Methodological Guide for Workshops on Anti-Rights Discourses and Strategies

BASED ON A PILOT WORKSHOP ORGANIZED IN MONTEVIDEO, FEBRUARY 10-11, 2019
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AKAHATA, Working Team on Sexualities and Genders, is a not-for-profit organization that brings together Latin American activists. It is based in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and works to protect, promote and advance human rights related to sexualities and genders.

AKAHATA organizes training for activists across the region; provides technical support to submit alternative reports to different UN mechanisms; is a member of the LGTTTBI Coalition doing advocacy in the Inter-American Human Rights system; the Sexual Rights Initiative (SRI) that does advocacy with the International Human Rights System and of a Sexuality Policy Watch (SPW) project called Gender and Politics in Latin America¹ that is conducting case studies on anti-gender policies in ten countries - Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

Through SRI, Akahatá is also active in the Observatory of the Universality of Rights (OURs), a coalition of activists and organizations from across the world that produced the report Rights at Risk on which the contents of the Pilot Workshop were based.

AWID is an international, feminist, membership organization committed to achieving gender equality, sustainable development and women’s human rights. AWID coordinates the OURs and has worked with Akahatá in the design and facilitation of the Pilot Workshop as well as in producing and disseminating this Guide.

This is a guide to apply participatory methodologies to work on the issue of discourses and strategies deployed by anti-rights groups, also known as anti-gender, catholic and evangelical fundamentalists, ultra-conservatives and other similar terms. These groups that call themselves “pro-life and pro-family” are on the rise in the Latin American region in a systematic and coordinated way, using common discourses and strategies that are adapted to the different national contexts.

This Guide is designed for feminist, LGBTI, and other pro-sexual rights groups, as well as political parties interested in reflecting together on this issue.

The different exercises we propose are based on a Pilot Workshop held in Montevideo on February 11-12, 2019, in which journalists, LGBT and feminist activists from Uruguay, Paraguay and Argentina participated.

For each proposed activity, we have included a “Getting Ready” section that describes the materials you will need as well as one called “On the Go” that outlines how it will actually happen. We know that human creativity knows no bounds and that you will certainly think of other activities, other materials, etc. Also, each activity can be done on its own but can also be combined with others – based on the specific issues that you want to prioritize in your collective reflection.

If you use this Guide, modify it, have a great experience (or the opposite) you can use our email akahata@akahataorg.org or our Twitter account (@akahataorg) to tell us how it went and share your photos, along with your country and city. We would love to share your experiences with others!

¹ https://sxpolitics.org/GPAL/index.php
Workshop Goals

- To deepen our knowledge on how anti-rights groups operate
- To understand and analyse anti-rights discourses, identifying why they resonate with different audiences.
- To acquire elements and resources to build effective responses to those discourses

Workshop content

- Examples of anti-rights discourses on values, family, sovereignty, nationalism and “gender ideology” as a term used to disqualify feminisms, gender perspectives and other frameworks.
- A description of strategies used by anti-rights, fundamentalist, conservative and/or anti-gender groups.
- An analysis of our own responses – strengths and weaknesses.

Our main theoretical references for the workshop content were the OURs’ Rights at Risk Report (2017) and the articles compiled in «¡Habemos Género! La Iglesia católica y la Ideología de género» (2018) published by Sexuality Policy Watch (SPW) and Akahatá.

Note: It is recommended that there be two facilitators in-charge of this workshop so they can share the work and when one is leading an activity, the other can act as an observer. We also suggest that you document the workshop, either by having one or more persons whose specific function will be note-taking, or by filming or recording it (after having sought participants’ permission to do so). If you plan to take photos or film the workshop, it is important that you announce this at the beginning, seek participants’ permission to do so, explain to them how their images will be used and respect the decision of those who say that they don’t want their images recorded and/or circulated.
# Proposed Agenda

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<td><strong>Activity # 2</strong> Anti-rights discourses: their structure, why they work</td>
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<td><strong>Day 2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Activity # 5</strong> Focusing: When do our – and their - strategies work and why?</td>
<td>If time allows, you can add an activity on the fault-lines between our groups and how they are manipulated by anti-rights actors to our disadvantage.</td>
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DAY One

Activity #1

Getting Ready

(Please take into account that it is always best to complete the Getting Ready stage before participants are in the room).

What do you need to prepare?

1. **A flipchart sheet** (could also be any poster board or similar material of 32 x 45 inches) stuck on the wall.

   This is the sheet on which participants will write their expectations, what the workshop has given them and any suggestion they may have to assess and improve this activity. On the first day they will write only the expectations and by the end of the second day, during the evaluation, they will add the rest.

2. Three cards for each participant: one green, one red and one yellow.

3. A blank flipchart sheet labelled “Ground Rules” and also stuck on the wall.
Introductions, ground rules and expectations
Approximate length: 1 hour. Suggested timing: 9:00 – 10:00 am

Participants are asked to introduce themselves by sharing:

- Their names
- The pronouns they want people to use to refer to them
- Something that they think is key for other participants to know about them (could be professional, personal, anything)
- A ground rule they want to propose for working together in the workshop

Facilitator explains that each ground rule that is proposed will be “voted” by the group using the cards (here you could make reference to how important it is to start by setting a common and agreed-upon ground when building a strategy together):

- if they agree, they raise the green card
- if they disagree, they raise the red card
- if the proposal is not clear or they have any doubts, they raise the yellow card

If all cards are green, the facilitator writes the ground rule on the “Ground rules” flipchart. If there are yellow cards, those who raised them ask their questions or share their doubts, with the person who proposed the ground rule clarifying or responding, and then the group proceeds to vote. If there are red cards, the proposal is dismissed.

Once all participants have introduced themselves, the facilitator reads the Ground rules, asks if anyone has questions or objections and if there is none, the group adopts the ground rules.

To conclude this activity, participants are invited to go to the “Expectations” flipchart and to write one expectation each that they have about the workshop. They are told that on the last day we will all come back to this flipchart to check if expectations were met or not.
What do you need to prepare?

1. When participants confirm their participation in the workshop, send an email to each participant asking them to share one example of an “anti-rights discourse” that has been successful/effective in their context along with an example of discourse in response to an anti-rights attack (also successful or effective) that upholds women’s or LGTBI rights, the secular state, or similar positions.

You will find below a template for this email message:

Dear XXX,

Thanks for accepting our invitation to participate in the workshop on anti-rights discourses and strategies that will take place in XX on the dates XXXX.

As a preparatory activity for the workshop, we kindly ask you to choose one example of anti-rights discourse that you find particularly interesting to be analysed. It can be a short video, a media article, a post on social media, a piece of campaign material (e.g. a flyer), a meme, a manifesto, etc.

We would also like to ask you to look for one example of a response to an anti-rights attack – this can be a statement by an organization or political party, a video, a speech, etc.

Once you have selected your materials, please send them to XXXX.

Please do not hesitate in getting back to us if you have any questions. Your contributions are very important for the workshop. Many thanks and see you soon.

2. Four flash drives (or pen drives), each with copies of all discourses sent by participants and each discourse identified with the name of the participant and their geographical location.

Facilitators will need to make sure that the workshop location allows them to reproduce the discourses on video or audio, and will also need to make four computers available to participants so they can read the flash drives there.
3. **Three cloth bags** labelled with the names of the geographical locations participants are coming from (for example, “Uruguay”, “Paraguay” and “Argentina” for the Pilot Workshop). If you have more than three, you can group them. Inside each bag, place **coloured papers with the names of the participants from each location that have sent examples of discourses**.

4. **Four cards for the “Known Discourses”** (Protection; Gender Ideology; National Sovereignty and Values – see below) and **four cards that read “Others”**

## Known Discourses

### Card 1: Protection of the natural or traditional family
- The natural or traditional family (father, mother, children) must be protected from any State intervention that weakens parental authority and parental rights to decide about their children.
- To strengthen and protect the natural or traditional family is the solution for all social evils (like violence, addictions, etc.).
- Children have the right to grow in a natural or traditional family, as that is the best environment for their development and protection.

### Card 2: Gender Ideology
- There is a powerful radical ideology that seeks to abolish natural differences between the sexes and replace them by the wrong conception that people can choose what the proponents of this ideology call “gender”.
- This ideology is unnecessary because both sexes existing in nature are complementary and have specific roles and features – to respect those roles does not constitute discrimination.
- Gender ideology brings social disorder and frustration as individuals can only realize themselves and fully express their human dignity by fulfilling the role that nature has assigned them according to their gender.

### Card 3: Values
- Our society faces a crisis of values and is drowning in confusion and anxiety created by individualism and materialism.
- A “revolution of values” is needed to affirm that nobody is disposable, that all lives matter, that those who suffer need help and that what matters is not material wealth but to live in dignity, fulfilling one’s assigned role in society and in the family.
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5. Four printed copies of the Questions to work with discourses

**Questions to work with discourses**

- How is the discourse you are analysing specifically expressed in the example?
- By using that discourse in that particular situation, what are anti-rights actors trying to achieve? (e.g. which actions do they want to see happening, what feelings do they want to awaken, which ideas do they want to strengthen or eradicate, etc.?) What is their goal?
- How would you describe the language employed? (e.g. is it accessible, academic, emotional, etc.?). If your example includes images, please also think about their features (colours, what is shown, fonts and size of the text, what actions are portrayed, etc.)
- Whether we like it or not, many people listen to a discourse like the one you are analysing and agree with it. Why do you think that discourse manages to be effective?
- If you know of any example in which the discourse you are analysing or any other that is similar has not worked, discuss why – and what was different in that situation compared with others in which it was effective.

6. Room set-up and signs

In the previous activity (“Introductions, ground rules and expectations”), while participants write their expectations on the flipchart, facilitators will divide the room in as many sections as the “Known Discourses” (in our case, there were 4, but you may add other discourses that are relevant to your context). You can do this by sticking tape on the floor, placing chairs together, forming circles, etc. In each section, please place a sign to identify it (e.g. “Values Section”). Keep a blank sign in case participants propose another Section that you had not planned.

Blinded by scientific progress, human beings believe that they dominate nature, and that they can twist and exploit it. But there are laws above us that will always prevail over the wrongful pretension of knowing everything and being able to decide about everything.

Card 4: National sovereignty

- There are vested interests behind Gender Ideology: imperialist and economic powers have found a new way to bring less-developed countries into submission not just economically but also culturally. We must resist and defend our culture and our values.
- These vested interests envy us because we may be poor but we have healthy values (family, charity) that have already been lost in their countries. This is why they want to weaken us by having us plunge into social chaos through the imposition of foreign laws and values.
- Behind every apparently “progressive” agenda lies an economic advantage for colonial power (e.g. to increase profit for their pharmaceutical industries).
Explaining the activity - 15 minutes

- Facilitators explain the content and purpose of this activity (to analyse in depth anti-rights discourses and try to understand why they work).
- They add that we will work with some discourses that we know are used by these groups (the “Known Discourses” as identified in the Rights at Risk Report and summarized on the cards) but there will also be room for participants to identify other discourses.
- Facilitators “introduce” each of the Known Discourses and invite participants to volunteer to work specifically on one of them (ideally, each break-out group will bring together people from different geographical locations and organizations, and groups will also be of a similar size).
- Each group receives their corresponding Known Discourse card along with an “Others” card that they can use to note down other discourses that may come up in the example.
- Participants take their place in the Area that corresponds to the Known Discourse they will analyse and are given some time to read and become familiar with their cards.

Reading examples – 30 minutes

- Random selection of examples: Facilitators bring the cloth bags to the centre of the room. In the Pilot Workshop, each bag had the names of participants from one of the three countries that were represented (“Uruguay”, “Paraguay” and “Argentina). We asked a non-Uruguayan participant to take a paper from inside the “Uruguay” bag and to read the participant’s name written on the paper. The “chosen” participant was then invited to read, project or play the example they had contributed before the workshop. (You can follow the same procedure in whichever way you have chosen to group the names- what matters is that a “neutral” participant makes the choice!)
- In the Pilot Workshop, we repeated the procedure with a non-Paraguayan and a non-Argentinean selecting the remaining two examples. Then flash drives were distributed – one per group – and participants were told that after the break they were going to analyse the three “chosen examples” from the perspective of their specific Known Discourse.

Break – 15 minutes

Group analyses of Known Discourses through the examples contributed by participant (40 minutes)

- Participants come back to work in the “Known Discourse Section” of their choice. Facilitators distribute the Questions to work with discourses and add that: a) if participants are absolutely certain that their Known Discourse is completely absent from all the “chosen examples”, they are welcome to look through the other examples in the flash drive until they find one that allows them to complete their assignment and b) they can also keep in mind the possibility of identifying other discourses that they consider important to highlight.

Sharing and discussing the break-out groups’ conclusions (50 minutes)

- Each group presents a summary of their work and a plenary discussion takes place.

Proposed time for lunch: approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes. Suggested timing: 12:30 – 2:00 pm
Activity #3

Getting Ready

What do you need to prepare?

1. In the email that is sent to participants as described in the “Getting Ready” section for Activity #2, we also ask them to share an example of response to anti-right discourses that affirms women’s or LGTBI rights, the secular state or similar positions. You can use the same cloth bags from Activity #2 to select the examples that will be analysed to ensure diversity and representation of all geographical contexts. The examples provided by participants will be stored and clearly identified in the same flash drives used in Activity #2.

2. A card with the following questions for break-out groups work:

   - What are we speaking about in the messages analysed? Identify three key themes present in our discourses (no longer focusing on the anti-rights discourses). For instance, we can say that we speak of human rights, freedom, equality, equity, etc. Feel free to add a few more themes (one or two) if needed.

   - Identify the goal: what do we want to achieve with those messages?

   - Which features of the language employed can you identify? (e.g. is it accessible, academic, emotional, etc.?). If an example contains images, please also think about their features (colours, what is shown, letter fonts, what are the actors portrayed doing, etc.)

   - Identify what is valuable and strong in the messages analysed and what could be improved. What makes those messages work and what makes them fail? These are the strong and weak points of the discourses analysed.

On the Go

Our responses

Approximate length: 2 hours and 30 minutes. Suggested timing: 2:00 - 4.30 pm

- Random selection of examples: As in Activity #2, facilitators bring the cloth bags to the centre of the room (having removed from them the names of those participants whose examples were already selected). The same procedure as previous procedure is repeated to select three participants whose examples will be analysed in small groups, but this time the discourses are not read in plenary. Flash drives with the examples are distributed to each group. Participants can stay in the same groups as for Activity #2 or you can decide on a different configuration.

- Facilitators distribute the cards with questions to analyse our responses and groups set out to work (1 hour)

- Sharing in plenary – Each group shares their conclusions and this is followed by a general discussion (1 hour and 30 minutes).
Card 1: Influencing State actors

This includes the three powers (Executive, Legislative and Judiciary) as well as other State institutions (e.g. government schools or hospitals, etc.). Such influence can be exerted through different means, such as:

- taking over positions (by election and/or appointment)
- seducing, or putting pressure on and/or threatening officers in key positions
- undermining the weight of State institutions by circulating anti-State discourses, by creating parallel institutions and getting States to fund them (e.g. private schools, NGOs that provide health services, etc.)

Card 2: Developing and disseminating a “parallel science”

This strategy includes creating, funding and supporting – through study groups, educational institutions and others – the production of “science” based on religious-ideological anti-rights perspectives. It is complemented by the influence exerted so the spokespersons from these institutions occupy key positions in State institutions and have opportunities to communicate their ideas in the media, the educational system and other social spaces. Such “scientific” sources have taken the place of religious explanations in the discourse of many anti-rights movements.
### Card 3: Mobilizing

This strategy includes organizing demonstrations, rallies, public events and celebrations, and the whole process that goes from conceptualizing and goal-setting; outreach (deciding on who to reach out to and how to make people participate); the locations chosen; the slogans; the ‘merchandising’ (flags, dress-code, signs, etc.); media coverage and how these events are used to influence important actors (State and non-State).

### Card 4: Virtual advocacy

This includes online petitions; spreading fake news; creating social media groups; attacking those defending rights (activists, State officers, elected representatives and others); creating products specifically designed for virtual advocacy (memes, videos, gifs, etc.); interfering with virtual rights-advocacy spaces (infiltrating them, demanding that they be censored, etc.) and the relationships between online and off-line advocacy and mobilization.

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**2. Three copies of Guiding Questions to Analyse Strategies** (see below) – could be printed but also copied to the same flash drives used in Activities # 2 and 3, or to the three computers available for breakout group work.

**Guiding Questions to Analyse Strategies**

**Event to be analysed:**

1. What did anti-right groups set out to achieve?
2. Who supported them? How did they manage to attract, maintain and/or widen their support?
3. Which obstacles did they face? How did they overcome them?
4. Which of the Known Strategies did they use? Did they use any Other strategy that we have not mentioned?
On the Go

Anti-rights strategies
Approximate length: 3 hours. Suggested timing: 9:00 am – 12:00 pm (with a break)

Opening (10 minutes) – 9:00 - 9.10 am
- Facilitators ask that each participant share one conclusion, reflection, doubt, etc. from what the group has worked on the previous day.

Introducing the morning assignment (20 minutes) - 9.10 - 9.30 am
- Facilitators explain that in this session the group will analyse anti-rights strategies and read the Known Strategies Cards, leaving space for questions, clarifications, etc. Participants are told that they will also be able to identify Other strategies that are not in the cards.

Breakout group work (1 hour and 30 minutes) – 9.30 – 11:00 am
- Participants are grouped based on their geographic location (countries, in the case of the Pilot Workshop). Each group is asked to select a key event that took place in their context in the last two years (could be a campaign, a discussion around a bill, etc.) for the analysis. They are invited to use the Guiding Questions to analyse the strategies deployed by anti-rights groups around that key event: what did they do? What worked and what did not work? And, why?

(Participants are given the option to decide if their group will stop for a 10 minute break at any point, or, if coffee and snacks are available, they want to pick them up and continue working)

Sharing and plenary discussion (1 hour) – 11:00 am – 12:00 pm
Sharing (30 minutes)
- Participants are asked to present the strategies they analysed “in role”, that is, from the perspective of anti-rights groups as if they were in a workshop with their peers. Those asking questions or comments are also required to do it “in role”.

Plenary discussion (30 minutos)
- Participants move out of their roles and reflect together.

Alternative additional activity to work on strategies
Approximate length: 1 hour

Role play: Defending a pro-rights argument in three not-very-easy situations.
The purpose of this exercise is to develop skills to adjust our messages to situations where we need to be quick, flexible and clear.

Preparing the situations:
assigning roles, selecting arguments (pro and against rights), etc. 30 minutes

Role plays performed in plenary: 30 minutes

In the Pilot Workshop, the following three situations were played out:
The elevator (2 minutes)
- A middle-aged neighbour takes the elevator with you. Checking the phone, your neighbour says “These Sexuality Education people are mad. Children need to study not waste time with such degeneracy.” In the 2 minutes that the elevator takes to reach her or his floor, how would you explain to your neighbour why CSE is useful? Please be polite and use accessible language.
Meeting with a State officer (10 minutes):

- A city Mayor calls both anti-right and LGTBI groups to discuss if the city’s LGTBI Pride Parade should take place or not that year. The Mayor is set on keeping a “neutral” position – he or she is not particularly inclined to any side, but has an interest in boosting her/his own position and benefitting his/her administration.

On TV (10 minutes):

- One or two feminist activists are invited to a popular general interest show in a commercial TV station to speak about the upcoming International Women’s Day demonstration. The hosts are not particularly hostile but their focus is on keeping the show alive, the ratings high and the audience entertained. Also, they have a lot of sponsored content to insert so interruptions to what the activists are saying will be ongoing.

Activity #5

Getting Ready

What do you need to prepare?

1. Make sure to have the Known Strategies cards available in the room as well as the Other Strategies cards if participants have filled them in.

2. Prepare big colourful papers with numbers from 1-5 and place them in a line on the floor, at a good distance from each other.

3. Choose one or more symbols of feminist, LGBTI or other pro-rights movements in your context (e.g. rainbow flags or pins; green, violet or yellow handkerchiefs, etc.) and also of anti-right groups. If your workshop has 20 participants, you will need 10 feminist or LGBTI symbols and 10 anti-rights ones.

4. Prepare one flipchart that reads (this is the Scores Flipchart):
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>Average score</th>
<th>Average score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ANTI-RIGHTS</td>
<td>OUR MOVEMENTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influencing State actors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Developing and disseminating a parallel science/scientific sources</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobilizing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virtual advocacy</td>
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<tr>
<td>The most mentioned strategy in the Others card</td>
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<tr>
<td>The second most mentioned strategy in the Others card</td>
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5. Prepare one **flipchart** with the following content (you may need to use two flipcharts stuck together so you have more space to write) - this is the Strategies Flipchart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>ANTI-RIGHTS</th>
<th>OUR MOVEMENTS</th>
<th>WHAT WOULD WE NEED TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>+</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
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<td>Influencing State actors</td>
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As participants come in, the facilitators give one feminist/LGBTI or anti-rights symbol to each person.

Explain that we are going to rate the effectiveness of the different strategies we have discussed in the workshop – of our own movements and of the anti-rights – and then analyse what makes them more or less effective, and what we would need for the strategies we employ to have greater impact.

Rating Strategies (50 minutes)

Facilitators read the first of the Known Strategies “Influencing State actors”.

Participants with the feminist/LGBTI or anti-rights symbols position themselves by the number that expresses how effective they think our movements or the anti-rights are in implementing that strategy in their context. [Participants will rate strategies corresponding to the symbols they are wearing]. Facilitators explain that 1 means “not effective at all” and 5 means “very effective”. Once all participants are ‘in place’ one of the facilitators calculate the average score for anti-rights and for our movements and writes them in the Scores flipchart.

Without abandoning their positions and starting with the “anti-rights”, participants explain why they have assigned their rates, what contributes to effectiveness (“+”) and what undermines it (“-”). One of the facilitators writes a summary of their comments in the Strategies Flipchart. Participants with the feminist/LGBTI symbols do the same.

Repeat the process for each of the remaining three Known Strategies and – if time allows – you can also add one or two of the strategies that participants identified in the Others card (the most frequently mentioned or any that seems to be specially relevant)

Improving our strategies (40 minutes)

Participants put their symbols aside and sit down in plenary. For each Strategy – starting with the one that got the lowest score for our movements – facilitators guide a discussion on what we need in order to become more effective at that strategy and how to get it (e.g. we need dedicated staff for social media advocacy we will make our funders aware of that and request money to do it, etc.)

Break (30 minutes)
Activity #6

Ending on a high note
Length: 30 minutes. Suggested timing: 4:00 - 4.30 pm

Our successes (20 minutes)

- Participants are asked to break out per geographical location (“countries” in the Pilot Workshop)
- Each group will select a recent achievement they have had in their struggles. It could of course be a change in legislation or policies but it can also be a success in terms of organizing, influencing public opinion, etc.
- Groups are asked to articulate why they think it was an achievement and identify 5 factors that were key for that achievement.

Plenary for discussing the work done in breakout groups (10 minutes)

Activity #7

Closure

On the Go

Evaluating expectations and making suggestions
Approximate length: 30 minutes. Suggested timing: 4.30 – 5:00 pm

- Facilitators invite participants to go back to the “Expectations” flipchart that was filled in on the first day and to write there if those expectations were fulfilled or not and why. (Please make sure that facilitators are not around while participants write, as it may feel intimidating)
- Ask them also to write what the workshop has given them and any suggestions/proposal they have for improving or enriching it. (Please convey that all opinions are important, heard and welcome – whether they are positive or negative. This will enable participants to express themselves honestly)
- Facilitators – and/or participants – read the chart out loud and discuss its contents.