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Name: Brainstorming

Time: 15 minutes, or longer

Goal or purpose of the exercise:

Brainstorming is a group technique designed to generate a large number of ideas in a limited amount of time.

How it's done/facilitator's notes:

The facilitator gives the group a question like: what is nonviolence, or an issue you want to come up with more ideas like: how do we develop a fund-raising strategy. Then ask the group to come up with as much ideas, responses as possible.

Here are 5 recommendations for holding a brainstorming session:

1. Focus on quantity: The greater the number of ideas generated, the more to pick from.
2. No criticism: Criticism, challenges and discussion should be put 'on hold' until the brainstorming is done.
3. Unusual ideas are welcome: To get a good and long list of ideas, unusual ideas are welcomed.
4. Combine and improve ideas: Good ideas can be combined to form a single very good idea, as suggested by the slogan "1+1=3".
5. The facilitator should be aware that a brainstorm usually starts slowly, pick up speed as ideas are sparking other ideas, and then slows down again. This is why some call it "popcorning".

Wrapping up

After all the ideas are up on the wall, ask if there is anything up there that people have a question about, or that they disagree with. Open this up for discussion. You may not need to come to consensus on a brainstorming session. Or you may want to sort out the answers for further discussion.

At a nonviolence training session, you are not trying to come up with a single definition to answer "What is nonviolence?", but through the brainstorm the participants can share many answers to that question. It can be enlightening to do a "What is violence" brainstorm at the same time. The facilitator should pay attention to key words. Check to make sure that words like "power" and "anger" don't just appear only in the violence brainstorm.

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