

VUFO-NGO Resource Centre Guide to writing meeting minutes

Minutes are the notes taken at a meeting that record the important information from the meeting.

Taking minutes is essential because they are the permanent record of the meeting. They ensure that what was decided at a meeting is not forgotten, or misunderstood.

However minutes do not record everything that happened or was said at a meeting. They record basic information that needs to be kept for future reference. In particular this information includes the decisions made at the meeting, the actions that need to be undertaken, and who, or which organisation, is responsible for those actions.

The minutes for some meetings can also include notes on discussion that took place during the meeting. However, such minutes record the main points made in discussion, and not everything that was said.

At the end of this guide are two samples of meeting minutes. The first is a longer format, which includes the main discussion points made during the meeting. The second is a briefer format, which records the decisions made and the people responsible for further action.

But first, here are some tips for writing meeting minutes.

- Use the meeting agenda as an outline for the minutes.
- Always record who is present by providing an attendance sheet and making sure everyone signs it.
- At a minimum, minutes need to include the name of the organisation or hosting organisation (for meetings of NGO Resource Centre working groups, this is the NGO Resource Centre), the location, the date, the participants, the agenda, all resolutions that are passed or decisions made, and any tasks that people agree to do before the next meeting.
- Remember that meeting minutes are for people who will be reading them in the future, and will also be read by people who were not present at the meeting. Make sure whatever you write down will be clear to people getting involved at a later time. This means that the minutes must be clear for people who were not at the meeting and may not be familiar with the matters discussed.
 - Always spell out all short names at their first mention - such as Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Terms of Reference (TOR), and Reduced Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD).
 - Record the full name of anyone mentioned in the minutes. For presenters to the meeting, also record their name and the name of their organisation. You may need to ask the chair before or after the meeting for some of these details.

- You don't need to record every single comment, even if you are writing minutes that include points made in discussion during the meeting. Concentrate on noting the main points of the discussion so that you can summarise it later. Think in terms of issues discussed, major points raised and decisions taken. It is generally not necessary to record who said what. However there are exceptions to this - see the next point.
- As already noted, you generally do not need to record who said what in a discussion. However you do need to record the names of people or organisations who have agreed to undertake an action, and the action. This is also the case when a meeting is between the organisation and external players. For example, in a consultation meeting with Government officials it is important to record the details of information provided by the officials, their comments and all actions they agree to carry out.
- Always write down any decisions made, any actions to be carried out and, as already noted, the person or organisation that is responsible for each action.
- Also record matters that were postponed until future meetings as a reminder that they still need to be considered.
- Finalise your notes as soon as possible after the meeting, while your memory is still fresh.
- If you are unsure of any details ask the chairperson, also as soon as possible after the meeting.
- Always proofread the minutes for spelling errors. Also use your computer's spell-check, which will pick up some - but not all - spelling errors.

1. Longer format for meeting minutes that includes the main discussion points

**Meeting of the Board of Solutions for Climate Change NGO
Monday, October 4, 2010
1400-1600 at Solutions for Climate Change office, Hanoi**

Chair: Sally White

Minutes: John Brown

Meeting participants: John Brown, Sally White, Andrew Scarlet, Mary Black, Peter Green, Anna Pink, Lisa Blue, Gary Rose, Joanne Maroon, Bill Grey (Director)

1. Opening and introductions

Chairperson Sally White opened the meeting and welcomed Mary Black, who has just joined the Board of Solutions for Climate Change. Sally said that Mary's many years of expertise in the working on behaviour change campaigns would be very useful for the board. Mary said she was delighted to be joining the board and looked forward to making productive contributions to its work.

2. Approval of minutes of last meeting

The minutes were approved, after John Brown noted that it had been agreed he would prepare the draft action plan for next year for the meeting in December, and not the meeting in November.

3. Workshop on climate change mitigation next February

The call for papers and presentations for the workshop went out last week. There was a discussion about the best location to hold the workshop. Many of the organisations attending the last workshop came from Hanoi. However it was also pointed out that if the workshop was held in another location that this might attract new organisations. The meeting decided to hold the workshop in Hue. Anna Pink, who lived in Hue for five years, said she would advise Bill Grey on some venues that he could investigate for the workshop.

There was also a discussion about publishing the papers together in a single report after the workshop for wider circulation, and decided that this will happen if the budget allows it. It was decided that Bill Grey will investigate the costs involved and report back to the board.

4. Update on the publication of the report on the impact of climate change on Hanoi

Bill Gray reported that Bright Ideas, the consultancy firm preparing the report, has completed the literature review and will have a draft for the board to review at the next board meeting. Andrew Scarlet asked whether the literature review included data on changing rainfall patterns in Hanoi and surrounding provinces. Bills said he would contact the consultants and report back to Andrew.

5. Redesign of website

Bill Grey reported that Digital Designs, the website developers working on the redesign of the website, are behind schedule because the project coordinator has been ill for the past month. It is also taking longer than expected for staff at Solutions for Climate Change to collect the new information to go on the redesigned website. Bill does not expect the website to be ready for the relaunch until after Tet next year. There was discussion at the meeting about the delay with some people asking why Digital Designs did not arrange for another employee to continue the work while the project coordinator was sick. Gary Rose will follow up on this matter with Digital Designs.

6. Update from Capacity Building Sub-Committee

Lisa Blue, the chairperson of the Capacity Building Sub-Committee, reported on the plans for improving the skills of staff of the Solutions for Climate Change. The survey of current staff skills has been completed and the subcommittee proposes three training workshops before the end of the year - one on public speaking, one on Microsoft Office skills, and one on preparing e-bulletins. There is money left in the training budget for these three workshops. The meeting decided to go ahead with the three workshops, which Bill Grey is responsible for arranging. It was also decided that the Capacity Building Sub-committee prepare a full training plan for next year, to be submitted to the December meeting of the board for approval. Lisa Blue will do this on behalf of the sub-committee.

7. Guest presenters

At the September meeting Peter Green undertook to report back to the board on potential guest presenters to make presentations to the board at some meetings. Peter has identified one potential guest presenter to approach, Sam Red, of the Sam Red and Associates consultancy business, who is evaluating a project in Da Nang that links Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Peter asked board members to think about any other experts who could be approached to make presentations to the board. Peter will ask Sam Red if he can make a presentation at the December meeting.

8. Any other business

Anna Green reported that she had just been invited to make a presentation about the work of Solutions for Climate Change in Vietnam at the international conference in Bangkok in March 2011, titled "Climate Change and NGOs in South East Asia". The meeting discussed what would be the best aspect of the work of Solutions for Climate Change to present to the Bangkok conference. Discussion centred on the school awareness campaign and the trial project in Ho Chi Minh City to encourage households with air-conditioners to set them at a higher temperature in order to reduce electricity consumption. Ninh Binh province. The meeting decided that the school awareness campaign is more advanced so it should be the topic of the presentation.

8. Next meeting

The next meeting is at 0900 on Monday, November 8, 2010, at the Solutions for Climate Change head office.

2. Shorter format for meeting minutes that records decisions and actions only

Meeting of the Board of Solutions for Climate Change NGO Monday, October 4, 2010 1400-1600 at Solutions for Climate Change office, Hanoi

Chair: Sally White

Minutes: John Brown

Meeting participants: John Brown, Sally White, Andrew Scarlet, Mary Black, Peter Green, Anna Pink, Lisa Blue, Gary Rose, Joanne Maroon, Bill Grey (Director)

1. Opening and introductions

Chairperson Sally White welcomed Mary Black, who has just joined the Board of Solutions for Climate Change.

2. Approval of minutes of last meeting

The minutes were approved, after John Brown noted that it had been agreed he would prepare the draft action plan for the year for the meeting in December, and not the meeting in November.

3. Workshop on climate change mitigation next February

Decision: The workshop on mitigation will be held in Hue. Papers from the workshop will be published in a single report, if there is money in the budget.

Further action: Bill Grey will investigate venues for the workshop in Hue, after advice from Anna Pink. Bill will also investigate the costs involved in publishing the papers from the workshop, and report back to the board.

4. Update on the publication of the report on the impact of climate change on Hanoi

Decision: Consultants Bright Ideas to be asked whether the literature review includes data on changing rainfall patterns in Hanoi and surrounding provinces.

Further action: Bill Grey will contact the consultants and report back.

5. Redesign of website

Decision: Approach Digital Designs about whether other staff there can continue work on the website redesign while the project coordinator is on sick leave.

Further action: Gary Rose to talk to Digital Designs.

6. Update from Capacity Building Sub-Committee

Decision: With the survey of staff skills completed three workshops for staff will be held before the end of the year - one on public speaking, one on Microsoft Office skills, and one on preparing e-bulletins. The Capacity Building Sub-committee will prepare a full training plan for next year, to be submitted to the December meeting of the board for approval.

Further action: Bill Grey is responsible for arranging the training workshops. Lisa Blue is responsible for submitting the training plan for next year to the December meeting.

7. Guest presenters

Decision: Sam Red, of the Sam Red and Associates consultancy business, to be asked to make a presentation to the board at its December meeting about the project he is

evaluating in Da Nang that links Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

Further action: Peter Green to approach Sam Red. Other board members to suggest other potential presenters to Peter for future meetings.

8. Any other business

Decision: The topic of the Solutions for Climate Change presentation to the "Climate Change and NGOs in South East Asia" conference in Bangkok in March 2011 will be the school awareness campaign.

Further action: Anna Green is to make the presentation.

8. Next meeting

The next meeting is at 0900 on Monday, November 8, 2010, at the Solutions for Climate Change head office.