



**STEP 5: DEVELOPMENTAL
(ISSUE RELATED) AWARENESS**

**Cre8
in 8**

*Understanding your
challenges is the first
step in terms of
addressing them.*

INTRODUCTION

‘Art is development. Art, in all its forms: music, dance, drama, painting, etc., is a magnification of life: an extension and representation of how we live that mirrors our hopes, anxieties and dreams. Art helps us express our feelings and thoughts. Art is a process that empowers us and helps us to discover who we are, besides helping us map out where we want to go and what we want to be. Art is not a process, it is development.’ (Sami Gathii)

The ‘Cre8 in 8’ Method is a capacity-building process that includes artistic skills training and personal development. It is often said that an artist holds a mirror up to society. If that is so, then the artist must be aware of the issues that affect his or her society: social, political, economical and cultural.

Step 5 of the ‘Cre8 in 8’ Method provides a guideline for organising that capacity-building process by engaging the target group and the larger community through so-called focus group discussions (FGDs).

CONTENT AND GUIDELINES

- Develop a focus-group questionnaire (also known as an FGD flow; see the example below).
- Appoint a moderator (usually someone from the project team) and a note taker (usually one of the participants; make sure they are well briefed).
- Gather the focus group together and make sure everyone is comfortable. It is recommended to have everyone sit in a circle.
- Conduct a focus-group discussion.

EXAMPLE OF AN FGD FLOW

1. Who are young people?

Define who you are, as individuals or as a group. The definition of youth is conventionally based on age but it less conventionally it could – also – be based on other characteristics and circumstances.

2. What are their challenges?

Identify the issues affecting young people, as seen from political, social, economic and cultural contexts; What are those that affect only girls or only boys?

3. What causes those challenges?

Think about the possible internal causes, external causes, circumstantial causes, preventable and non-preventable causes, who are to blame, etc.

4. How do those challenges affect them?

Think about what the effects of those challenges and how do they manifest themselves in the lives of young people? For example teenage pregnancy forces girls to drop out of school, etc.

5. What are suggestions to solving those challenges?

Think about possible solutions, from the perspective of the local context. Consider short-term and long-term solutions, people-driven solutions, practical vs theoretical solutions, etc.

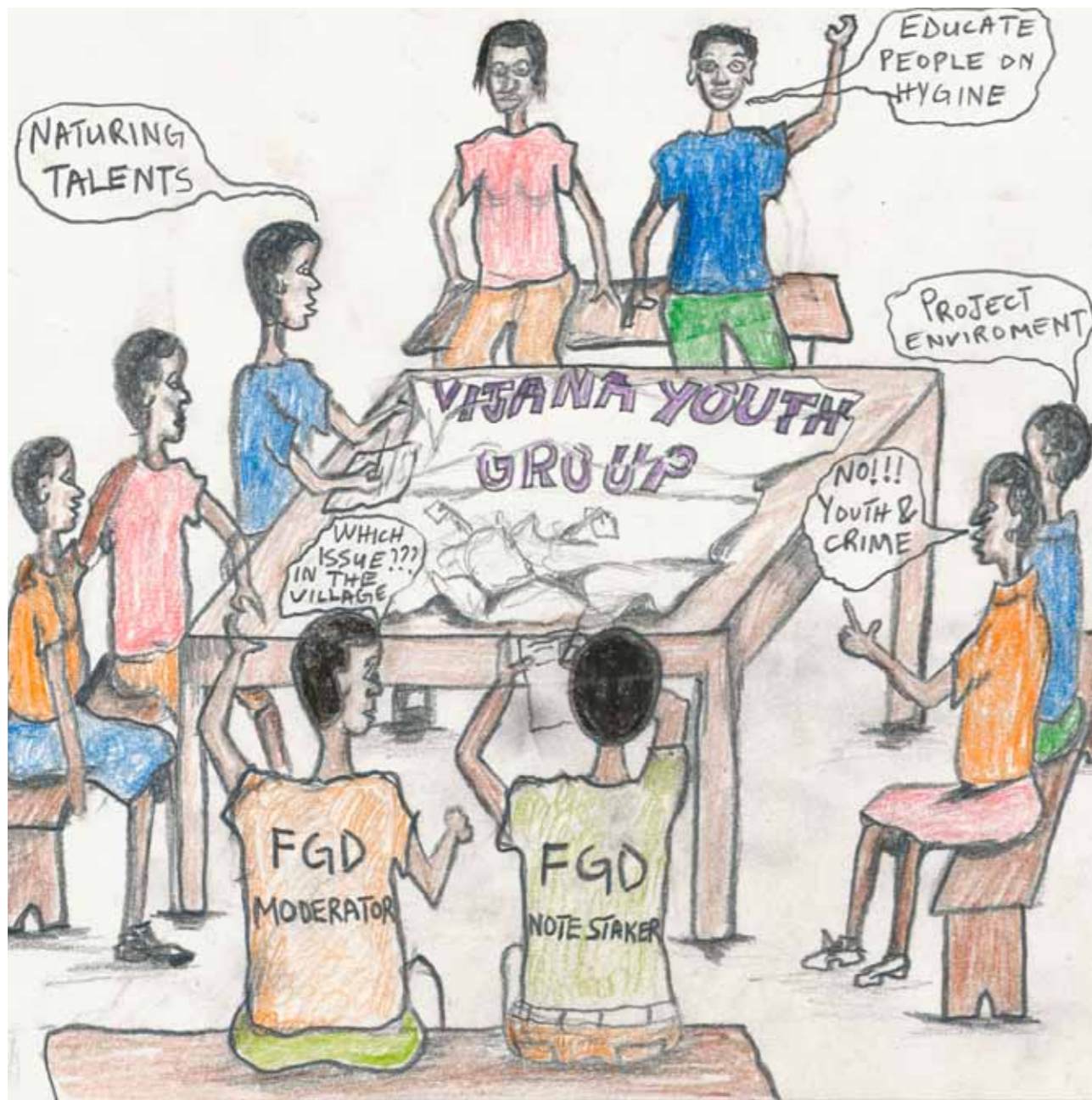
6. What is the role of young people in solving those challenges?

Consider the responsibility of young people in terms of being part of the solution through active participation.

A Cre8 project uses focus-group discussions to help the participants reflect on issues that affect them, both positively and negatively. A moderator who is aware of the FGD process leads the session. Note takers are appointed from among the participants document the issues and information shared.

The FGD should follow a logical flow to ensure that the participants not only raise issues but

also analyse them critically and assist each other in putting them into context. If they come up against any challenges, they should suggest solutions to them. It is important that the participants are encouraged to share their discussion points based on their personal experience and to discuss topical issues from their local context, for instance how inefficiency at the national level of government affects their village’s water supply and how that, in turn, has affected



their schooling or other personal circumstances. This will help the participants to view 'the world' from a personal point of view. That is both liberating and empowering as they begin to see themselves as part of the bigger picture. It also encourages them to make comments on issues they would otherwise think do not immediately concern them, especially when they cannot connect such 'global issues' to their own lives.

The moderator is encouraged to replace the term 'young people' with 'you' and 'me', 'myself' or 'I' to help the participants discuss the issues in the first person. Among other things, the FGD aims to help the participants:

- define themselves
- view themselves within the context of the larger community
- contextualise issues affecting them and their community
- share and exchange ideas and experiences
- take responsibility for looking for solutions.
- become empowered, active participants and to articulate their role as leaders in their community.

The moderator gets the participants to vote on the most significant points under each issue, which in turn forms the basis for the group's statement. The group decides on how many points to include, although five points per category is recommended.

Those issues are what will form the background of the participants' presentation.

EXAMPLE

The Jukwa la Vipaji and AMKA projects with Mkombozi in Moshi, Tanzania aimed at creating a platform where participants, mostly former street children, could share their experiences and sensitise other children and the community at large to issues affecting street children. This project approach divides the issues into four process-based categories:

1. reasons that lead children to go live on the street
2. challenges that affect children while they are living on the street
3. solutions that can help stop children from going to live on the street
4. general social, cultural, economic and political impacts.

All 50 participants gave their input for each category. Each person's input was discussed openly, with the contributors explaining their points. After all points had been listed, the group voted for the five most significant issues in each category. These form the basis for the participants' statement on the issue. The visual artists used this statement to develop three large backdrops that reflected it. These backdrops were extensively used for monitoring and evaluation

purposes, while also serving as the backdrop for performances.

CONCLUSION

With artistic projects, there is often a lack of balance between the form (the artistic expression) and the content (the developmental issue they are supposed to address). Cre8 has been able to strike a balance in this regard by engaging experts in different fields. It is important that the project statement, which is represented

by the performance, is able to address the developmental needs of the participants. It should help them deal with issues affecting them, for instance, while at the same time helping them explore and exploit their artistic talents. The project should be able to artistically inspire and entertain its audience, while also sensitising and educating them to various developmental issues as identified by the participants.



CHECK-OUT BOX

- **A report of the focus-group discussion**
- **A list of the most significant issues or challenges as identified by the participants**
- **A list of the causes of those challenges as identified by the participants**
- **A list of possible solutions to those challenges as identified by the participants.**