

Team Working

Teamwork is the essence of humanitarian work. However, building a strong sense of teamwork can be challenging when there is a mix of professions, cultures, styles and expectations, and high turnover of staff.

Team effectiveness requires:

Commitment by all team members to a common goal.

How clear is your team's goal?

Cooperation and collaboration with team members working for and with each other, recognising and sharing their skills and knowledge.

How clearly does your team understand each other's roles and responsibilities?

Discussion and decision-making procedures can be made by

- the leader
- a selected minority of the team (e.g. those with expertise on the issue)
- a majority
- team consensus, in which everyone agrees to the decision to some degree.

How clear are your team members about what the team is expected to decide, how they will make the decision and who will be accountable?

Open, honest, frequent communication: Successful teams develop effective communication processes. By developing and using the core skills outlined below, teams can engender trust and a sense of belonging in team members.

How effective are your team's communications? Do you regularly review how effectively your team feel they are working together and adapt accordingly?

Conflict management: Conflict is an inevitable ingredient of teamwork and decision-making. Check your organisation's processes, channels and procedures. Use these six steps to help your team work through its conflicts.

1. clarify and identify the cause of conflict, then try to understand each other's point of view.
2. find common goals on which all members can agree.
3. determine what the team's options are.
4. identify and remove barriers to consensus.
5. find a solution that everyone can accept.
6. make sure all parties understand what the solution means to them.

Core skills for building trust

- **Listening** – and understanding each other's points of view
- **Sacrifice** – being prepared to give and take
- **Sharing** – information, skills, resources
- **Communication** – open, honest and respectful
- **Language** – increase inclusion by agreeing a common language(s); avoid jargon; speak in a positive manner
- **Hard work and competence** – working for the team and not just oneself, and using everyone's skills
- **Persuasion** – encourage everyone to exchange, defend and adapt their ideas



Team Development

Groups and teams go through well-recognised stages. You need to encourage teams to move through them effectively.

Forming

In early meetings, wary of sharing, *your team needs to get to know each other; clarify expectations*

Storming

Start opening up leading to differences of opinion, challenges to leadership. *You need to manage conflict.*

Norming

Start to agree how to work together, establish rules, procedures, processes. *You need to ensure effective procedures on how to share information, handle disagreements, run meetings.*

Performing

Comfortable, open, delegating tasks, different roles. *You need to maintain effectiveness.*

Adjourning

Group task ends. *You need to create a positive ending.*

*Tuckman, B. W. (1965)
'Developmental sequence in small groups'*

Additional resources on AllIn Diary website

Building trust in diverse teams, © Oxfam for ECB Project, 2010
Teams and Team Working, 2009

Web links for further information

<http://chsalliance.org/what-we-do/people-management>