

Reading Club

Objective: To sharpen critical reading skills and analysis of staff by engaging with academic, peer-reviewed and other types of high-quality articles.

How it works:

Topics: Topics for the reading club sessions are selected on issues related to the organisational goals and theory of change, by the LME manager in dialogue with other managers and the head of the organisation. In addition, a limited number of sessions are reserved for other topics based on staff suggestions.

Process: Every reading club session is led by a different staff member who reads the material ahead of time, synthesises it, presents it to the group and poses questions in order to engage in a group dialogue. Having read the material beforehand, the staff come prepared to discuss and critically analyse the content of the assigned reading, sticking closely to the text. The presenter or another staff member facilitates the discussion. The articles are distributed well (preferably one month) in advance through Google calendar.



Who participates: The Reading Club is open to Twaweza staff and a limited number of outside members. We encourage the participation of people from government offices, academia and other non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The reading club sessions are voluntary.

When is it: First Tuesday of every month, 7.30 – 8.30

Learning Sessions

Objective: The aim of these sessions is to introduce new ideas and to strengthen Twaweza staff's analytical and critical thinking capabilities focused around the goals (overall organisational goals, and the specific goals set annually), and around the theory of change underpinning Twaweza's work.

How it works:

Topics: Topics for the learning sessions are selected from organisational goals and theory of change, by the LME manager in dialogue with other managers and the head of the organisation. In addition, a limited number of sessions are reserved for other topics based on staff suggestions.

Process: At start of the year, a plan is made for a selected number of external/international experts to be invited for these sessions; in addition, staff members are asked to submit suggestions and ideas. The sessions are centered on a presentation of a key idea or topic (20 minutes or so), followed by group discussion. A Twaweza staff member facilitates the discussion. The LME team works with the presenter in developing the content and format of the session. A standard, simple format is to be followed to capture the objectives, outline of the process, etc.



Who participates: The learning sessions are mandatory for all Twaweza staff.

When is it: Second and Fourth Tuesday of every month, 8.00-9.00.

Visiting speakers: Learning sessions and beyond

At least two or three learning sessions annually will be led by internationally significant thinkers and actors (from different disciplines, backgrounds, etc.). These sessions are intended to benefit a much larger audience through engagement with key Twaweza partners (eg. other CSOs, government), and also the wider public (eg. through the University of Dar es Salaam). The LME unit, in discussion with other unit managers and head of the organisation is responsible for identifying and inviting speakers, as well as organizing the agenda for the visit which is to include meetings with Twaweza managers/staff, with key partners, and public events, as appropriate.

Skills Lab

Objective: The aim of these sessions is to increase staff competency in specific skills that enhance their personal development as well as work performance.

How it works:

Topics: Skill needs and gaps are identified two ways: (a) from an annual report, created by the operations manager, based on the annual staff assessment process, whereby a staff member together with his/her supervisor identifies areas where professional skills could be improved, and (b) from general suggestions from all staff.

Process: A staff member or an outside expert with the required skills is identified and approached to develop and lead a session with a theoretical as well as a practical / hands-on component. The session is organised according to the skill being taught, but can include presentation, discussion, individual and group work. Areas of skills include: computer software, such as Microsoft Excel; public presentation skills and writing skills; and internal process tasks, such as the drafting of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), accounting procedures, developing popular materials, and the creation of Monitoring and Evaluations Matrices.



The LME team is responsible for working with the presenter in developing the content and format of the session. A standard, simple format is to be followed to capture the objectives, outline of the process, etc.

Who participates: The skills labs sessions are voluntary.

When is it: Third Tuesday of every month , 8.00-9.00.

Food for thought

Objective: The aim of these sessions is to provide an informal (yet structured) space where creative and informative ideas or ongoing initiatives can be shared by Twaweza staff or external guests in a casual setting (usually during the lunch hour).

How it works:

Topics: Staff are free to suggest topics, and are invited to sign up for and organise these sessions. Managers and staff are encouraged to invite visiting guests who have an interesting story to share during a Food for Thought session. The LME unit also schedules certain sessions, in discussion with managers and the head of the organisation. Topics can cover new ideas, work in progress, informal meetings with partners, screening of interesting presentations / talks, etc. Technology can be provided as needed (eg. for screening a presentation or short film).



Process: The format of the sessions is free, to be adjusted to the need – eg. presenting a new idea / product, getting feedback on a piece of work, giving staff the opportunity to dialogue with an interesting visitor, etc.

Who participates: The food for thought sessions are voluntary.

When is it: The aim is to organise one session per week, although there is no set schedule

Immersion

Objective: To enable Twaweza staff to come face to face with the realities that the organisation's activities are supposed to address and the people whose lives we are supposed to change, and to enable Twaweza as an organisation to scrutinise its theory of change. Staff members observe and participate in the host families' daily lives unencumbered by normal professional roles and hierarchies, asking the families to provide a small 'window' into their lives. Twaweza staff also meet other community members, and visit schools and clinics. The emphasis is on observation, particularly of stories, and drivers, of change, key socio-economic activities, governance arrangements and access to information.

How it works:

Location: Each year, the location is decided based on several criteria, including: (a) spreading the immersion experiences across the three East African countries; (b) the presence of a strong partner organisation which can assist in making contacts, arrangements, and carrying out logistics



Process: Working with one or more partner implementing organisations which have strong connections and networks in rural areas in any East African country, a location (region/district) is chosen, and then specific communities and families that could host the Twaweza staff are approached. The logistics of setting up the immersion involve careful and sensitive planning with the host families. The methodology is one of participatory observation, where the essence is to take part in the host families' lives, and through observation and non-intrusive discussions seek descriptions and understanding around key areas of focus (e.g., information, change, power, and basic services). The exercise is typically six or seven days long, including travel, preparation, two or three days and nights with the families, and a de-brief session.

As a result of the immersion, Twaweza aims to produce a set of internal and external learning materials and stories, including presentations, short videos, and articles.

Who participates: Immersion is mandatory for all Twaweza staff, and generally open to interns, logistics permitting.

When is it: Once per year, in the first half of the year (usually in May)