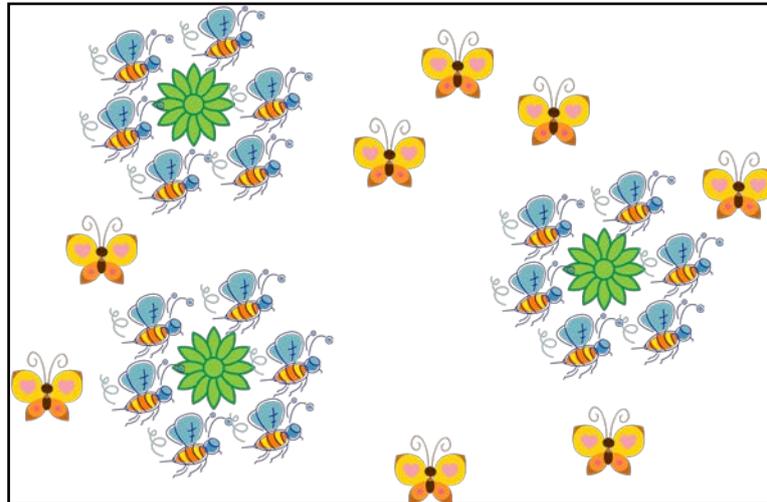


ShareFair 2011 at IFAD Rome

Gift Garden Session

Presented by Carl Jackson (Westhill Knowledge Group)

26 Sept 2011 @ 11:00-12:30 in Room C500



Introduction

This session will introduce you to the Gift Garden - a method I developed originally for an interactive session on climate adaptation for 80+ participants at a conference in Ethiopia earlier this year. It brings together elements of large group facilitation from approaches including World Cafe and Open Space with playful approaches from Applied Improvisation. What is distinctive about the Gift Garden method is that it enables large groups to build new ideas quickly, collaboratively and creatively drawing on individual experience.

Objective

This session aims to share the building blocks of the Gift Garden method and inspire you to use and adapt it in your own work in organisations, networks and communities.

How We'll Do It

In the next ninety minutes you'll get an overview of the method, a case study and the opportunity to experience Gift Garden for yourselves. If you are a social media junkie, feel free to report live from this session and use hashtags #sfrme and #giftgarden

Overview of Gift Garden Method (30 mins)

Gift Garden enables large groups to build new ideas quickly, collaboratively and creatively by adopting one rule and two roles.

The 'Yes And' rule for discussions in the Gift Garden is that you must build on what the last person has suggested. Yes And is core element of Applied Improvisation, an approach to serious play that draws on creative practices in the fields of drama, comedy and music. One way to understand this is to think about the difference between classical and jazz music. In jazz improvisation follows the Yes And rule by each musician taking inspiration from the preceding saxophone riff or drum beat, accepting the new variation on a familiar tune as a gift and building on it with additional improvisations. The Yes And rule provides the structure within which jazz musicians are liberated to be more collaboratively creative. By way of contrast in classical musicians in an orchestra each have set scales and melodies to play within an established musical structure guided and reinforced by one individual – the conductor. Variation and improvisation is strongly constrained so that a familiar work can be replicated again and again.

The two roles that are adopted for discussions in the Gift Garden are Bees and Butterflies. The Bee's role is to work together to build new ideas drawing on individual experience. People adopting the role of the Bee cluster around flowers in sub-groups to discuss a topic the whole group wants to explore. Bees adopt the Yes And rule to positively accelerate the creative flow of new ideas and work collaboratively on each other's experience. The Butterfly's role is to see that the bees uphold the 'Yes And' rule by travelling between groups observing their discussions and reminding them to build positively on each suggestion made. Bees are not allowed to criticise or question. Each idea is a gift that the next bee builds upon.

To start the gift garden split the group into bees and butterfly's by getting participants to call off bee, butterfly, bee, butterfly etc round the group until each person has a role. For the second round all the bees become butterflies and vice versa. Have sheets of flip chart paper with a flower drawn on each and the discussion topic spelt out. Place these around the room and ask the bees to cluster in sub-groups of 6-8 people around each flower. So for a group of 40 that would be 6 flower sheets. If you have a group much larger than this you should consider running two Gift Gardens in parallel (with a facilitator and rapporteur for each garden in separate spaces). Otherwise the report back sessions will be too lengthy.

The first person to speak briefly states what their idea is. One person speaks at a time (either going round the circle or cutting across). Whatever someone suggests you have to say in response "Yes, And". For each topic the whole group wants to explore two rounds of discussions are run so that each participant gets to be a bee and a butterfly. The fact that butterfly's hear more than one group's discussion also helps to transfer learning between groups and rounds.

At the end of each round the facilitator invites brief responses from each group to the question "what was the very best idea you heard?" A Rapporteur collects the ideas on flip chart pages or in whatever method suits them best. This recording enables a report to be prepared that can be distributed to all participants following the Gift Garden. As this is a large group activity it is important to moderate the responses to avoid one group taking up too much space. Keep the report back session lively by moving between each group response by response. That way if time permits you can come back to groups for a second or third response but each group definitely gets to feedback.

Close out the Gift Garden by thanking all the participants for following the one rule and two roles, stating that the report will be circulated by email (Nb. check you have everyone's email) and leading a round of applause.

Depending on the time available to run the Gift Garden it is recommended to spend half as much time on each discussion round as on each feedback session. So if you have 2 hours and one topic that would be:

- Intro & Set Up 15 mins
- Discussion Round 1 15 mins
- Feedback 1 30 mins
- Discussion Round 2 15 mins
- Feedback 2 30 mins

That leaves 15 minutes spare that will be taken up moving between each stage in the process and closing out the Gift Garden.

It is possible to explore more than one topic in the gift garden. This can be done either by assigning different topics to different groups in parallel (e.g. half the groups discuss topic 1 and the others topic 2) or by running topic groups one after the other. If you do this it is important to make the topics complimentary so that in the report back sessions the ideas shared will have things in common. If you do explore more than one topic you can save time overall by just running one round per topic because over two or more topics participants will get to be a bee and a butterfly.

To run the Gift Garden the essential resources are: Flip Chart Paper to draw a big flower on with the discussion topic spelled out and to record the ideas in the feedback sessions; Marker Pens. An optional resource is a PA system and two radio microphones to help with feedback sessions so that

people can easily hear. If not available just get the groups to come close together in a circle so that hearing is easier.

AfricaAdapt Symposium Case Study

The first Gift Garden was run as an interactive session on climate adaptation for 80+ participants at the AfricaAdapt Symposium in Ethiopia in April 2011.



There were three related topics run in three sessions with feedbacks after each session. The topics were “What would climate compatible agricultural / gender / youth development look like in Africa?”



For each topic this large group collaboratively created five concrete visions of climate compatible development in Africa.

Participants' messages on agriculture

1. Build capacity - innovation would draw on indigenous knowledge and science with a focus on empowering and addressing the needs of vulnerable producers and consumers in agriculture.
2. Low carbon agriculture using renewable energy, lowering emissions from production and benefiting from carbon sequestration payments.
3. Grow specific agricultural sub-sectors including drought or flood resistant crops, organics, agro-forestry and controlled environments.
4. Positive equity and poverty reduction outcomes by putting issues like food security, social protection and risk management ahead of exports and growth.

Participants' messages on gender

1. Equitable access to assets – this is necessary for women and men to play full and empowered role in production and reproduction in the context of climate change (technology, finance, natural capital, social transfers). Access for girls and women would be a priority in most cases.
2. Value women's knowledge within mainstream sectors - knowledge management, communication and the media would be engendered and women empowered by increased access to education and information.
3. Give women an equal voice in decision making in climate compatible development.
4. Start from the grassroots – mainstream the needs of men, women, boys and girls into policy from grassroots, through national to international levels.

Participants' messages on young people

1. Formal and informal education would ensure that the teaching/training/ networking that was offered to young people was useful, attractive and indicated the relevance of climate change across all subjects.
2. Create an enabling environment for learning – young people would have their education subsidised, be provided with maintenance grants, be taught in local languages, rewarded for their advocacy and offered apprenticeships / microfinance for low carbon jobs.
3. Larger decision making roles for young people in government and development. This would address their marginalisation / abuse in political processes, improve the accountability and transparency of climate change policies and give them a longer term vision of development. Rural youth should benefit especially.
4. Start from the grassroots – mainstream the needs of men, women, boys and girls into policy from grassroots, through national to international levels.

Speed Gift Garden Experience

To give you the opportunity to experience Gift Garden for yourselves we'll now run a short discussion and feedback session.

We'll create the Gift Garden. In this garden we can build creative ideas quickly and collaboratively by adopting one rule and two roles. The 'Yes And Rule' for discussion in groups. You must build on what the last person has suggested - "yes, and". You are not allowed to criticise or question. Their idea is a gift that the next bee builds upon. The role of Bees is to work together to build positively on each idea in their discussion. The Butterfly's role is to see that the bees uphold the 'Yes And' rule by travelling between groups observing their discussions and reminding them to build positively on each suggestion made.

Beginning of Session (5 mins)

1. Participants gather into one big U-Shaped horseshoe in the meeting area
2. Introduce the topic for discussion, the objective and the process
3. Tag each participant as Bee or Butterfly

Discussion Round (10 mins)

4. In the centre of each circle is a flower representing the topic . Each circle of bees discusses the topic for 15 minutes. The first person to speak briefly states what their idea is. One person speaks at a time (either going round the circle or cutting across). Whatever someone suggests you have to say in response "yes, and". At the same time the Butterflies move

between circles listening in to the discussions and making sure the Bees uphold the 'Yes And' rule. The discussion flows until time is up.

Feedback Round (15 mins)

5. At the end of each round the facilitator invites brief responses from each group to the question "what was the very best idea you heard?" A Rapporteur collects the ideas on flip chart pages or in whatever method suits them best. I'll keep the report back session lively by moving between each group response by response.

Concluding Q&A (10 mins)

- How did you find the Gift Garden experience?
- What challenges do you foresee using it in different contexts?

Resources

Flip Chart stand and paper, pens, Laptop for Sound Effects.

Presenter Contact Info

Carl Jackson

Westhill Knowledge Group
e: carl.jackson@wkg.uk.net
m: +44 7801 820 635
skype: carl_wkg
w: wkg.uk.net