

## ***Group Facilitation: Towards Working Principles***

*(Contributed by Margit Szesztay)*

*The eight statements below can be used as discussion triggers to open up some of the key issues related to facilitator roles and responsibilities. They can be used in a variety of ways depending on the size of the group, the time available, and the specific aims of the trainer. For example, they can be put on slips of paper (one statement on each slip) and passed around to serve as triggers for a quick, 'respond to the statement' pairwork activity.*

*The statements are likely to elicit a 'Right! or Wrong!' type of response from the participants, asking them to take sides. It is important that this kind of right-or-wrong way of thinking is followed-up by open-ended discussion which makes a more in-depth exploration of issues possible.*

**1 The facilitator needs to remain neutral, s/he should not take sides or express his/her own opinion.**

**2 Silent members of a group should be allowed to stay silent – some people learn best by observing.**

**3 If a group member is monopolising the floor, the facilitator needs to intervene in the interest of the whole group.**

**4 If someone strays off the topic being discussed, the facilitator needs to intervene and bring the discussion back on track.**

**5 Maintaining a positive, supportive atmosphere is more important than achieving group goals.**

**6 If there is conflict between two members of the group, the best thing is to ignore it and move on.**

**7 If one or two people give visible signs of switching off and not listening, the facilitator needs to remind them of the ground rules of working in groups.**

**8 Ultimately, the facilitator is responsible for the success or failure of a learning group.**

