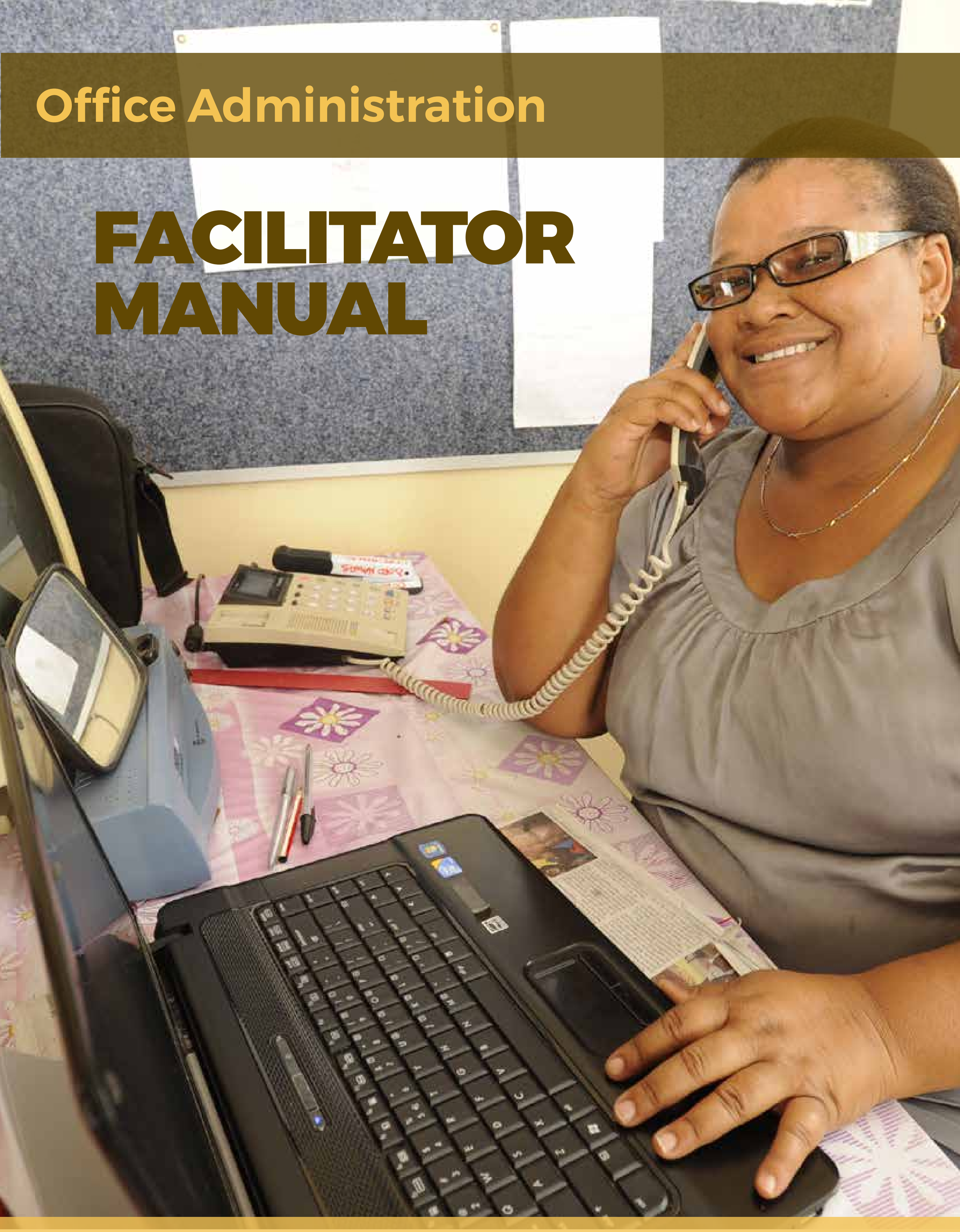
Office Administration

FACILITATOR MANUAL



NACSO
Namibian Association of CBNRM Support Organisations

WWF

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IRDNC

CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

AGM	Annual General Meeting
GM	General Meeting
OA	Office Administrator

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The cover-, back cover- and spread photo courtesy of NACSO Photo Library

GENERAL TRAINING TIPS

PREPARATION

- Prepare each session in advance.
  Ensure that all necessary materials and visual aids are available.
  Use visual aids wherever possible to enhance your training.
- Be aware of local customs.
  Remember to open and close the training day with a prayer, and give due recognition to any traditional leaders present.
- Provide translation services when necessary.
  This will need to be arranged in advance. It may not be appropriate to ask a participant to translate.

GENERAL TRAINING AND PRESENTATION

- Use good time management to ensure every aspect of your training is completed.
- Take into account the possible need for translation, and, if necessary, be prepared to slow down to ensure that all participants understand.
- Maintain good eye contact with the participants.
- Speak clearly.
- Keep your training language simple and appropriate for the participants.
- Bridge one topic to the next.
- Provide clear instructions for activities, and check to see if your instructions have been understood.
- Keep a separate sheet of flipchart paper available to ‘park’ any issues that need to be revisited at the end of the day.
- Where appropriate, summarise.
- Avoid reading directly from this manual.

VISUAL PRESENTATION

- Write clearly and boldly when using flipchart paper.
- Keep your visual aids visible.
  Avoid standing in the way of your visual aids and blocking the participants’ view.

INVOLVE THE PARTICIPANTS

- Encourage questions and participation.
- Ask questions to get participants thinking about the topic and the key issues.
- Keep the group focused on the task, but take breaks if participants are tired and begin to lose concentration.
  Pay attention to participants’ body language for any signs of fatigue.

- The subject matter in this training manual could generate a lot of debate. The process of debate is very valuable, provided you are able to maintain control of the group, and can prevent the discussion from veering off the subject. It is useful to capture any key points during these debates.
- Be patient and courteous with all participants.
- Talk to your participants and not to the flipchart.
- Acknowledge all comments and feedback from participants.

INTRODUCE THE WORKSHOP

Introducing the workshop could include all or some of the following procedures:

- Prayer (at the beginning and end of each training day)
- Welcoming remarks
- An activity to introduce participants and to help them remember names
- Objectives of the workshop
- Participants' expectations and/or concerns regarding the workshop
- Ground rules (e.g. switch cell phones either off or to silent, respect other participants' opinions, every question is a good question, one person speaks at a time, respect appointed time schedules, etc.)
- Housekeeping (e.g. restroom facilities, break times, meal times, etc.)

NOTE TO TRAINERS / FACILITATORS

This manual is a guide for you to deliver training on how to improve conservancy office administration.

This manual (Office Administration) provides a step by step approach for delivering training in each session. The training approach includes a combination of information delivery and participatory activities. Instructions for these participatory activities are provided in the manual. The manual also indicates where you need to have material prepared in advance, and where the participants need to be provided with hand-outs.

The topic (Office Administration) has been divided into three sessions with allocated time durations. These time durations are only a guide, which you may need to adapt as you deliver the training content of this manual.

ABOUT THIS MANUAL
OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

OBJECTIVES

People who receive training in this workshop will gain knowledge on the following topics:

- how to manage conservancy administrative functions; and
- the development of Action Plans in order to develop and/or improve office administration procedures.

COMPETENCIES

People who receive training in this workshop will be able to:

- manage their conservancy office efficiently and effectively.

This manual is intended for:

- conservancy managers and selected staff.

The duration of this workshop is:

- usually 2 days.

FOR THIS WORKSHOP, YOU WILL NEED THE FOLLOWING MATERIALS:

- ☐ Flipchart stand, roll of flipchart paper, and different coloured marker pens ('kokies')
- ☐ Hand-outs #1 – #7 (make sure there arollre enough copies for everyone)
- ☐ Writing paper/notebooks, pens, pencils, and erasers for the participants

The training content of this workshop should generally adhere to the following programme:

INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHOP

- Introducing each other and the workshop *(approx. 1 hour)*

SESSION 1

- Key Purpose of and Skills Required for Office Administration *(approx. 2.5 hours)*

SESSION 2

- Essential Tasks of an Office Administrator *(approx. 6 hours)*

SESSION 3

- Developing Action Plans *(approx. 30 minutes)*

CLOSE THE WORKSHOP

- Review and Evaluation *(approx. 1 hour)*

TRAINING PROGRAMME
DAY 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE WORKSHOP

(1 HOUR)

OPENING ACTIVITIES (30 minutes)

TAKE NOTE:

- → Open with a prayer.
- → Introduce yourself.
- → Welcome the participants to the workshop.
- → Present the housekeeping and ground rules (see General Training Tips); write these up on a sheet of flipchart paper and display them for the duration of the workshop.
- → To open the workshop, conduct the following introduction activity with the participants.

INTRODUCTION ACTIVITY

One-word check in with a gesture

- Ask the participants to stand in a circle.
- Moving around the circle, ask each person to communicate the following:
  - → your name
  - → the conservancy you are from
  - → your role in the conservancy
  - → **one word and one gesture** with your body that **describe how you feel right now**
  - → the previous person's name
- Keep the process going until everyone has been introduced.

PREPARATORY QUESTIONS (30 minutes)

TAKE NOTE:

- → During this preparatory question session, ask the participants to record in their notebooks any points that they would like to remember for inclusion in their action planning later on in the workshop.

❶

ASK

- Ask the participants the following question: **"Why is it important that an office is run efficiently and effectively?"**

CAPTURE

- Record the participants' responses on the flipchart, and discuss them.

ASK

- Ask the participants the following questions:

1) "Considering your answers, do you believe your office is being run efficiently and effectively?"

2) "If not, what do you think needs to be improved?"

CAPTURE

- Record the participants' responses on the flipchart, and discuss them.

❷

ASK

- Ask the participants the following question: **"What do you expect to gain from this workshop?"**

CAPTURE

- Record the participants' responses on the flipchart under the heading: **Workshop Expectations**.
- Display these expectations for the duration of the workshop.

SESSION 1

KEY PURPOSE OF AND SKILLS REQUIRED FOR OFFICE ADMINISTRATION

(approx 2.5 hours)

1

ASK

- Ask the participants the following question: “**What is the key purpose of the Office Administrator?”**

CAPTURE

→ Record the participants’ responses on the flipchart, and discuss.

ACTIVITY

- Prepare 5 sheets of flipchart paper by writing the following headings on each sheet: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Annually.
- Position each headed flipchart sheet at different locations around the room.
- Ask the participants the following question: **“What are the Office Administrator’s responsibilities?”**
- Ask the participants to write the responsibilities on each headed flipchart sheet.

(Allow 50 minutes for this activity: 10 minutes per flipchart sheet.)

TAKE NOTE:

→ During this activity, observe and comment on any missing or incorrect responsibilities.

DISTRIBUTE HAND-OUT

→ Provide the participants with Hand-out #1 (Office Administrator – Job Description), which is a summary of these responsibilities.

→ Remind the participants that jobs vary from conservancy to conservancy.

2

ASK

- Ask the participants the following questions:

1) **“What skills (competences) should the Office Administrator possess to be able to perform the necessary tasks?”**
2) **“Which are the most important tasks?”**

CAPTURE

→ Record the participants’ responses on the flipchart, and discuss them.

ACTIVITY

①

- Ask the participants to record in their notebooks 1) which skills they believe they have, and 2) which skills they believe would be beneficial to develop.

(Allow 10 minutes for this part of the activity.)

②

- Divide the participants into small groups.
- Ask them to discuss ways that each of them could develop the skills they believe they need, and to record what they find useful in their notebooks.

(Allow 15 minutes for this part of the activity.)

TAKE NOTE:

→ Emphasise that they should consider ways to develop skills on-the-job, and to consider who in their conservancy might be a resource person that could assist with or provide on-the-job mentoring to help develop these skills.

③

- Once the groups have completed their discussion, ask those who are willing to share their ideas.

(Allow 15 minutes for this feedback session.)

SUMMARISE

Are there any questions before we move on to the next session?

SESSION 2

ESSENTIAL TASKS OF AN OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

LESSON 1
Dealing with messages **(approx. 30 minutes)**

➊

EXPLAIN

While you are in the office you will receive messages, either over the telephone or face to face, that need to be noted and passed on.

Taking messages correctly and acting on them is important because:

- you will be considered professional;
- you instil confidence in the people who leave a message (i.e. they know that their message has been well received and will be dealt with);
- you will be considered reliable (credibility); and
- can you think of anything else?

ASK

→ Ask the participants the following question: **"How should messages be dealt with?"**

CAPTURE

→ Record the participants' responses on the flipchart, and discuss them.

EXPLAIN

Dealing with messages should include the following procedure:

- Write them down. Record the date; from whom, to whom; message content; and action/s required.
- Record the messages in an exercise book or in a duplicate Messages Book.
- Let the people leaving a message know who you will pass their message on to and when.
- Pass the messages on promptly – preferably in writing.
- If appropriate/necessary, make sure that the messages have been acted upon.

ACTIVITY

- Ask the participants to decide on a procedure for dealing with messages that best suits their conservancy administration and to record it in their notebooks.

SUMMARISE

Are there any questions before we move on to the next lesson?

LESSON 2
Dealing with correspondence (approx. 30 minutes)

➊

ASK

- Ask the participants the following question: **“What is your current procedure for dealing with written correspondence?”**

CAPTURE

- Record the participants’ responses on the flipchart, and discuss them.

EXPLAIN

Dealing with letters should follow a similar procedure to the following:

- Collect the correspondence from the post office .
- Record the ‘date received’ on the envelopes.
- Enter the received items in the Correspondence Book. This should include the date, the sender, a summary of the content, the person responsible for action, the date it was responded to, and where it has been filed.
- Pass the correspondence on to the person responsible for action.
- If necessary, follow up.

Dealing with emails should follow a similar procedure to the following:

- Print the email and pass it to the person responsible for action.
- Send a reply to thank the sender and to inform them who their email has been passed on to.
- File in the appropriate folder.
- If necessary, follow up.

ACTIVITY

- Ask the participants to decide on procedures for letters and emails that best suit their conservancy administration and to record them in their notebooks.

SUMMARISE

Are there any questions before we move on to the next lesson?

LESSON 3
Keeping records (approx. 30 minutes)

❶

EXPLAIN

Explain the importance of being diligent about keeping records; the difference between an Inventory and an Asset Register; and the different filing systems that could be used (i.e. alphabetical, numerical, or date systems).

ACTIVITY

- Divide the participants into conservancy groups.
- Ask the groups to compile a list of important documents that should be filed in their conservancy office.
- Once the activity is complete, ask only one group to present their list.
- Ask the participants to add any outstanding items from their lists.

DISTRIBUTE HAND-OUT

→ Provide the participants with Hand-out #2 (Proposed Conservancy Filing System), and discuss.

SUMMARISE

Are there any questions before we move on to the next lesson?

LESSON 4
Effective meetings (approx. 30 minutes)

❶

ASK

- Ask the participants the following question: **“What, in your opinion, makes a meeting effective (i.e. productive, worthwhile and good use of your time)?”**

CAPTURE

- Record the participants’ responses on the flipchart, and discuss them.

ASK

- Ask the participants the following question: **“What should you be doing in order to ensure that all your meetings are effective?”**

CAPTURE

- Record the participants’ responses on the flipchart.
- Make sure that the following points have been mentioned. Add any points that have not been mentioned to the flipchart.

To ensure that meetings are effective, the following actions are required:

Beforehand:

- Prepare an agenda
- Prepare and compile invitations; distribute these with the agenda
- Collect apologies
- Prepare a meeting room
- Provide all the relevant papers concerning the agenda topics

During the meeting:

- Have a copy of the agenda and previous minutes with you
- Ensure that there will be no interruptions during the meeting
- Set ground rules (e.g. switch cell phones off, no walking in and out, etc.)
- Ensure that a competent person is present to take the minutes
- Approve the previous minutes and check that the previous Action Points have been carried out
- Ensure that a chairperson has been appointed and will facilitate the meeting
- Keep track of the time to ensure that all agenda items are discussed fully
- Make arrangements regarding the next meeting (if appropriate)

After the meeting:

- Ensure that the minutes are compiled
- Circulate the minutes promptly (with the chairperson’s approval)
- File a copy of the minutes
- Diarise the next meeting
- Follow up progress concerning the Action Points

SUMMARISE

Are there any questions before we move on to the next lesson?

LESSON 5
Taking minutes **(approx. 1 hour)**

❶

ASK

- Ask the participants the following question: **"In your conservancy, who takes minutes of the meetings?"**

CAPTURE

- Record the participants' responses on the flipchart.

EXPLAIN

It is good practice to take minutes of **all** meetings.
By doing this, you will have a record of what has been discussed, what Action Points need to be carried out, and what decisions have been taken. Whatever the topic, you will be able to track the progress being made and to continually move forward. For GMs, AGMs, and disciplinary cases, it is especially important that you are able to show the minutes.

The Office Administrator (OA) needs to be able to take good minutes, but others should also learn to do so in order to substitute during the absence of the OA or to record their own meetings.

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❷

ASK

- Ask the participants the following question: **"What skills do you need to be able to take minutes?"**

CAPTURE

- Record the participants' responses on the flipchart.
- Add any of the following points that have not been mentioned.

The skills required for taking minutes include the following:

- Listening
- Concentration (this includes keeping track of the agenda)
- Accurate recording of what has been said
- Personal shorthand method (e.g. symbols, letters and abbreviations for words and phrases)
- Confidence to interrupt the meeting to clarify something which is unclear
- Prompt compilation of the minutes after the meeting and getting them checked by the chairperson before distribution

❸

EXPLAIN

Taking minutes requires practice. With time, it does become easier.

ASK

- Ask the participants the following question: **"What difficulties/challenges do you experience with taking minutes?"**

CAPTURE

→ Record the participants' responses on the flipchart.

DISTRIBUTE HAND-OUTS

→ Provide the participants with Hand-out #3 (Dos and Don'ts when Taking Minutes) and Hand-out #4 (Guidelines for Taking Minutes).

→ Read and discuss the hand-outs with the participants.

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4 ACTIVITY

Practising Listening

- Divide the participants into pairs.
- Inform the pairs that they are going to practise their ability to listen properly.
- Ask the pairs to conduct the following activity:

→ Person One: Talk for 2 minutes about the most exciting thing that has ever happened to you.

→ Person Two: Listen carefully to the story, and then verbally summarise the key points to Person One.

→ Person One: Give feedback on the accuracy of Person Two's summary of your story.

- Ask the pairs to exchange roles and repeat the activity.
- Once the activity is complete, ask the participants the following questions:
  → How did you find the exercise – easy or difficult?
  → What did you learn?
  → What difficulties did you experience while listening?
- Discuss their answers during this feedback session.

DISTRIBUTE HAND-OUT

→ Provide the participants with Hand-out #5 (Effective Listening).

→ Read through and discuss the hand-out with the participants.

SUMMARISE

Are there any questions before we close the workshop for the day?

Close the day with a prayer.

TRAINING PROGRAMME
DAY 2

Open with a prayer

CONTINUE WITH LESSON 5: TAKING MINUTES (approx. 3 HOURS)

5
ACTIVITY

Role-playing taking minutes

- Inform the participants that they are going to practise taking minutes.
- Divide the participants into two groups (Group 1 and Group 2).
- Inform the two groups that they are going to prepare for a scenario which involves a conservancy management committee holding a committee meeting.
- Ask the two groups to prepare the following:
  - → Three topics (not more) for their agendas
  - → Assign roles to each person in the group

  (Allow 20 minutes for this preparation.)

Role-play procedure:

①

- Ask Group 1 to sit in a circle, and to role-play the conservancy management committee holding a committee meeting.
- Ask Group 2 to form a circle around Group 1, and to take minutes of the meeting being held.

  (Allow 30 minutes for the role-play.)

②

- Once the committee meeting is complete, ask Group 2 to discuss the minutes they have taken and to agree on the Action Points and key decisions taken.

  (Allow 15 minutes for this Group 2 discussion.)

- Ask Group 2 to present the minutes.

  (Allow 10 minutes for this feedback presentation.)

③

- **Exchange the groups' roles and repeat the role-play procedure (steps 1 and 2), as above** (i.e. Group 2 holds the committee meeting; Group 1 takes minutes of the meeting).

FEEDBACK DISCUSSION

- → Ask the participants to share their learning experiences during the role-play activity.
- → Conduct a group discussion.

DISTRIBUTE HAND-OUT

- → Provide the participants with Hand-out #6 (Format for Taking Minutes), and discuss.

SUMMARISE

Are there any questions before we move on to the last session?

SESSION 3

DEVELOPING ACTION PLANS (approx. 30 minutes)

ACTIVITY

- Divide the participants into their conservancy groups.
- Ask the groups to develop Action Plans for the improvements they need to make regarding their office administration.

SUMMARISE

Are there any questions before we close the workshop?

CLOSE THE WORKSHOP (approx. 45 minutes)

REVIEW

EXPLAIN

We have now reached the end of the workshop, but before we close let us address any final questions and review your expectations.

ASK

- Ask the participants to voice any outstanding 'parked issues' and final questions that still need to be addressed.

ASK

- Ask the participants to refer to the flipchart sheet of their Workshop Expectations, and to report on whether their listed expectations have been met.

EVALUATE

ASK

- Provide the participants with Hand-out #7 (Workshop Evaluation Form), and ask them to complete it.

Close the workshop with your final remarks, and a prayer.

LIST OF HAND-OUTS

HAND-OUT #1:	Office Administrator – Job Description
HAND-OUT #2:	Proposed Conservancy Filing System
HAND-OUT #3:	Dos and Don'ts when Taking Minutes
HAND-OUT #4:	Guidelines for Taking Minutes
HAND-OUT #5:	Effective Listening
HAND-OUT #6:	Format for Taking Minutes
HAND-OUT #7:	Workshop Evaluation Form

JOB DESCRIPTION

Name: ______________________________ **Job Title:** ***Office Administrator***

Reports to: ***Manager*** **Location:** ______________________

Key purpose of the role: To provide overall day-to-day support to the Chairperson and Manager, assisting them to meet all the conservancy's goals and objectives.

Key responsibilities:

1. Planning

- Attend staff meetings and help co-ordinate the planning with project staff weekly, monthly, quarterly and annually.

2. Leading and organising

- Lead and support staff in creating a happy, productive and healthy working environment (this includes helping with leave applications, casual labour, communications, regulatory forms, etc.).
- Ensure personnel records are complete and up to date, including attendance, annual leave and sick leave registers.

3. Controlling

- Keep assets register updated, and ensure that assets are booked in and out (when appropriate).
- Ensure that the assets and equipment used for project implementation are well maintained (e.g. vehicles, tools, machinery, etc.).
- Ensure that accident or damage reports are written for any damaged assets, including vehicles.
- Ensure that trip authority forms/log books are completed and approved on a weekly basis.
- Ensure the avoidance of unnecessary use of already scarce and expensive resources through proper planning and coordination.

4. Administration

- Receive visitors
- Filing
- Copying
- Keep an updated membership list
- Receive cash and write receipts
- Answer the telephone and take messages
- Manage the use of the telephone and fax machine
- Take minutes of important meetings (e.g. staff, Management Committee and Board meetings) and file these in their proper places.

5. Other responsibilities

- When the chairperson is out of the office, the chairperson will delegate his/her responsibilities to the manager and/or the office administrator – conduct these responsibilities.
- Organise food and cooks for workshops and/or meetings.
- Manage the cleaners, cooks, and security guards.
- Any other duties requested by the manager, chairperson, Management Committee or the Board.

6. General

- Plan, budget and report monthly.

Resources responsible for:

Finance -
People -
Property -

Competences required: ability to manage relationships; good verbal and written English; ability to plan and organise, and monitor and control; numerical competence; conscientious; honesty; and ability to manage time.

Signature (job holder): ___________________________ Date: _____________________

Signature (supervisor): ___________________________ Date: _____________________

PROPOSED CONSERVANCY FILING SYSTEM

Strategic Management Files	Operational Files
🗁 Conservancy Constitution 🗁 Management Plan Framework 🗁 Benefit Distribution Plan/s 🗁 Game Management Utilisation Plan / Zonation Plan 🗁 Forestry Plan (if appropriate) 🗁 Human-Wildlife Conflict Plan 🗁 Policies: Staff, Financial and Vehicle/Boat 🗁 Asset Register 🗁 Membership Register	🗁 Annual Work Plan & Budget 🗁 Quarterly Work Plans & Budgets 🗁 Monthly Work Plans & Budgets 🗁 Minutes of meetings: AGM, GM, Village, Management Committee, Staff 🗁 Financial Files 🗁 Monthly Report File for each team (e.g. NRM, Enterprise, Manager) 🗁 Event Book System files 🗁 Inventory – stock records 🗁 Joint Venture Partners: Separate file for each JV, each including: proposals; contracts; JMC agendas and minutes; correspondence; record of payments received; and monitoring records and reports for Hunting file/s. 🗁 Vehicle File: Records of services and repairs (including copies of invoices); Licence documentation (including payments); Insurance Policy (including premium payments). 🗁 Staff Files

DOS AND DON'TS WHEN TAKING MINUTES

DOs	DON'Ts
Have the agenda at hand so that you can follow the proceedings.	Do not try to write down what is being said word for word.
Use key words, abbreviations, or symbols to represent words and phrases.	Do not guess or make up what you think you have heard.
If you are unsure about something during the meeting, ask for clarification.	Do not lose concentration.
Compile the minutes immediately after the meeting while your memory is still fresh.	Do not run out of paper, pen ink, or a sharp pencil.
Write the minutes legibly and with clear headings for each agenda topic (i.e. main points discussed; decisions taken; agreed actions).	Do not forget to ask the chairperson about the level of detail required.
Check the accuracy of the minutes with the chairperson before distribution.	Do not panic!
File copies of each meeting in order to keep accurate records.	
Practice as often as you can (even during informal conversations).	

GUIDELINES FOR TAKING MINUTES AT A MEETING

1) Obtain the meeting agenda, minutes from the last meeting, and any background documents to be discussed.
2) Make sure that sufficient paper, pens and/or pencils are available.
3) Sit beside the chairperson to be able to ask for clarification or assistance as the meeting proceeds.
4) Write the heading: "Minutes of the meeting of _______________ (give the exact name)."
5) Under the heading, record the date, time and the place where the meeting is being held.
6) Circulate a sheet of paper for attendees to sign (this sheet can also help identify speakers by seating arrangement later in the meeting). If the meeting is an open one, write down only the names of the attendees who have voting rights.
7) Make a note of those who arrive late or leave early so that they can be briefed on what they have missed.
8) Write down items in the order in which they are discussed. (If item 8 on the agenda is discussed before item 2, keep the old item number but write item 8 in second place).
9) Record the agenda topics discussed and the names of the people who have introduced them.
10) Record whether decisions are taken or rejected, how the votes were taken (by show of hands, voice or other method), and whether the votes were unanimous, large majority, or small majority. For small meetings, write the names of the attendees who approve, oppose or abstain from each decision.
11) Focus on recording actions taken by the group. Only record a brief summary of the discussion if some people who should be present have not attended so that they can be informed later. Avoid writing down the details of each discussion.

TIPS

- You do not need to record topics that are irrelevant to the business at hand (taking minutes is not the same as taking dictation).
- If you have questions, consult only the chairperson, not the attendees.
- As the person taking the minutes, you do not participate in the meeting. However, you do need to concentrate fully on the proceedings and listen attentively throughout.
- Practice using key words, abbreviations, and/or symbols to represent words or phrases.

TRANSCRIBING MINUTES

First Steps

1) Write up the minutes soon after the meeting, while your memory of the event is still fresh.

2) Follow the format used for previous minutes.

3) When decisions are made, begin these sections with: DECISION.

4) Make sure all Action Points are clear and complete (what is to be done, by whom, and by when). Either write them with the agenda topic in the body of the minutes or list them together in a table at the end of the minutes.

5) Consider attaching proposals, budgets, reports or other supplementary material to the minutes in an appendix.

6) Write: Submitted by: ______________ (write your name), and then the date.

Next Steps

1) Give the minutes to the chairperson to check for accuracy.

2) Make amendments, if necessary.

3) Distribute to the appropriate people.

4) Make a note of who the minutes have been sent to and when (the date).

5) File a copy for record keeping purposes.

EFFECTIVE LISTENING

What is the problem?

The main problem with listening is that we do not usually recognise that it requires a conscious effort. After all, we do it all the time. There is a tendency to assume that the responsibility for the success or failure of communication rests with the speaker; however, the listener has an equally important part to play. Listening is an active not a passive process. It is something that can be done well or badly, and it is a fundamental part of every manager's collection of communication skills.

Of the four basic communication skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing – listening is the one that receives the least formal attention and yet, like the others, it is a skill that can be learned. We also spend a lot more time listening than we do reading or writing. It has been estimated that as much as 60 per cent of our working lives is spent listening – an important reason for getting it right. Effective listening saves time, reduces misunderstanding, is essential for good teamwork, and provides one of the best opportunities to show that we respect other people's views.

We listen for many different reasons.
We listen in order to:

- be polite;
- get precise information;
- understand a problem;
- sympathise;
- find fault; and so on.

How we listen will depend on why we are listening and what we are listening for. If we are aware of these things, we are likely to listen more effectively.

Barriers to effective listening

There are many reasons why we do not always listen as well and as carefully as we should.

These reasons include the following:

- We get too emotionally involved in the issues and hear only what we want to hear (or fail to hear what we wish to hear).
- We allow personal feelings about the speaker to prejudice our judgment of what he/she has to say (try to listen to the speech rather than the speaker).
- We are too impatient, too eager, to take over talking.

- → We may be thinking about something else and not giving the issue in question our full attention.
- → We are distracted by the appearance, mannerisms or style of the speaker.
- → We are easily distracted and think about other things instead of listening.

All these barriers can be demolished, but only if we devote the same care and attention to listening as we do to speaking or writing. Being aware of these barriers is the first step towards improving performance. IRDNC can develop a communication culture in which managers pride themselves on being good listeners.

Of course, the speaker could also have certain speaking tendencies that make listening difficult.

These speaking tendencies include the following:

- → too much information (which is difficult for the listener to absorb all at once);
- → speaks to rapidly; and so on.

By helping the speaker to become aware of these tendencies (without appearing too critical), the difficulties can often be resolved.

Being a good listener

What are the characteristics of a good listener?

A good listener:

- → always knows what he/she wishes to achieve from a dialogue;
- → always develops a strategy for achieving it;
- → always prepares by doing background reading and having a clear view of the purpose of the exchange;
- → gives advance consideration to the kinds of questions that will be appropriate, how to word them sensitively, and how to gauge reaction;
- → allows the speaker to finish without interrupting and without finishing sentences on the speakers behalf;
- → maintains eye contact;
- → avoids inappropriate body language (e.g. yawning, looking out of the window, falling asleep, glancing at the time, etc.);
- → avoids leading or deliberately embarrassing questions;
- → remembers that dialogue is not about winning and losing but achieving a shared understanding;
- → uses questions to create further listening opportunities;
- → confirms his/her understanding with the speaker; and
- → generally does whatever is necessary to maximise the value of the dialogue.

Being seen to listen

It is not enough simply to listen well – it is essential to be seen (by the speaker) as listening well. There is nothing worse than talking to an expressionless, silent listener. Speakers need to be reassured that they are making sense and to be encouraged to give of their best . Non – verbal communication is critical. Think about the effect a yawn at the wro

You are the lucky owner of a sophisticated range of facial expressions, gestures and postures which can make life easier for the speaker and his/her exchange more profitable for both of you.

Making the most of spare capacity

It has been calculated that people talk at about 120-150 words per minute, are capable of hearing and making sense of at least 400 words per minute, and can think at 800 words per minute . This means that listeners have to ‘slow down’ in order to keep pace with the speaker, which can adversely affect concentration.

Such spare capacity can be used constructively. Listening is an active process which involves continuously monitoring what is being said; analysing its relevance and its connections with things you already know and the action likely to be required of you. If you can do all this, many workplace conversations are likely to seem a lot less dull.

Conscious hearing

Effective listening has been defined as ‘conscious hearing’. The value of such a definition is that it stresses the importance of consciously polishing up an essentially unconscious act. By becoming conscious of the ways we listen and respond, we are likely to improve both.

The importance of an open mind cannot be overstated. Listening carefully to someone does not imply that you agree with what they say and, in any case, you are not always required to judge whether or not what they are saying is correct.

Even in a conflict situation, you will do best to first listen carefully to what the other person has to say; and then you can debate what you regard as the weak point of that person’s position.

Remember, an argument – no matter how vigorous or therapeutic, no matter how much fun –may be little more than a failure to communicate.

FORMAT FOR TAKING MINUTES

Committee Meeting Minutes

1. **Name of the Conservancy** (if not on headed paper)
2. **Date / Venue**
3. **Attendance**
4. **Absent with apology / Absent without apology**
5. **Minutes of previous meeting**

Discussion - Point	Resolution / Decision	Action + Due Dates

6. **Discussions**

Discussion - Point	Resolution / Decision	Action + Due Dates + Who's Responsible

7. **Any other business**

Discussion - Point	Resolution / Decision	Action + Due Dates + Who's Responsible

8. **Date for next Committee meeting**

Minutes read and adopted on (date of Committee meeting): ___________________________

Sign as the true reflection of the discussions:

Chairperson: ______________________________

Person who took the minutes: ______________________________

Office Administration

WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM

Venue: ______________________________ **Date:** ________________________

Facilitator/s: ____

Evaluation		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	The facilitator was knowledgeable about the workshop content.					
2.	The workshop content was well presented by the facilitator.					
3.	The workshop content was relevant.					
4.	The workshop content was easy to understand.					
5.	I gained new information.					
6.	I learnt new skills.					
7.	The allocated time for the workshop was sufficient.					
8.	The workshop met my expectations.					
9.	**Workshop logistics:**					
a)	Notice for the workshop was given on time.					
b)	The venue was appropriate.					
c)	Transport was well organised.					
d)	Meals and accommodation were satisfactory.					

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

1. **Which aspect (or aspects) of the workshop did you find the most valuable, and why?**

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2. **Do you have any other comments/suggestions that could help with improving future workshops?**

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3. **Do you need any follow-up training, or training in other areas?**
   If so, please list them.

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