

Africa – A Diverse Continent of Communities

Session Plan

Session Outline: *“Facilitated by AFS in Africa (AiA) Network Organizations leaders, this workshop will help Network Meeting delegates broaden their understanding of Africa and its diverse cultures, and introduce delegates to key cultural values in several African countries.”*

The idea is to give delegates a feeling for the diverse nature of the African continent, to learn something about how communities support each other across the continent, how each culture recognises that "a person is a person through other persons"; and how that approach generated a range of inspirational leaders.

1) How Well Do I Know Africa?

Aim: To have an idea of the diversity of Africa.

Materials: 2) A3 Africa Map - 1 for each small group (approx 20) (Final).docx

3) Country Names and Data Labels (Final).docx (One set per breakaway room, split into 5 envelopes for each sub-group)

4) A4 Africa Map - 1 for each person (approx 100) (Final).docx

Prestik, Blu Tack etc.

Each breakaway group (4 groups in 4 breakaway rooms) is further split into 5 smaller groups; each is given an A3 map of Africa and one set of labels (10 or 11 countries per set for each group) so that, between them, they have labels for each African country. The labels are **Country Name, Language and Religion**.

There will be three labels per country (for an example, see below).

Country
Algeria

Christianity	Islam	Other (inc. Traditional Religions)
1	99	0

OFFICIAL Languages and recognised “NATIONAL” Languages (There are between 1,250 and 3,000 languages in Africa.)
Arabic / Berber

Each group has **10 minutes** to decide where their 10-11 countries are, what is their main language, and the breakdown of religions. They stick the labels onto the map with Prestik (and, if needed, draw a line to the country).

Everyone is given the A4 handout with the **names** filled in (plus some data about AFS countries) and there is a discussion around where groups got something wrong, and why they came up with their answers. **10 minutes**

2) The Story of Africa

Aim: After seeing the diversity, we now look at what makes everyone an African, what are the similarities.

Materials: 5) Story of Africa Audio (Final).mp3

Each breakaway group forms into one circle and a story is told, moving from Southern Africa through East Africa, into North Africa, and finally down through West Africa, ending in Ghana. The story highlights some of the things that are special and unique about the different countries, but ends with what is common. **10 minutes**

3) It Takes A Village

Aim: To introduce an 'African geography of thought' on the relationship between the individual and the community.

Many of you will have heard the phrase "**it takes a village to raise a child**". Research from a few years ago has shown that very similar phrases or traditional proverbs occur across Africa in at least 4 different languages. That's before one looks at phrases that, in effect, mean the same thing. For example, in Ghana when thinking about the concept of **Nkabom**, there is the agreement that "a woman only has sole custody of a child while it is in her stomach, after that, it is the community's responsibility to educate and raise the child." One indication of this is that it is members of the community that correct a child if they see that they are doing something wrong.

The idea that "it takes a village" is both ancient and modern. For example, in Egypt the approach is **Silat Al Rahim** (the Bond of the Womb) which is referred to in the Koran, and states that the bond begins with those who have shared a womb (brothers and sisters) but stretches outwards (to cousins and cousins of cousins) upwards (to ancestors) and downwards to children; until it ultimately encompasses the whole universe - so that everyone is connected and everyone is responsible for each other.

Modern takes on the concept can be seen in Tunisia where, following Independence in 1956, a more modern society was imposed and the idea of **Waqfa** was introduced to connect the modern society with its rural roots, in order to reduce tribalism and division. This means that, while individuals are encouraged to get an education and develop themselves, families still have a big say in the choices made. Or in Kenya, where, again following Independence, President Kenyatta adopted the concept of **Harambee**, which in Swahili means "all pull together" and is on the coat of arms. The President encouraged communities to work together, for example in raising funds for local projects, with the pledge that the government would provide start-up costs.

In South Africa there is the concept of **Ubuntu**. Although it is an old idea, it was popularised by Desmond Tutu when writing "a person is a person through other persons"; and it is a very important way of describing community in South Africa. It is the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity; that we all belong to a greater whole and should share what we have.

If you look at the handout, you will see the different concepts related to the 5 AFS in Africa countries set out in more detail.

- As you can see, here in Africa we definitely live the idea that it takes a village. How does that compare to the approach in your countries? Is there a similar focus on all belonging to one community? Or has the focus on the nuclear family created more distance between individuals?

15 minutes

4) Leading the Community

Aim: To highlight different African leaders and how the principles of working together influenced them.

Materials: [6\) African Leaders - 1 for each small group \(approx 20\) \(Final\).docx](#)

Working in the same groups (i.e. 5 sub-groups per breakaway room) each group is given a set of half-page profiles plus A4 photos of African leaders e.g. Nelson Mandela, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Anwar el-Sadat, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, Habib Bourguiba etc. but also leaders who we not Heads of State e.g. Huda Shaarawi, Wangari Maathai, Charlotte Kesson-Smith Osei, and Desmond Tutu.

Each group discusses the various profiles, and then chose one leader that resonates with them. **We need people to consider the range of what leadership is, therefore, only one sub-group can profile a particular leader. Once a group has decided who they want to profile, they write that name on a flipchart at the front, and then no other group can choose that person!** **10 minutes**

Each group creates a flipchart with the person's picture to present who they have decided upon and explain why they chose the person that they did. They will write one or two sentences outlining the person's values, one or two

outlining their mission, and then a quote from that person that sums up what they believed or their approach. These flipcharts will be put up around the main room for the next day. **10 minutes**

5) Becoming a Leader

Aim: The participants reflect on what they have learned and vision what they will do.

The facilitator sums up what has been looked at – diversity, difference, similar approaches, communitarianism in the different AiA countries, leadership etc.

Individuals write down the key two things that have learned during the session and one thing that has inspired them.

Everybody shares one of their points. **10 minutes**

Total Session time 75 minutes
