

## **CCI USA adopts latest version of decisions making by consensus**

**Bob Sawyer reports:** CCI-USA has used consensus in its decision making process for many years. The consensus model was originally adopted in April, 1990. It was amended in December 1994 and again in November 1997. The following is the most recent revision which was adopted in November 1999. The **guidelines** say: 'There are many models of consensus process; this model is the one traditionally used by Co-Counseling International USA, Inc. Consensus is a participatory process of decision-making in which all members of the group present at a meeting or discussion have equal voting power and equal discussion opportunity. The process is designed to empower participants to have a voice and to generate decisions which reflect a synergy of the ideas and energy of the group's members without the loss of any member's individuality. The whole **process** starts with the introduction of the idea or proposal: An idea for a proposal or actual proposal is put forward. It then follows four phases:

### **I. Discussion phase:**

Discussion ensues in which every person present has a chance to share or respond specifically to the idea or proposal. (This can be timed to give equal opportunity to all members and/or to keep within time boundaries for the meeting.)

### **II. Proposal phase:**

At any point in the discussion, anyone can request that the proposal be formally made and responded to. The proposal is generally a clear, short, concise statement of action, for example, "I propose that we allocate \$500 in travel funds, to support a representative of CCI?USA in attending the first annual Co-Counseling Jamaica workshop."

### **III. Clarification and restatement:**

The meeting facilitator, or someone facilitating this process, restates the proposal and asks if everyone understands it. At this point, only questions clarifying the intent or language of the proposal are taken; discussion about the proposal is curtailed.

### **IV. Response phase:**

The proposal is restated if necessary and the facilitator calls for response to the proposal. In turn, individuals respond in one of four ways listed below; they do not add to or modify the proposal statement or share why they have reservations. (If an individual is not ready to respond he or she can pass and respond at the close of the round.)

1) **supporting** the proposal? The person typically responds "yes" or "I support the proposal". Impact at close of round: The proposal goes forward, unless blocked.

2) **supporting with reservations** ? The person agrees to support the proposal and the group's decision, but has some concern or reservation about the full scope of the proposal. She or he typically responds "Yes, with reservations" or "Support, with reservations" and the response phase continues. Impact at close of round: The proposal goes forward with acknowledgement of differing opinions or wants, unless it is blocked.

3) **blocking** or not supporting the proposal ? The person is not willing to support the proposal and responds 'I block'. The response phase continues around the room. Impact at close of round: The proposal will not go forward in its current form. It is helpful to note that blocks often generate breakthroughs in creativity and movement. Someone speaking his concerns, taking a stand, and/or sharing her beliefs can inspire clarity, generate new and richer ideas, or take the discussion to a deeper level.

4) **abstaining** ? This option is available to anyone who believes she or he cannot vote on the proposal with integrity for any reason. She or he simply states "I abstain". Impact at close of round: Unless blocked, the proposal goes forward.

**After all have responded, anyone who blocked the proposal is given the opportunity to state his or her reasons for the block; however, he or she can choose not to do so.**

### **V. Closure/reopening phase:**

\* If there are no blocks, consensus has been reached on the proposal. The group moves forward with the agenda or discussing implementation of the decision.

\* If there has been a block, the facilitator moves the process back to discussion, until a new proposal is made or the allotted time is up. He or she can also initiate an attunement activity. Attunement can be achieved through quiet, reflective time; an energiser or break; paired co-counseling minis; or some other heart-centred activity. Discharge can be an effective way to clear distress or break patterned thinking at this point or at any time during the consensus process.

#### **the facilitator**

A note on the role of the facilitator: Typically, the role of the person facilitating the meeting is to keep track of times for starting, ending, discussion, attunement, minis, etc. She or he keeps the group on task by assuring that the consensus process is being used, keeps the agenda, restates proposals, and clearly state outcomes (that consensus has or has not been reached).

#### **the participant**

A note on the role of the participant: Integral to the peer process, though, is that each member of the group be self-responsible to keep on task, offer support to the facilitator, call the group on a breakdown, or to ask for co-counseling time or an attunement. Requests for brief co-counseling time will be honoured. Self-responsibility and the steps outlined above combine to co-create inclusiveness and mutually agreeable outcomes which support everybody participating.