



Workbook
N°1

Guide for the facilitator

YOUTH TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURE:
a toolkit for storytelling, leadership, and advocacy



Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), 2026



Youth Transforming Agriculture. A Toolkit for Storytelling, Leadership, and Advocacy
Guide for the Facilitator

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<https://repositorio.iica.int/>

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Youth Transforming Agriculture. A Toolkit for Storytelling, Leadership, and
Advocacy. Guide for the Facilitator / Óscar Mario Jiménez Alvarado. – San
José, Costa Rica: IICA, 2026. 27 pp.; 21 × 16 cm.

ISBN: 978-92-9273-212-7

Also published in Spanish

1. Rural youth 2. Agrifood system 3. Leadership

I. IICA II. Title

AGRIS
E14

DEWEY
307.141.2

San José, Costa Rica
2026





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1

Introduction to the toolkit

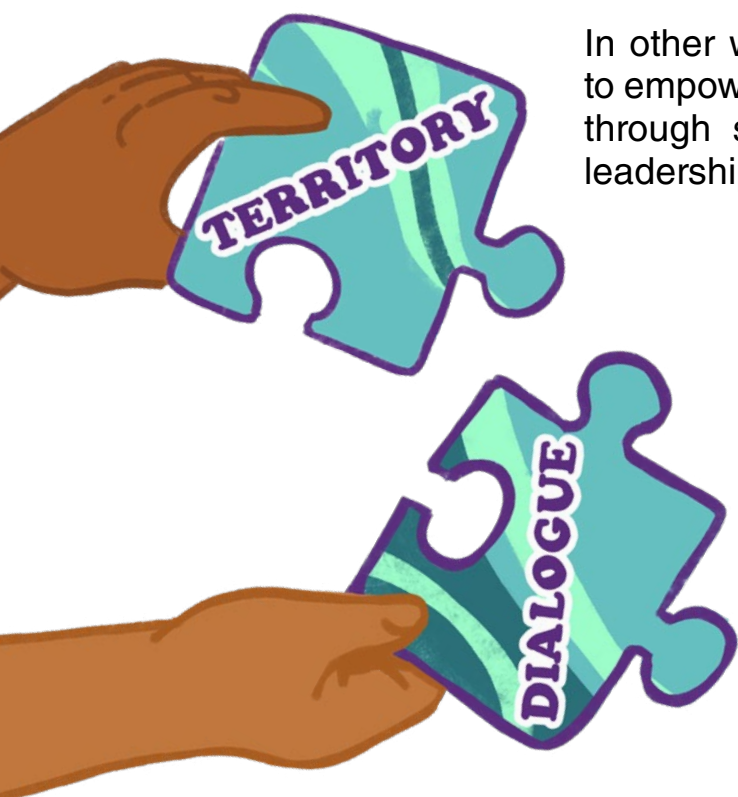
This first workbook explains the methodology entitled *Youth Transforming Agriculture: a toolkit for storytelling, leadership, and advocacy*, aimed at strengthening the capacities of young people in their communities.

It is a method made up of three additional interconnected thematic workbooks which, taken together, address key aspects that empower rural youth to create narratives for social change, develop transformative leadership, and promote youth advocacy.

What is the toolkit about and what is it for?

It consists of a set of thematic workbooks that combine conceptual foundations with dynamic activities to facilitate participatory workshops. Its objective is to provide rural young people with the knowledge and skills required to tell their own stories, lead collective processes, and influence the decisions and policies that affect their lives.

The toolkit is a resource for facilitators working in youth training. Its rigorous yet accessible content includes participatory methodologies and practical guidance for delivering successful workshops.



In other words, it is a support manual designed to empower rural youth to transform their realities through strategic communication, collaborative leadership, and informed civic action.



How are the three workbooks used?

Each thematic workbook addresses a specific topic and is structured as a stand-alone guide for delivering a workshop. It can be used independently or in an integrated manner (see the following section).

In terms of content, the workbooks share a similar structure to facilitate their use. First, they provide guidance on proper use. Then, in the section Preparing to Facilitate, they present key conceptual elements and useful reading material on the topic in question. Next, in the section Getting to Work, they offer a practical guide for facilitating the workshop, including activity blocks with their respective estimated timeframes and instructions. In addition, they provide teaching resour-

ces such as templates or matrices, which are especially helpful when facilitators have limited prior experience with the topic.

The following section briefly describes the contents of each workbook, along with their recommended use.



Workbook No 2. Narratives for social change

This workbook focuses on the power of narratives and strategic communication. It provides key concepts related to these areas and their main characteristics, along with practical guidance on developing new narratives and a strategic communication plan.

It includes hands-on exercises that enable young people to reflect on prevailing narratives about the rural world and learn how to tell their own stories in a compelling way. It is used to facilitate workshops aimed at strengthening communication skills and changing perceptions. For example, it supports groups of young people in creating hopeful messages about their community or project.



Workbook No 3. Transformational leaderships

This workbook aims to develop collective and ethical leadership skills among young people. It presents the foundations of transformative leadership: a participatory leadership style, grounded in service and oriented toward positive social change. It also provides guidance on fostering leadership in agri-rural contexts and explores the relationship between leadership, power, and authority, as well as the values of community leadership, the importance of communication, and the trust required to lead.

In addition, it offers a practical guide for facilitating a workshop designed to help participants recognize their own leadership potential, identify values, and practice horizontal and collaborative forms of leadership. It is used in training processes to inspire rural youth to take on leadership roles in their projects, organizations, or communities.



Workbook No 4. Youth advocacy

This workbook focuses on youth policy advocacy strategies and civic participation. It clearly explains the concept of advocacy, as well as its different types (direct, community-based, digital, etc.). It addresses key concepts such as power relations, effective civic participation, context analysis, and stakeholder mapping. In addition, it presents a ten-point framework for advocacy and its core principles.

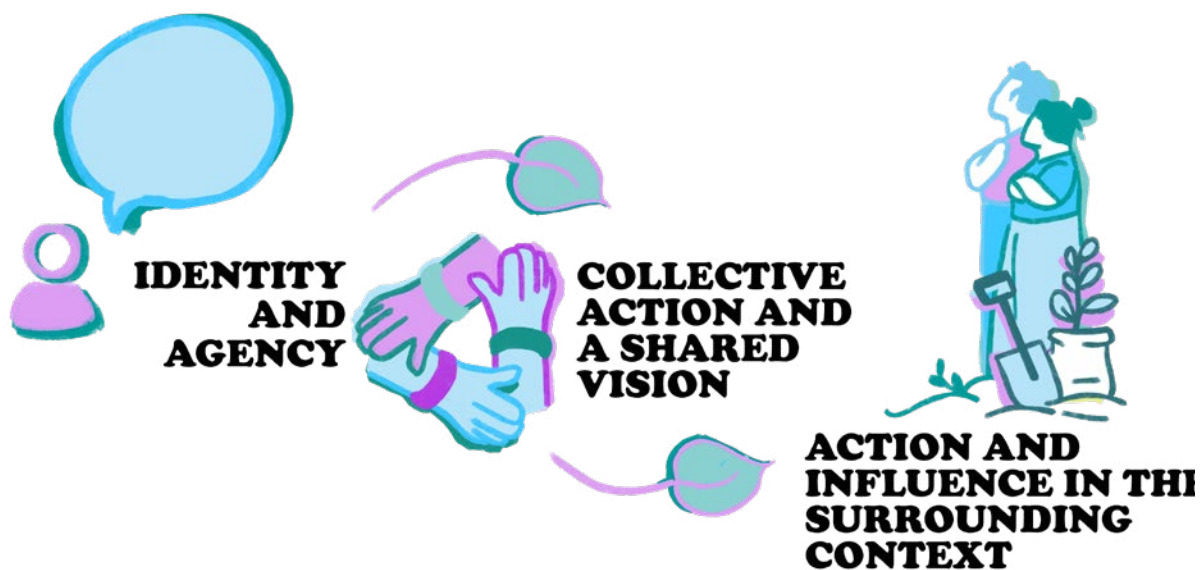
It also guides facilitators in delivering a practical workshop in which young people learn to design advocacy strategies, from identifying a problem in their community and analyzing the surrounding context to planning concrete actions to achieve change (e.g., campaigns, dialogue with public authorities, or community-based projects).

Integrated or independent use of the workbooks

The three workbooks can be used independently, depending on specific needs; for example, an organization may choose to deliver only the leadership workshop to a particular group or focus exclusively on narratives. However, their value increases when they are used in a complementary manner, as they address interrelated dimensions. For this reason, it is recommended that the three workshops be delivered as part of a training sequence, so that the skills developed in one enhance the effective use of the others.

There is no strict rule regarding the order in which they should be delivered, but it is recommended to follow a logical sequence, as outlined below. First, the topic of narratives is addressed, enabling young people to define how they wish to describe their realities and craft positive messages. Next, the content related to leadership is explored, in order to strengthen self-confidence, values, and collective coordination capacities. Finally, the content on advocacy is addressed, with the aim of channeling those narratives and leadership skills into concrete plans of action and influence.

In this way, workshop participants experience a gradual empowerment process that includes:



Regardless of the order chosen, it is important for facilitators to adapt each workbook to their specific context and group. This involves reviewing the conceptual content of each guide in advance, selecting the most relevant activities (or adjusting their duration and level of complexity according to the number of participants, their age, and the local cultural context), and preparing the necessary materials.

The following section provides cross-cutting guidance to support adaptation and the successful delivery of any workshop in the toolkit. It presents approaches that should be maintained throughout, as well as pedagogical principles of facilitation and tools for monitoring and evaluating the process before, during, and after the workshops. As in the other workbooks, a narrative and explanatory tone is used, with a professional yet approachable style, so that any facilitator—even without specialized training in these topics—can easily understand the recommendations and put them into practice.

2

Cross-cutting principles to be applied in the workshops

Through the toolkit, the aim is to disseminate technical content using approaches that ensure inclusive and transformative training processes. To this end, when facilitating any of the workshops (narratives, leadership, or advocacy), it is essential to intentionally incorporate certain perspectives in both the delivery of activities and the dialogue with young people.



The following section clearly and accessibly explains these key cross-cutting principles that should guide facilitation.



Ensuring the **full participation of young women** is a cross-cutting principle to be applied in all workshops. What does this mean in practice? It involves recognizing that young women—particularly in rural contexts—often face additional barriers to expressing themselves or being heard, stemming from traditional gender roles, more limited access to education, socially reinforced shyness, among other factors.

Facilitators should foster an environment in which participants feel safe and valued for their opinions. Some practical tips to ensure that this approach is upheld include:

Promote equity in participation:

Attention should be paid during discussions or group work. If a tendency is observed for men to dominate the conversation or lead tasks, it is important to intentionally invite women to contribute, for example through phrases such as “We would like to hear from those who have not spoken yet,” or by using dynamics in which everyone participates in turn.

Make women’s contributions and role models visible

When presenting concepts, it is helpful to include examples of rural women leaders, young communicators, or activists, so that participants have positive role models with whom they can identify. In addition, facilitators should explicitly acknowledge when a participant makes a valuable contribution and affirm that their voice matters.

Encourage the use of language that fosters respect:

It is essential to avoid the use of language that renders women invisible; for example, employing expressions such as “young people” or “youth.” It is also important to refrain from reproducing ideas about what people can or should do based on their sex. If a

comment or joke belittles women, facilitators should intervene in an educational manner to underscore the importance of respect within the group.

Apply a care-oriented support approach:

Support related to the care of children or dependents should be provided, so that participants are able to fully benefit from the training activities and attend all sessions.

In terms of women's participation, a cross-cutting approach entails creating conditions of equality between women and men in the learning environment. In a truly participatory and inclusive workshop, women are ensured the same opportunities as men to develop their capacities for storytelling, leadership, and advocacy.

This approach also helps young men to value the leadership and voices of their peers, fostering relationships based on collaboration and mutual respect. Women's participation is a cornerstone of sustainable rural development; therefore, its integration into these workshops is not only desirable, but essential.

It is important to recognize that **youth are not a homogeneous group**. Participants will reflect a diversity of identities and lived experiences that intersect with one another. This analysis considers how different categories—such as sex, age, ethnicity, social class, and disability—interact, giving rise to unique situations of advantage or disadvantage.



In a workshop aimed at rural youth, for example, participants may include young Indigenous women whose challenges differ from those faced by non-Indigenous men or by young people from remote communities with more limited access to education. Applying this approach involves effectively recognizing these differences in order to avoid generalization and exclusion.

How is this approach applied in facilitation practice? In this regard, it is recommended to:

Assess the composition of the group:

From the registration stage or at the outset of the workshop, it is important to identify relevant characteristics of participants, such as the number of people from Indigenous communities, adolescents, women, or participants with disabilities. This makes it possible to anticipate specific needs, for example, the use of bilingual materials or primarily visual activities for speakers of an Indigenous language, or adjustments to the methodology when participants have hearing, visual, or other types of impairments.

Create an environment of respect:

Ground rules should be established to prevent discriminatory comments (racist, classist, sexist, etc.). In addition, an environment should be fostered in which everyone feels free to express their identity and the group values the diversity of perspectives. If different viewpoints emerge during a discussion—for example, when a young Indigenous participant prioritizes cultural elements while another focuses on technical aspects—it should be made clear that both perspectives add value to the discussion and reflect different experiences with equal validity.

Adapt examples and case studies:

At times, concepts or examples should be adjusted so that no one feels excluded from the topic being addressed. If examples consistently reflect only one reality—for instance, male leaders

or a single geographic region—some participants may feel disconnected. To avoid this, facilitators should refer to diverse cases, such as stories of young people from different backgrounds, include both female and male names, and draw on a range of cultural references from within the same region.

Pay attention to less-heard voices:

Be attentive to those who tend to remain on the margins. Indigenous participants may be more reserved, or the youngest person in the group may not speak because older participants dominate the discussion. Facilitators should be able to read these dynamics and make appropriate adjustments, such as dividing participants into smaller groups so that those who are more reserved feel comfortable speaking, or using structured rounds to ensure balanced participation.



Applying the principle of **rural youth as key players** involves recognizing two key aspects: first, that young people in rural settings face particular challenges that differ from those of people living in urban areas; and second, that when given opportunities, they possess a unique potential to transform their communities. Workshops should always be grounded in this rural reality, which requires empowering young people as key players in the development of their territories.

Some practical ways to incorporate this approach include:

Contextualize content to the rural setting:

When discussing concepts such as narratives, leadership, or advocacy, it is useful to draw on examples from the rural world. For instance, when addressing narratives, facilitators can examine how rural youth are commonly portrayed in the media: Are they depicted as young people who migrate because they see no future in their territories, or as agents of agricultural innovation? The exercise then involves reframing that narrative. When discussing leadership, it is important to highlight examples of community leaders in villages or agricultural cooperatives. When addressing advocacy, attention should be given to local policies on access to land, markets, and rural education in which young people can engage. This contextualization helps the content resonate with participants, as it connects directly with their daily lives and communities.

Acknowledge both challenges and strengths of rural settings:

Discussions should address issues such as limited employment opportunities in rural areas, rural-to-urban migration, restricted access to technology or education, and infrastructure gaps, as these are part of the everyday reality of rural youth. Validating these concerns demonstrates empathy. At the same time, it is important to highlight the strengths of rural settings, such as connection to the land, traditional knowledge, community solidarity, and the central role of agriculture in society. This balanced approach encourages participants to recognize that, while there are challenges to be addressed through advocacy, they can also draw on the value of their rural identity to build their narratives and leadership.

Apply cultural and territorial relevance:

In rural areas, certain aspects of local cultures are often deeply rooted, including agricultural traditions, community celebrations, systems of communal organization, and even Indigenous

languages. Workshops should be sensitive to this local reality. For example, if it is customary in the community to begin meetings with a particular greeting or ritual, this can be respectfully incorporated into the workshop. If there is a local term in an Indigenous language for “leader” or “traditional authority,” it can be discussed in relation to the concept of transformative leadership. This territorial relevance creates a sense of closeness, and participants will feel that the workshop speaks to them in their own language—both literally and figuratively.

View rural youth as agents of change, not passive recipients:

Facilitators should consistently convey the message that rural youth are not merely beneficiaries of projects, but central actors with the capacity to take initiative. This message should be woven throughout all workshop activities. Shifting the perspective from young people as a problem or passive audience to young people as part of the solution and as partners is, in itself, a transformative approach. Participants should leave the workshop feeling like protagonists of this transformation.

The principle of rural youth as key players ensures that the entire training process is firmly grounded in the realities of rural areas and highlights the role of young people in transforming those realities. It is not a generic course that could be delivered in any city, but rather a process tailored to those who plant, harvest, live, and dream in rural territories. In this way, the toolkit fulfills its purpose of supporting youth who are transforming agriculture in developing the skills needed to tell their stories, lead their projects, and influence the future of their communities.

The content of the workshops and their facilitation should promote and respect people’s rights. In the case of rural youth, a rights-based

approach involves, on the one hand, understanding their rights (economic, social, cultural, and environmental) and, on the other, exercising those rights effectively—particularly the right to participation.

How can this be put into practice during facilitation? First, by creating an environment in which the dignity and freedom of expression of each participant are respected. Second, by intentionally incorporating content related to rights.

Depending on the workbook, this may take different forms. In the advocacy workshop, discussing rights (of youth, rural women, etc.) comes naturally, as advocacy aims to protect or expand rights and public goods. In leadership or narrative workshops, conversations about rights can also be introduced; for example, leadership can be framed in terms of defending the right to a healthy environment, education, or land, depending on the context, or narratives can be used to convey messages that affirm the rights of rural youth.

Applying a rights-based approach in the workshops means empowering youth as rights holders rather than as recipients of assistance. It reinforces the idea that society and the State have obligations toward them, and that young people can and should exercise their rights to bring about change.



3

Recommendations to facilitate the workshops

Facilitating a participatory workshop involves much more than just delivering a class. It requires a set of attitudes and techniques to guide the learning process in an effective and engaging way, with the aim of empowering those who take part. The following section presents fundamental principles and practical recommendations that facilitators should follow when delivering the workshops included in this toolkit. These principles and recommendations place particular emphasis on building trust, promoting horizontality, using active methodologies, and ensuring cultural and territorial relevance, as these are critical factors for the success of any training process involving rural youth.

Creating an environment of trust



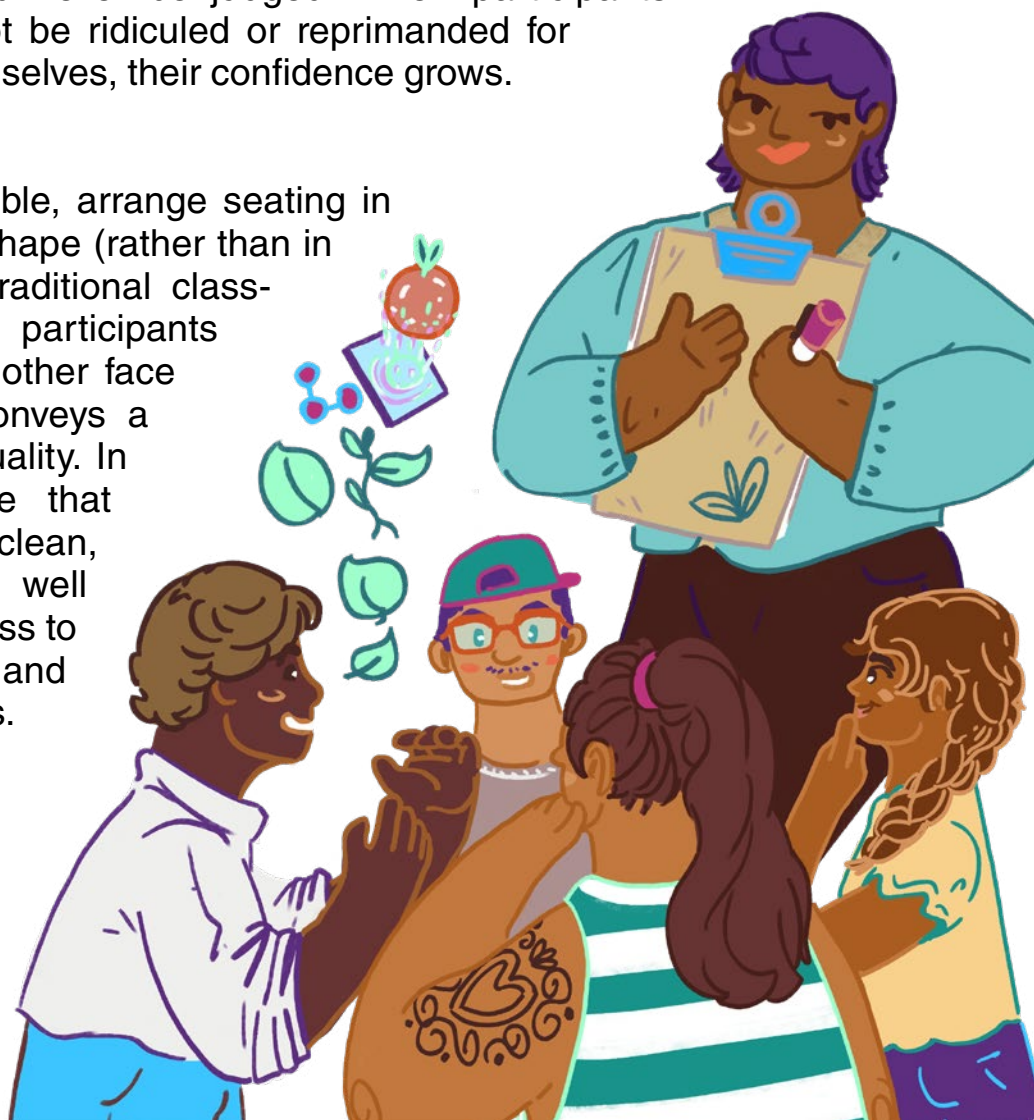
Trust is the foundation on which all meaningful group learning is built. Without a climate of trust, people are unlikely to open up, participate genuinely, or collaborate with one another. For this reason, creating a welcoming, safe, and trusting environment is the first task of the facilitator. Some recommendations to achieve this include:

Begin the workshop with an icebreaker or a fun introductory activity to reduce initial tension.

From the outset, jointly agree on basic ground rules or shared agreements, such as respecting others' opinions, maintaining confidentiality, and being punctual, among others. When these rules are established in a participatory manner, participants are more likely to embrace them and feel committed to upholding them.

Make each person feel welcome through thoughtful communication. Addressing participants by name, smiling, and showing approachability are simple gestures that contribute to this. Contributions should never be judged. When participants feel they will not be ridiculed or reprimanded for expressing themselves, their confidence grows.

Whenever possible, arrange seating in a circle or a U-shape (rather than in rows, as in a traditional classroom), so that participants can see one another face to face. This conveys a message of equality. In addition, ensure that the venue is clean, well ventilated, well lit, and has access to drinking water and sanitary facilities.



Trust should not be built only at the beginning of the workshop; it must be nurtured throughout its implementation. This involves caring for relationships, remaining approachable, and managing any conflicts or tensions that may arise in an appropriate manner.

Practicing horizontality and mutual respect



A key principle of this methodology is horizontality, as it translates into mutual respect and balanced power dynamics within the group. To put this principle into practice, it is necessary to:

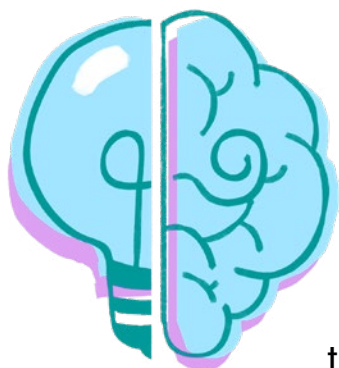
Adopt the stance of a facilitator rather than that of an authoritarian instructor. In practice, this means guiding through questions and inviting reflection, rather than simply delivering content. When a member of the group makes an insightful comment or shares traditional knowledge, this should be publicly acknowledged, for example with a remark such as, “That’s an excellent point—we are all learning from that experience.” This reinforces the idea that everyone teaches and learns.

Agree collectively on break schedules, ways of working, and similar arrangements.

Use a more approachable and horizontal tone, for example by asking participants to address the facilitator by name rather than using academic titles or ranks that denote hierarchy. In rural settings, interactions are often overly formal, and reducing this formality helps balance relationships.

Manage disagreements or conflicts within the group (such as debates arising from opposing views) through group dialogue, rather than imposing an arbitrary solution.

Practicing horizontality not only improves the workshop environment, but also promotes learning by example. Through horizontality, young people experience a democratic and equitable way of interacting that contrasts with the vertical relationships to which they may be accustomed. As a result, they discover that it is possible to lead without imposing authority.



Using active and participatory methodologies

“What I hear, I forget; what I see, I remember; what I do, I learn.” This saying captures the importance of active methodologies in workshop facilitation. An active methodology keeps young people engaged, allows them to “learn by doing,” and connects theory with real-life experience. All of the workbooks in this toolkit were designed with a participatory approach; however, their effectiveness depends on how the activities are implemented. Some recommendations for making the most of active methodologies include:

Alternate between different types of activities to maintain motivation.

Ensure that participants’ knowledge and experiences are genuinely valued.

Encourage the participation of everyone.

Include activities that involve movement. Concentration has limits, especially during long sessions or when complex topics are addressed. Active methodologies recognize the connection between body and mind: a bit of movement helps refresh the brain.

Through active methodologies, workshops move beyond being theoretical sessions and become meaningful experiences. This increases not only knowledge retention, but also enjoyment and the perceived relevance of the workshops. Participants learn better when they are engaged and having fun, as well as when they are emotionally and physically involved. These methodologies foster teamwork, creativity, and initiative—soft skills whose development is also a key objective of this toolkit.

Cultural adaptation and territorial relevance



The section on cross-cutting approaches already highlighted the importance of cultural and territorial relevance, particularly in relation to rural youth and intercultural contexts. This principle is reiterated here as a methodological guideline: each workshop must be adapted to the specific cultural and territorial context in which it takes place. No guide, no matter how well designed, will achieve its objectives without appropriate adjustments. Facilitators must be sensitive and proactive in adapting examples, language, and activities to the local reality, taking into account the following considerations:

If most participants speak an Indigenous language or a local dialect, ideally the facilitator should speak that language or work with an interpreter. If participants speak Spanish at a basic level or use specific local expressions, the facilitator should use simple language, avoid unnecessary technical terms, or explain them clearly.

Refer to role models and examples that young people recognize. For example, if the leadership workbook mentions Nelson Mandela as a global example of transformative leadership, this can

be complemented with the example of a regional or local leader.

From an organizational standpoint, cultural sensitivity also involves adapting to local rhythms. If a workshop is scheduled on an important local date (such as a patron saint festival or a weekly market), it is preferable to reschedule. If it is customary to begin gatherings with a particular ritual or greeting, this can be respectfully incorporated into the workshop or facilitated by a community member. What matters is that the workshop is not perceived as something foreign to the community.

Adapting the workshop to the territory also means orienting discussions toward local challenges and resources. For example, if access to irrigation water is a critical issue in the area where an advocacy workshop is held, activities such as stakeholder mapping or campaign planning can focus on that specific issue. If a community hosting a narratives workshop is facing youth out-migration, it may be appropriate to develop a narrative around the idea that “the countryside does have a future.”

Plans can be adjusted as the workshop unfolds. A responsive facilitator changes strategies when something is not working as expected. This requires having a plan B—and even a plan C—that is, being familiar with different facilitation techniques in order to select the most appropriate one for each group.

When participants’ culture and territory are respected, facilitators gain credibility and build stronger connections with them. From a results perspective, learning becomes more relevant: what participants learn and practice during the workshop can be directly applied in their communities, because the process was designed in line with their reality. Conversely, without cultural adaptation, there is a risk that the activity will be perceived as imposed, alienating, or irrelevant.

4

Glossary

This glossary contains brief, clear definitions of key specialized terms used in this toolkit.

Term	Definition
Authority	The legitimate exercise of command, that is, the power held by a person or institution that is voluntarily accepted by those under its direction. Unlike power that is imposed, authority is grounded in recognition and legitimacy granted by others.
Context analysis	A strategic and systematic tool aimed at understanding the context in which an initiative operates. It involves examining political, economic, social, cultural, and other factors in order to make informed strategic decisions.
Leadership ethics	A set of values and principles that guide the conduct of a person who leads a collective. Ethical leadership is based on integrity, transparency, and respect for others. Those who lead make decisions and act in accordance with moral principles aimed at achieving the common good and justice for all members of their organization or community.
Narrative	A set of stories, discourses, or narratives that give meaning to a cause or an identity by shaping public perception. In the fields of leadership and advocacy, strategic narratives communicate shared values and objectives in order to mobilize support for a cause and promote social change.

Negotiation	A process of dialogue between two or more parties who offer and receive mutual concessions in order to resolve a conflict of interests or reach a satisfactory agreement. Its objective is to achieve a win–win solution by building trust-based relationships and commitment between the parties in both the short and long term.
Political advocacy	A deliberate and planned process carried out by organized civil society with the aim of influencing decision-makers and public policies through persuasion and social pressure, in order to open spaces for participation and promote more accountable and responsive governments.
Power	The ability to influence other people and impose one's own beliefs or will within a social relationship. It is relational in nature and can be exercised in either a coercive or constructive manner, depending on the resources and legitimacy that underpin that influence.
Situational analysis	A political analysis methodology that examines the present from a historical and political perspective, understanding reality as a dynamic process shaped by the actions of political actors and their power relations. It helps reconstruct the balance of forces and distinguish what is feasible from what is desirable at a given moment.
Stakeholder mapping	A participatory technique used to identify and analyze relevant stakeholders (individuals, groups, or institutions) who can influence the viability of an initiative or place it at risk. It helps determine each stakeholder's interests, needs, and level of influence in order to design more effective intervention strategies.
Strategic communication	A planned process through which an organization (or movement) designs, develops, and manages its messages and information for its various audiences, with the aim of achieving specific objectives and generating the greatest possible impact on a defined audience.

Strengthening	The process through which traditionally vulnerable groups, such as rural women and youth, develop their skills and expand their capacity for decision-making. This process entails gaining control over material and symbolic resources, garnering influence and prestige, and participating effectively in social change to overcome situations of subordination.
Transformational leadership	A leadership style exercised by individuals who inspire and motivate their teams to achieve positive and meaningful change in people and organizations. The term was coined in the late 1970s by James MacGregor Burns, a U.S. historian and Pulitzer Prize winner. In his book <i>Transforming Leadership</i> (1978), he introduced the concept of transformational leadership in contrast to transactional leadership, which is based on the exchange of rewards.
Women's participation	The full and effective participation of women in public life and decision-making, ensuring equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making (Sustainable Development Goal 5.5).
Youth participation	Youth participation characterized by the active engagement of young people and their collective action to address issues of public interest and promote social change.