

## THE THEME TEAM

### Creating focus and meaning for large groups

**Roles:** The Theme Team helps the whole group to “see” the group’s collective messages/thoughts/ideas regarding focal issues.

Themers read participant comments, summarizes and formulates themes that represent the comments broadly.

**Theme:** A common idea or message, representing many different expressions across numerous comments.

#### Tips for Theming:

- Be unnaturally objective; leave your biases at the door
- The goal of the team is to generate a short list of themes and key messages out of the group’s many comments – based on the first impressions and knowledge of basic issues – and to have them presented back to the whole group.
- The goal is to create a quick list, NOT to be perfect: 80% accuracy is fine. The group may be given the chance to discuss and add themes based on popular acclaim.
- The important first stage of distilling themes is done at the same time as the rest of the room is still developing new ideas. This speeds up the process.
- Begin reading as the first comments arrive. Read over them quickly, don’t get fixated. Let them wash over you.
- As soon as a theme emerges for you, make a quick note and keep reading.
- When all have read the first 20-30 comments, begin comparing notes. As the next 20-30 comments are read, look for similarities and the themes will start to emerge.
- As a theme becomes clearer, capture it in a slide. **[HOPE Staff creates the PPT and will help the team stay on track with time]**
- Then, as the list comes together the theme team members fine tune the list and add clarity and details.
- We’re ultimately looking for overarching statements that synthesize 5-10 comments or more tables that are along similar lines. We can also:
  - Add sub-statements that help exemplify the overarching statements or
  - Share specific entries or direct quotes from the input.