



Stepping Stones Training Guidelines



1 INTRODUCTION

Strategies for Hope launched the Stepping Stones training package in December 1995, and has now distributed manuals and videos to over 2,000 organisations more than 100 countries. As interest is growing in Stepping Stones, more and more people are thinking about how best to use the package. Many are concluding that training is important if Stepping Stones is to become more widespread and to be used effectively. The Stepping Stones package is very detailed, and was designed so that it could be used by skilled people. Although many people have used the materials without any special training, others feel that they would like training.

In these guidelines we aim to offer you ideas about training. We have based the ideas on feedback which we have received from organisations that have already run Training of Facilitators (ToFs) and Training of Trainers (ToTs) courses. We also looked at experiences from other, similar projects. The guidelines have been produced in consultation with the Stepping Stones TAP Advisory Group, and we would welcome your comments on them.

As the use of Stepping Stones spreads, people are also finding that they need to *adapt* the package, to make it more appropriate for use in the places where they live. We will not deal with that topic here, however, but in some separate guidelines. *Please contact us if you would like a copy of the [adaptation guidelines](#).*

A note on Stepping Stones terminology:

Trainers	are	people who train Trainers and Facilitators
Facilitators	are	people who facilitate Stepping Stones workshops in the community
ToT Courses	are	Training of Trainers courses
ToF Courses	are	Training of Facilitators courses
trainees	are	people attending ToTs or ToFs
SS workshops	are	the series of Stepping Stones sessions which take place at community level
participants	are	community members who form peer groups for SS workshops



2 THINKING ABOUT TRAINING

To think about Stepping Stones and training issues we focused on five key questions: *Why? Who? What? How? And where?* (These are all covered in detail in the 'Before you Begin' section in the Stepping Stones manual, pages 1 to 22). Of course, these questions are all connected, but to try and make things clear we will here look at each question in turn. We stress that *there is no 'right' answer for any of these questions; what is best will vary according to local circumstances.* For example, how many people are interested in running or participating in a training course, and what resources including skills, time and money are available. We deal with the key questions of why-who-what-how-and-where in sections 2.1 to

2.5. The main points are summarised in a table in section 2.6. Finally, in section 3 we outline an exercise to help you to explore the options and choose what is best for your situation.

2.1 WHY train people as Facilitators and as Trainers?

We think it is important at an early stage of planning to have a good idea of WHY the training is needed. This understanding needs to be shared by all the people and organisations involved. If people do not agree about why they are running the training there will be confusion, and the training is likely to be less effective.

Here are some reasons why you may need to train **Facilitators**:

- because the people who facilitate Stepping Stones workshops should ideally have experienced Stepping Stones for themselves. The Stepping Stones process can be exciting and empowering for participants, but also challenging and even frightening sometimes. For the Facilitators it is much easier if they have faced up to their own personal issues themselves, before leading others through the process. A ToF run as a Stepping Stones workshop, where the trainee facilitators are the participants, gives them this experience;
- there are not enough women and men available with the skills, knowledge, experience and qualities to be Facilitators;
- there are some Facilitators, but they need others from their area or organisation to be trained, so that they can make up the teams of 2 women plus 2 men needed to run Stepping Stones workshops;
- the Facilitators are skilled, but a training needs assessment reveals that there are specific gaps in their experience, for example:
 - using participatory approaches to adult learning
 - working with peer groups
 - assessing needs using participatory approaches
 - work on sexual health issues
 - understanding of gender issues
 - evaluating work with community members

The reasons you may have for training **Trainers** are likely to be similar to those for training Facilitators.

Although the main reasons *why* you may need to run a ToF or ToT course are likely to relate to extending the skills of the participants, you may have some other reasons for bringing them together to train. For example:

- in order to build **networks** between Stepping Stones users, so that they can support each other and perhaps work together;
- in order to **adapt** the Stepping Stones workshop activities together, for example, to alter some of the exercises or to devise new topics which are needed in that area.

2.2 WHO to train?

2.2.1 Profiles of WHO to train

Selecting WHO to train is a very important stage. Page 5 of the Stepping Stones manual has a quiz which outlines the skills, experience and attitudes required to be a Facilitator. This quiz is a good place to start when you think about who might be trained to be a **Facilitator**. You may also want to consider:

- **Skills and experience:** as outlined in 2.1 above, the main aim of a ToF course is likely to be to broaden the skills and experience of the trainees. In order to do this successfully, the trainees will need a minimum level of skills prior to the training. The level which is appropriate will vary according to circumstances, particularly the amount of training which you are able to do. However, as a minimum we suggest that potential Facilitators need to be:
 - trusted and respected by the communities with whom they work.
 - literate in the language of the manual which will be used (English or French if you are using the original manual, or the local language if you are using a local adaptation of the manual);
 - fluent in the language spoken by the community members;
- **Ability and commitment:** the Facilitators will need these if they are going to put their skills to use by running Stepping Stones workshops with community members. What they are likely to need includes:
 - *personal* enthusiasm for Stepping Stones (so avoid situations where a senior manager instructs reluctant staff to attend);
 - the commitment of others to support them. In many cases this will mean that the trainee Facilitator belongs to, or works for, an organisation which has a commitment to running Stepping Stones workshops in the community.
 - other trained Facilitators to work with. While a single, skilled and enthusiastic person can make good use of parts of SS, full-scale Stepping Stones workshops need a team of trained Facilitators.
- **Age and gender:** as the age and gender of Facilitators in Stepping Stones workshops should ideally reflect the characteristics of the peer groups, it is important to get a mix of male and female, and of older and younger trainees at a ToF. You should think about this with regard to the teams which intend to use Stepping Stones, which should ideally be made up of a younger woman, an older woman, a younger man and an older man. A ToF for 6 teams of Facilitators would therefore have 24 trainees - 6 younger women, 6 older women, 6 younger men and 6 older men.
- **Community volunteers or paid staff?:** paid staff are, in general, more likely to have the necessary skills and experience to facilitate Stepping Stones workshops. Experience so far suggests that it is best to start with them. However, after a workshop, there may be some community members from the peer groups who have become well respected by others in their groups and who want to learn how to facilitate Stepping Stones. You could consider training them at this stage. One possible drawback might be their limited literacy. However, we think that having the right *attitude* to shared learning and *respect* from the community is more important than having a Western education.

If we now look at the profile of WHO to train as **Trainers**, there are very similar points to consider:

- **Skills and experience:** as with the Facilitators, you will need to consider what minimum level of skills and experience will allow trainees realistically to become good Trainers. As a minimum we suggest they need to be:
 - literate in the language of the original manual (English or French)
 - able to communicate with the trainee Facilitators

- experienced in participatory training
- at ease with talking about sexual health issues
- **Ability and commitment:** as with the Facilitators, a potential Trainer needs to be able to put what they learn to use by training Facilitators. They will need personal enthusiasm. They will also need the support of their organisation to spend time on training others. You may think that freelance trainers - who do not work for a particular organisation - could play an important role in training others.
- **Age and gender:** in order for Trainers to run through Stepping Stones in a ToF course you will need a mix of Trainers. As a minimum you will need a male Trainer to work with the male trainee Facilitators, and a female Trainer for the female trainees. Currently there seems to be a shortage of male Trainers to work on Stepping Stones ToF courses.

2.2.2 The organisations that the trainees come from

In addition to the characteristics of the individuals, we suggest that you should also consider the organisations which the trainees represent.

In some cases a large NGO may wish to run a course purely for its own staff. There are many advantages to this, as the trainees are likely to use similar approaches. However, there are also benefits from inviting people from other organisations, for example, sharing experiences and building a local network. We think that this may be particularly rewarding if the trainees represent organisations which work in the same locality.

Another aspect is the types of organisations which the trainees represent. For instance, there are local CBOs, national and international NGOs. There are also organisations which work in the broad field of development while others concentrate on HIV and AIDS. Having people from a mix of organisations at a training brings a breadth of experience. It may also allow for cost-sharing, with, perhaps, wealthier organisations subsidising the costs for trainees from poorer groups. However, we think that too many differences between the trainees can be disruptive. We suggest that the trainees should have a certain amount in common in terms of the way in which they work, and the support that they can expect from their organisations.

2.2.3 Selecting WHO to train

Thinking about how to select the trainees, and who will do the selecting, is another important step. We suggest that the Trainers who are running the ToF or ToT course should have responsibility for selecting the trainees, or should share this task with the organisers of the course. Through their experience, they are likely to be in a good position to be able to assess the applicants, and to select a group whose members' needs are not too different. It may be appropriate to have some form of training needs assessment.

One method you could use is to send a questionnaire to applicants, to assess their suitability through a series of questions about their experience and circumstances. If possible, however, we think it is much better for you to speak directly with applicants, and with their managers. By talking you can get a better grasp of their skills and commitment to using SS, and their motivation for attending the training course. At this stage it is important that you can explain why the course is being run, in order that everyone can assess whether it is appropriate for a particular person to attend. It is helpful to have some clear criteria to help you to decide. You can also use these to explain your decisions to others.

2.3 WHAT to include in the training

The topics to be covered in the training will largely be determined by the training needs of the trainees.

We recommend that the basis for the training, be it a ToF or ToT, is to run it as a Stepping Stones workshop. If you do this, the trainees will **experience the Stepping Stones process** through activities both in their peer groups, and together as a 'community'. In addition to going through the Stepping Stones process, you will need to set aside time in which the trainees can **reflect on the experience**, and think about how to facilitate the activities themselves.

Going through the Stepping Stones manual should ensure that trainees:

- explore their own sexuality and sexual health issues
- get experience of using participatory approaches and techniques such as drawing exercises, role play and tableaux *and* have an understanding of how these differ from traditional 'teaching'
- experience the advantages of working in peer groups
- learn to use open and unprejudiced communication skills
- experience learning in a non-judgemental and gender sensitive environment, and understand the importance of this in their own facilitation
- understand the development of the four themes of the whole Stepping Stones process:
 1. group co-operation skills
 2. HIV and safer sex
 3. why we behave in the ways we do
 4. ways in which we can change
- learn the technical issues (topics on condom use, HIV)
- find out why behaviour change is so difficult

Additional themes which you might want to cover include:

- sessions on how to be a Facilitator or Trainer
- how to do basic monitoring
- theatre for development skills
- further participatory learning approaches, such as PRA to explore community needs in more depth
- what to do when conflicts arise during Stepping Stones workshops
- mentoring, shadowing and post-workshop support
- how to evaluate work with community members
- creative skills, so that people can adapt exercises or make up their own

You may also want to make time in your training schedule for the Trainers and trainees to think about **adapting** the Stepping Stones activities. Once they know more about SS, they may want to make changes to tailor the package to the situation in which they will use it. Sessions on adaptation are best placed towards the end of the training, when the trainees have had the chance to experience the whole process, and to reflect upon it.

2.4 HOW to conduct the training

The issues of why, who and what need to be resolved before moving onto how to conduct the training. Here we have divided the question of HOW into two parts: duration and frequency and ToTs or ToFs.

2.4.1 Duration and frequency

In terms of **duration** our experience suggests that people usually *underestimate* the time needed for a training course. This means that topics are often rushed, particularly in the final stages of the workshop. Both trainees and Trainers may find themselves overworked, and with too little time to reflect on what they are learning. A very tight schedule also does not allow for any flexibility, for example, if an additional training need is identified, or if a particular session needs to overrun.

Of course, the duration of a course is often limited by the resources available and the costs involved, and by the trainees' ability to attend a long course. We believe, however, that it is **not** safe to assume that some training, however little, is better than none. Inexperienced people with only a few days' training could create a lot of problems in the community if they then act as Facilitators.

Regarding **frequency**, many training courses are 'one-off' events with little follow-up after the course is over. We suggest that a 'rolling' series of shorter training courses over a period may be preferable to having a single lengthier training course. If you use a 'rolling' strategy the trainees can practise what they learn in between the courses. Also, the learning is broken up into smaller pieces, so they are less likely to become overwhelmed with too much new information at one time. Meeting several times may also increase the trainees' commitment, and provides more opportunities for them to share their experiences and for support networks to grow.

Here is an example of a rolling ToF

Month 1	1 or 2 week ToF course	introduction to Stepping Stones, experience some sessions, how to do participatory needs assessment
Month 2	trainees do their own jobs	participatory needs assessment
Month 3	1 or 2 week ToF course	experience more of Stepping Stones, how to facilitate, how to monitor. Decide on new sessions, or ones to amend
Month 4 to 6*	trainees do their own jobs	run Stepping Stones workshops with communities*, receive on-the-job visits from Trainers
Month 8	1 week ToF course	feedback, and training in participatory evaluation
Months 9-11	trainees do their own jobs	follow-up work with communities, including the post-workshop review after 6 months
Month 12	1 week ToF review course	review whole process and plan what to do next...

* The best timing for these workshops in your community will need to be worked out in advance, so that the participants from the community will be able to attend the workshop sessions regularly. Then the rest of the training course will need to be timed to take place before and after these months.

An alternative approach which might suit an organisation which has its own trainers would be to run an Stepping Stones workshop for staff, meeting once or twice a week in the same way that Stepping Stones workshops are run in the community. This would give the staff the

chance to really experience Stepping Stones. When it is finished, you could then add some sessions about how to facilitate Stepping Stones workshops, so that the staff could go on to use it in the community.

2.4.2 ToFs or ToTs first?

If your training is part of a larger strategy to use Stepping Stones, then you may also have the question "**which comes first, ToF or ToT?**" We initially expected that ToTs would need to come first, to build up the number of Trainers available to train Facilitators. However, this means that a lot of training has to be done before Stepping Stones workshops happen in the community. The alternative strategy, which we now think seems preferable, is that ToFs come first. People who might make good Trainers can then emerge from the ToFs, and attend a ToT later on.

2.5 WHERE is the training for?

This question is about the geographical coverage of the training, according to where the trainees work. Your training course could be for people working in a small locality, a district, a nation, a region or even on different continents.

We have organised two international ToTs, and found that the sharing of experiences and ideas by people from different countries was very exciting. However, the cultural differences also made it harder for the trainees to work in peer groups, and to think about adapting the materials for their own use.

In general, then, we would like initially to encourage training courses for people from similar cultures who have a shared language. This may mean that they are from the same area of a country, or from neighbouring countries which have a lot in common. This is particularly the case with ToFs, where there are distinct advantages in having Facilitators working in the same area, so that they can give each other support. If you bring only one such trainee from each area or organisation, it is rarely possible for them to use what they have learnt afterwards.

However, unless a very concentrated strategy of training is envisaged, it is unlikely that you would need to have a ToT at the local level. Far fewer Trainers are needed than Facilitators, and those with the skills and experience to be Trainers are also far fewer. ToTs, then, are likely to be held at the national and regional level.

2.6 Summary table

Key Questions	Things for you to consider	Our suggestions
WHY		
Why train people as facilitators or trainers?	<p>Would training Facilitators or Trainers help the spread and use of SS?</p> <p>Do we have a shortage of teams of skilled men & women to be Stepping Stones Facilitators or Trainers?</p>	<p>Do a needs assessment to see if there is a shortage of skilled men and women, and to see if there are gaps in their skills and experience.</p> <p>You might also use the training course as a way to build networks between the trainees, and to adapt Stepping Stones together.</p>

	Are there gaps in the skills and experience of our potential Facilitators or Trainers?	Be sure that everyone involved in organising the training agrees on the purpose of the training.
WHO		
Who should be trained?	<p>What skills and experience are needed to be a Trainer or Facilitator?</p> <p>What ability and commitment is needed?</p> <p>Do we have the right mix of trainees in terms of their age and gender?</p>	<p>Use the quiz on p5 of the Stepping Stones manual as a starting point.</p> <p>Consider our suggestions in section 2 of these guidelines in the light of the situation where you are.</p>
Which organisations should they come from?	<p>What are the advantages and disadvantages of having trainees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - from one organisation or from several? - from similar organisations or from very different ones? 	<p>A mix of organisations can be very useful, especially for building local networks. However, too many differences (eg in the scale, approach and resources of the organisations) can be disruptive.</p>
Who will be selected to be trained?	How should we decide who can attend the training?	<p>Allow the Trainers who are running the course to select or help to select the trainees.</p> <p>Talk to trainees and their managers, to assess their skills, motivation and ability to use what they learn. Do not depend on other people's casual opinions.</p> <p>Develop some criteria to decide who is suited to the training. Beware that you may come under pressure to accept people who do not meet the criteria.</p>
WHAT		
What should we include in the training?	<p>What are the training needs of the trainees?</p> <p>How can we ensure that they experience Stepping Stones?</p>	<p>A needs assessment will help you to identify their needs, and to prioritise what you to include.</p> <p>We suggest that trainees should experience Stepping</p>

	<p>Are there extra sessions that we should add?</p> <p>Do we also want to adapt Stepping Stones?</p>	<p>Stones for themselves, by working through Stepping Stones sessions in peer groups within your training course.</p> <p>Please read through the manual and, with others, think if there are any gaps. There may be some issues which are important where you work (eg anal sex) which are not covered in the manual.</p> <p>Try to assess whether the manual will need adaptation for where you work - for example, making the language more simple, making the process shorter, or including different topics. Please get in contact with us if you decide to adapt Stepping Stones - our guidelines on adaptation will help you with this.</p>
HOW		
How should we conduct the training?	<p>How many days long should the training be?</p> <p>Should we have a single training, or a rolling strategy of a series of training courses?</p> <p>Should we do a ToF or ToT first?</p>	<p>Many people underestimate the time needed, resulting in rushed workshops. We suggest 2 weeks for a ToF or ToT, assuming that the trainees are quite skilled and experienced.</p> <p>A rolling strategy seems preferable in terms of gradually building the skills and experience of the trainees. If you have a single training, please think about how to follow-up with the trainees, to support them and to learn about how they use Stepping Stones.</p> <p>We suggest that it makes more sense for ToFs to come first. You can build up a body of experience before scaling up to run a ToT. Some of the best Facilitators might be then trained as Trainers.</p>

WHERE		
Where is the training for? (or where will the trainees come from?)	<p>What are the advantages and disadvantages to having a training for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - people from different countries and cultures? - people from the same country or more similar cultures? 	<p>We suggest that it is best to have trainees from similar cultures - they can work together easily, and adapt the materials together. Regionally based training courses can, however, be useful if you want to build a network within your organisation.</p>



3. COMING UP WITH YOUR OWN STRATEGY

You may find the why-who-what-how-where approach useful as a basis for exploring which options best suit the situation where you are. This could be done at a meeting for people who are interested in Stepping Stones in your area. Assuming that the people already know about Stepping Stones, and are familiar with the approach, you could:

- ? Pin up large sheets of paper with the headings used in 2.1 to 2.5 above around the room.
- ? Give everyone small pieces of paper which they can pin or stick up.
- ? Ask them to walk around the room, writing their answers on the small pieces of paper - one idea to each piece. They should pin or stick them on to the large sheets.
- ? When everyone has finished, gather around the 'why' sheet of paper, and review the answers together. You can group similar answers together as you discuss them. When some kind of consensus emerges, move on to the next sheet.
- ? If you get stuck on one sheet, move on to another. You can come back to it later.
- ? When you have finished all the sheets, bring the outcomes together so that the overall strategy is clear. If it is not clear, you may need to discuss further.
- ? Ask those that are interested in running the training course to think about how to divide up the tasks involved. You may want to ask one organisation to take the lead, or you may choose to form a small committee of people who will share the workload.



FINALLY...

We hope that these guidelines are useful to you, and are sorry that they are so long! Please get in touch if you would like to discuss these issues further, or to make suggestions to us. We are very interested in hearing about your experiences and plans. We may also be able to put you in touch with others who are thinking about running a training course, or who are using Stepping Stones in your country.

Contact: Alice Welbourn: mail@steppingstonesfeedback.org

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