the workshop or training to revisit parking-lot issues.