

Introduction to this Facilitator's Guide

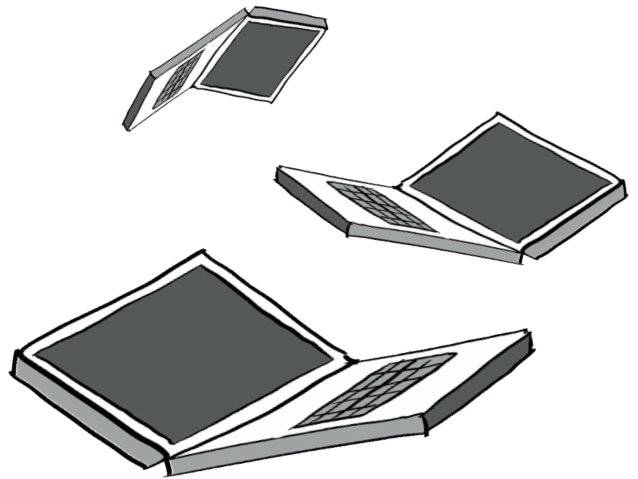


Background and Goals of the Training

BACKGROUND

Online communities have become more and more common in the post-pandemic world.. Communities that met in person moved to social media to form groups on platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal, and others. New online communities emerged as people were missing everyday interactions and sought to form connections in the confines of their homes. However, online communities have existed in the digital sphere for far longer. Facebook groups were established in October 2016, and since then, these groups have been utilised as platforms for connection and cohesion. Research shows that as of 2021, there are over 10 million Facebook groups, with over 1.8 billion people using them each month. There are over 70 million active admins and moderators running these groups. These numbers only go higher when we take into account that digital communities exist on other platforms such as Whatsapp and Twitter, and Telegram.

Simultaneously, online conflict and the spread of misinformation and disinformation have become more pervasive in recent years. Moderators and administrators of online communities were given responsibilities and challenges without being provided with the skill sets and resources needed to manage them ([GovLab Report, 2020](#)). Online communities, especially ones that act as a refuge for marginalised groups and those who do not have the luxury of safely forming communities in the physical world, are also often targeted, attacked and harassed. All these challenges put digital community stewards, and the members of their groups, in positions of vulnerability.



Search for Common Ground developed a training curriculum for digital community stewards on building social cohesion in online communities in 2022, with the generous support of Meta to address these issues and provide support to these emerging digital leaders. After a call for applications and a detailed screening process, Search for Common Ground brought together 17 participants from 10 countries for the global pilot training in August in Dubai. This hybrid training had six modules in person and three online. This pilot training, as it was the first of its kind, was used to test the effectiveness, relevance and usability of this curriculum.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

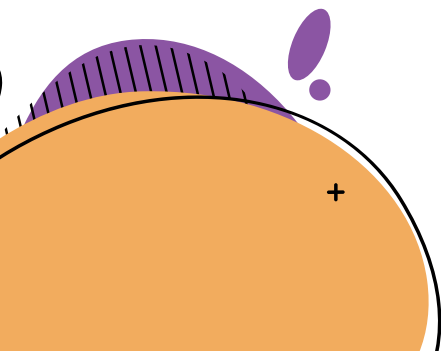
We define 'digital community stewards', as individuals who review user-generated content to ensure members adhere to rules, regulations and community standards of social media platforms. They act, in a sense, as first-line responders who build safe digital experiences within social media groups. This includes admins and moderators of both public and private groups on various social media platforms (i.e. Facebook, WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, Instagram, Twitch, Discord, and Clubhouse).

This training curriculum aims to enhance the skills and perspectives of existing digital community stewards to foster social cohesion within their digital communities. Specifically, this training will provide skills and perspectives for the digital community stewards to:

TRAINING OBJECTIVES

- Create a better understanding of guidelines, tools and practices concerning digital safety, and improve knowledge of concepts such as misinformation, disinformation and hate speech to build safe, functional, and cohesive digital communities.
- Promote reporting and flagging practices to appropriately classify and flag negative digital narratives with higher confidence to manage digital conflict effectively.
- Improve the overall quality of safety and communication in social media platforms by fostering digital communities that respect diverse views and promote healthy discourse while continuously modifying community rules and utilising digital and soft skills to create meaningful online dialogues.

With these objectives in mind, nine core modules were created. After the pilot training, a specific introductory module was created to provide a space for sharing and reflection on the roles of digital community stewards.



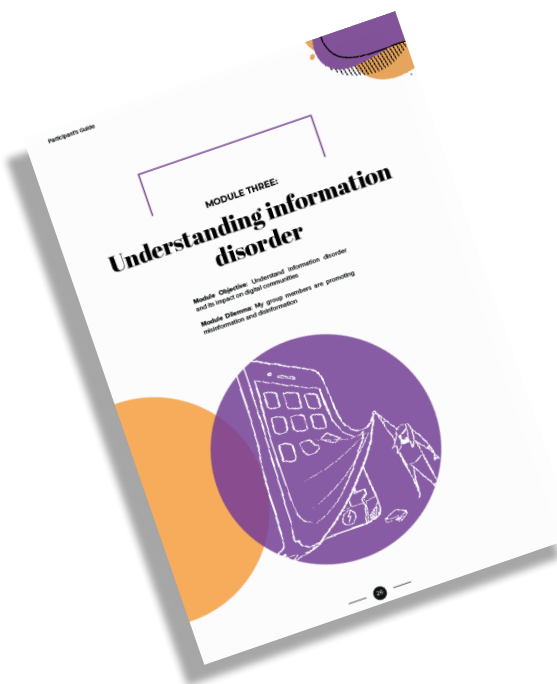
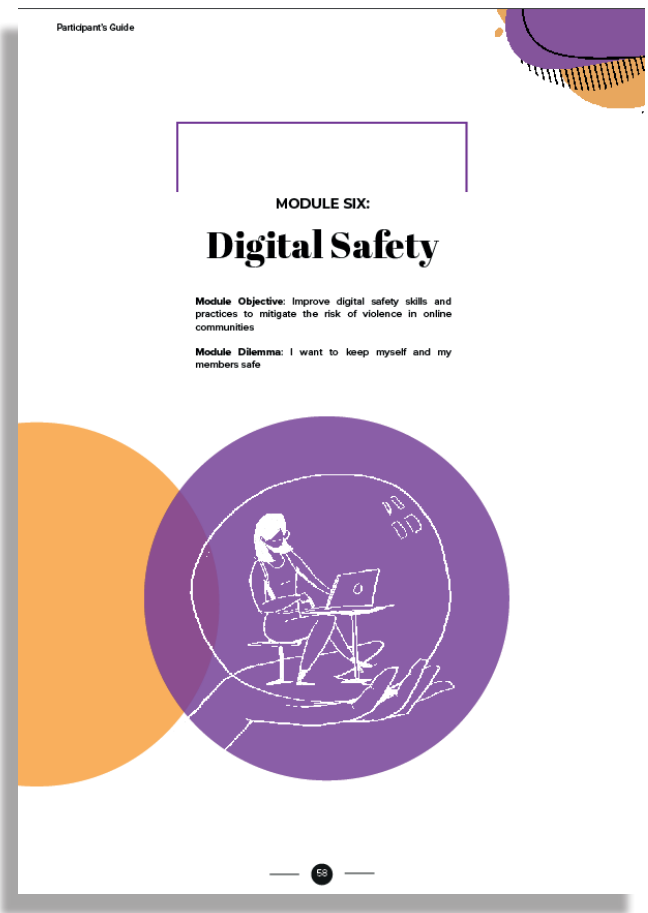
MODULES

The module titles are as follows:

Introductory Module: Digital Community Stewardship

- Module 1: Member Engagement
- Module 2: Trust and Connection
- Module 3: Understanding Information Disorder
- Module 4: Navigating Information Disorder
- Module 5: Non-Violent Communication
- Module 6: Digital Safety
- Module 7: Digital Leadership
- Module 8: Growth and Inclusivity
- Module 9: Digital Rights

While all 9 Modules were presented in the pilot training, they have been developed in a way that facilitators may pick and choose the modules depending on the training cohort selected. In general, each module was developed to take 3 hours, except the introductory module, which is only 2 hours. These modules can easily be broken down into three sessions in case there is a need for additional breaks, or individual sessions are excluded. Most of the sessions fall between 55-60 minutes each, but in some cases, the sessions vary in length depending on the topic and participant engagement. As explained more in the below section on “Customisation,” the structure of these modules and training are flexible. Each of the modules can be customised to fit your organisation’s expectations, available resources, anticipated time commitment, and training cohort’s needs.



Facilitator Guide Overview

WHO AND WHAT IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This document is developed to guide organisers and facilitators, and trainers on how to conduct training for digital community stewards on building social cohesion in online communities. The manual is primarily prepared for Search for Common Ground affiliates, partners, or other interested organisations.

It provides the content, activities, and facilitation notes necessary to deliver a hybrid training with nine modules. This guide is specifically created for facilitators; however, some additional notes are added for organisers. In the Annex of this Guide, you will find a link to helpful printouts for activities and a participant booklet with take-home information for participants once the training has been completed.

Instructions for Facilitators

CUSTOMISATION

This training was designed with a global audience in mind. However, it is likely that future training will be more local in scope, so this will necessitate some edits depending on the context. We suggest that the facilitator or trainer reads the guide in full before presenting any material to the participants. Facilitators should review and adapt the content as needed for your country or community context. This might mean removing a module that is less relevant to your group of participants (e.g. if your

participants already have large and inclusive groups, you may choose to remove the Module on Growth and Inclusivity). Alternatively, if you feel something is missing based on your country's context or cohort's needs, you may opt to add a module, session, activity or example. Or, you are welcome to simply use one or two of these modules if you are focusing on specific elements of digital community stewardship.

We have indicated some areas where we suggest customisation in the blue "Notes" sections in each respective Module. However, the training will be more relevant to the participants if local examples are integrated throughout the entirety of the curriculum.

Note:

MODE OF DELIVERY



The pilot Digital Community Stewards Training had a hybrid delivery. The first six modules were delivered in person, and the remaining three modules were delivered online via Zoom. However, the Facilitators Guide is written in a way that allows complete flexibility in the mode of delivery. The pilot training successfully enabled a safe space for sharing and peer-to-peer exchange, and we believe this was in part due to the initial in-person delivery.

The mode of delivery can be determined based on your participant group, budget, and needs. However, please factor in additional time in your planning stages to ensure the delivery is suitable for any changes in this training programme. Wherever possible, we have added notes that suggest alternative activities depending on if the activity is in-person or hosted online.

METHODOLOGY FOR FACILITATION

The training methodology is tailored to adult or young adults and bridges theory and practice. Participants come to the training with diverse skills, experiences and perspectives, so the focus should be on encouraging participant engagement through creative activities and discussions.

The Facilitator or trainer need not be an expert in this specific field; rather, they will serve as a fellow participant whose role is to create a safe space for inclusive engagement. Specifically, they are instrumental in guiding discussions and providing some explanations of concepts the group may not be familiar with and be able to add structure or direction to the discussions as needed. However, most important is their focus on motivating participants to think creatively and critically about digital community stewardship and generate ideas about how to make day-to-day improvements in managing difficult group dynamics in the online space. We encourage the trainers to actively involve the participants in your facilitation and discussions as it is crucial for the digital community stewards to learn from each other and their online stewardship experience.



Instructions for Organisers

PARTICIPANT SELECTION PROCESS

Finding the right participants is one of the most important elements of a successful training. The methodology for participant selection in the pilot phase, was based on ensuring that the cohort is composed of group moderators and admins, as opposed to just influencers or page administrators. Since this training was developed specifically for group moderators and admins, we selected applications that provided links or information about the said group.

The criteria we used to select strong applicants in the pilot training were as follows:

- The individual currently runs and/or manages private or public community groups on social media platforms.
- The individual has a basic understanding and skills in enforcing community standards and privacy policies of relevant social media platforms.
- The individual possesses adequate skills regarding digital literacy, content moderation, interpersonal interaction, and language literacy in English and relevant local languages.

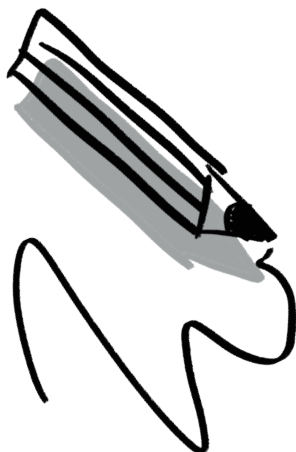
In preparation for the pilot training, we developed a short application form (can be found under resources). You may use this example, but we encourage you to create your own according to your needs. You will note that we included specific questions to ensure these participants were indeed group moderators or admins (rather than page admins and moderators), as this training focuses on this specific group. When going through the applications, we also sorted out applicants who were clearly just influencers. While influencers are important leaders and can make an impact in building social cohesion and peaceful online spaces, this training was not developed for them. You will note that we included specific tutorials on content moderation and managing groups, which is relevant for group moderators and admins, but not other roles.

RESOURCES: WHAT YOU WILL NEED

To run a Digital Community Stewards Training, make sure you have:

DIGITAL TRAINING MATERIALS (FOR BOTH ONLINE AND OFFLINE TRAININGS):

- Accounts for Mentimeter (for trainee participation), Kahoot! (optional for quizzes), Google Slides (for trainee participation) and the corresponding content (examples under resources).
- A PowerPoint Presentation (a sample PPT is included side-by-side with the Facilitators notes and also linked in the Annex).



SPECIFIC FOR IN-PERSON TRAINING MATERIALS:

- A Participant attendance sheet (optional)
- Classic in-person training materials: sufficient pens, paper pads, sticky notes, flipcharts, markers, etc.
- Consider providing participants with name badges, table tents, notebooks and a pen if possible.
- Printed activity sheets and any ordered materials for activities (see [Annex I](#) for specifics)
- Technical requirements to convey to the venue: Projector, sound system (a microphone is optional, but speakers will be necessary for playing video), and the necessary wires to connect your laptops to the projector system.
- Suggested room setup: half circle facing the front, with 10–20 participants. This setup is useful for plenary sessions and ideal for small-group participation. However, it is advised to customise to suit your needs and audience.
- Please refer to Annex I for links to specific module printouts and the complete list of resources.

Using this Guide

At the beginning of each Module and Session, there is a list of specific objectives and the time or resources needed to accomplish specific activities and discussions.

MODULE DURATION

MODULE OBJECTIVE

The image shows a page from a 'Facilitator's Guide' for an 'Introductory Module: Digital Community Stewardship'. The page is titled 'Facilitator's Guide' in the top left corner. The main title is 'Digital Community Stewardship' in a large, bold, black font. Below the title, there is a section titled 'CORE MODULE INFORMATION'. This section includes three sub-sections: 'Module Type: Introductory Module', 'Module Objective: To introduce participants to one another, co-create rules of engagement, and open discussion digital community stewardship, and explore what it means and entails.', and 'Module Delivery: This module was developed to be delivered physically but may be converted to a remote module with some customisation.'. On the left side of the page, there is a circular icon with the number '2' and the text 'MODULE DURATION' and 'HOURS'. On the right side, there is a line pointing to the 'Module Objective' text. The page is decorated with abstract shapes: a purple semi-circle in the top right, a purple semi-circle in the bottom left, and a large orange circle in the bottom right containing a white line-art illustration of a person standing next to a screen displaying a network diagram. The page number '16' is visible in the bottom left corner.

This makes it straightforward for trainers to move through the curriculum page by page. Wherever possible, notes have also been included for the facilitator and organiser to draw attention to specific activities or explanations that may need special attention or customisation. Finally, key questions for discussion have been highlighted to keep participants engaged. Additional questions can and should be developed, but these guiding questions

will get the conversations started in a productive way. Finally, note that there will be small infographics included indicating the type of activity for each session: from the facilitator explanation, videos, group work, group discussion, self-reflection, energiser, or Q&A. A key to these infographics can be found below:

Session 3: Flagging

SESSION DURATION (55 MINS)

NOTES (Session Objective: Understand flagging and reporting practices on social media platforms)

Trainers will introduce the session objective: to understand flagging and reporting practices on social media platforms through a tutorial.

ACTIVITY DURATION (30 MINS)

NOTES TO FACILITATOR (FLAGGING: A TUTORIAL)

NOTES TO FACILITATOR (Note to Facilitator: The trainer can ask participants for a quick raising of hands to see which social media platforms are most commonly used. From there, the trainer can share two examples based on the resource below, walking through flagging and reporting practices on these platforms. The trainers should review this resource from WHO in advance of the session. Depending on how many platforms are discussed, the timing may change.)

The overall module, as demonstrated in the previous sessions, focuses on navigating and identifying misinformation and disinformation through diverse digital tools.

SLIDE NUMBER AND COLOR (84)

QUESTIONS TO PARTICIPANTS (TUTORIAL: HOW DO YOU FLAG CONTENT?)

Once deciding which social media platforms to focus on, the trainers will do a quick tutorial and demonstration about how to report and flag content on social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, TikTok, Discord, LinkedIn, Viber, etc. The trainers will use this resource from WHO, and additional resources, to inform the participants about these learning practices.

QUESTIONS TO PARTICIPANTS (AN ACTIVITY)

The trainers will ask the participants to identify a post that spreads misinformation or disinformation (either in their group – or the overall social media platform) by utilising one of the tools discussed during the session.

Once the post has been identified, the participants will practise flagging the content with the relevant social media platform. Trainers will encourage the participants to flag more than one post.

ACTIVITY TYPE

- DISCUSSION (Icon: Two speech bubbles)
- ACTIVITY (Icon: Open book)
- EXPLANATION (Icon: Person at a whiteboard)
- VIDEO (Icon: Play button in a rectangle)

Sample Agenda at a Glance

An example of a 5-day agenda for this training can be found below. As mentioned earlier, we suggest you customise the flow and structure of the training according to your needs. Please note that if this is taking place remotely, we suggest separating each module into one day, per module.

DAY 1

10:00 am - 12:00 pm	Welcome and Introductory Module on Digital Community Stewardship (2 hours) Round of Introductions / Energizers Setting the Rules of Engagement Opening Discussion Who is a Digital Community Steward? (An Exploration)
12:00 pm - 1:45 pm	Break
1:50 pm - 2:00 pm 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Optional Energiser Module One: Building Member Engagement (3 hours) Session 1: Understanding Member Engagement Session 2: Increasing Member Engagement & Facebook Badges Session 3: Member Engagement & Facebook Insights

DAY 2

8:50 am - 9:00 am 9:00 am - 12:00 pm	Optional Energiser Module Two: Trust and Connection (3 hours) Session 1: Building Trust Session 2: Building Connection Session 3: Setting up Community Guidelines
12:00 pm - 1:45 pm	Break
1:50 pm - 2:00 pm 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Optional Energiser Module Three: Understanding Information Disorder (3 hours) Session 1: Misinformation, Disinformation & Malinformation Session 2: Types of Information Disorder and Its Impact Session 3: Practising Healthy Scepticism

DAY 3

8:50 am - 9:00 am 9:00 am - 12:00 pm	Optional Energiser Module Four: Navigating Information Disorder (3 hours) Session 1: Introduction to Fact-Checking Session 2: Verification Session 3: Flagging
12:00 pm - 1:45 pm	Break
1:50 pm - 2:00 pm 2:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Optional Energiser Module Five: Non Violent Communication (3 hours) Session 1: Understanding Online Hate Speech Session 2: Understand Nonviolent Communication Session 3: Managing Conflict in Digital Groups

DAY 4

8:50 am - 9:00 am
9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Optional Energiser

Module Six: Improving Digital Safety (3 hours)

Session 1: Why is Digital Safety Important for Online Communities?

Session 2: What are the Digital Safety Risks and Challenges Faced by Online Communities?

Session 3: Responding to Digital Safety Risks and Challenges Faced by Online Communities

12:00 pm - 1:45 pm

Break

1:50 pm - 2:00 pm
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Module Seven: Leadership and Non-Violent Communication (3 hours)

Session 1: Who is a Digital Leader? Revisiting What Makes a Digital Community Steward?

Session 2: How to be an Efficient and Effective Digital Community Steward - Key Strategies

Session 3: How to be an Efficient and Effective Digital Community Steward - Rely on your team

Session 4: How to be an Efficient and Effective Digital Community Steward - Practise Self-Care

DAY 5

8:50 am - 9:00 am
9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Optional Energiser

Module Eight: Growth and Inclusivity (3 hours)

Session 1: Growth - Expanding Membership

Session 2: Growth - Branding your Community

Session 3: Diversity and Inclusion in Digital Communities

Session 4: Co-Creating an Inclusive and Safe Community for All

12:00 pm - 1:45 pm

Break

1:50 pm - 2:00 pm
2:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Optional Energiser

Module Nine: Understand Digital Rights / Concluding Session (3 hours)

Session 1: Community Standards - What do we need to know?

Session 2: Digital Rights - What do we need to know?

Closing Session: A Reflection