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Practical Guide on Democratic Dialogue

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Contact information:

Crisis Prevention and Recovery Practice Area
UNDP Regional Centre for Latin America and the Caribbean
United Nations Office, building 128, Ciudad del Saber
Clayton, Panama City, Panama
Telephone: +507 302 4500
Email: rcpanama@undp.org
Web page: http://www.regionalcentrelac-undp.org

Department of Sustainable Democracy and Special Missions
Secretariat for Political Affairs of the GS/OAS
1889 F Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006, United States of America
Telephone: +1 (202) 370-4460
Email: dsdme@oas.org
Web page: http://www.oas.org/en/spa/dsdsm/default.asp

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Practical Guide on Democratic Dialogue

Compiled by:

Mirna Ángela Cuentas
Anaí Linares Méndez

Reviewed by:

Gastón Aín Bilbao
Virginia Beramendi Heine
Ana Bourse
Iñaki de Francisco
Katalina Montaña
Iván Ormachea Choque
Herbert Ortega
Emmanuelle Pelletier
Rodrigo Zubieta

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CONTENTS

		PAGE
INTRODUCTION		**5**
I.	**AN OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN LATIN AMERICA**	**7**
II.	**BASIC CONCEPTS AND ELEMENTS OF DIALOGUE**	**9**
II.1	What is democratic dialogue?	9
II.2	What are the governing principles of democratic dialogue?	12
II.3	What are the roles in a democratic dialogue?	14
II.4	What is a facilitator in a dialogue process?	15
III.	**STAGES OF A DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE PROCESS**	**16**
III.1	Exploration stage	18
III.2	Design stage	23
III.3	Implementation stage	29
III.4	Monitoring stage	35
IV.	**TOOLBOX**	**36**
BIBLIOGRAPHY		**54**

This web version of the Practical Guide for Democratic Dialogue allows you to navigate the document from the Table of Contents, taking you to the part you are interested in reading at any particular time simply by clicking on the description in the Table of Contents.

To return to the Table of Contents, click the lower right hand corner of any of the pages.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

In 2007, a combined effort on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the General Secretariat of the Organization of American States (GS/OAS), and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) resulted in the publication of *Democratic Dialogue – a Handbook for Practitioners*. The Handbook's purpose was to create a methodological tool that would facilitate the work of institutions and practitioners in designing, facilitating, and evaluating dialogue processes in a variety of contexts and circumstances. It has served as a valuable reference for the practice of democratic dialogue around the world.

Five years later, we have the opportunity to prepare a practical, concise, agile, and user-friendly guide that draws democratic dialogue closer to Latin America's current conflict dynamics, with both a vision of conflict prevention and transformation as well as of strategic discussion and change generation in complex problems and contexts.

This Guide seeks to offer criteria, guidelines, and tools that will allow the different stakeholders in society to understand what the process of democratic dialogue involves and how to engage in successful dialogic initiatives.

The Guide has four sections. The first section provides an overview of the current conflict dynamics in Latin America. The views and opinions of analysts, researchers, and leaders from a variety of sectors in the region are included. The second section introduces the basic concepts and elements of dialogue, which, in addition to providing a definition of dialogue, explains its governing principles and describes the various roles in a dialogue process, including that of the facilitator. The third section describes and explains the various stages through which a dialogue moves – exploration, design, implementation, and monitoring. The final section provides an array of methodological tools that can be used at various points during a democratic dialogue process.

The contents of this Guide rely on valuable contributions by Ana Bourse of the Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales [Regional Coordinator for Economic and Social Research] (CRIES); Virginia Beramendi Heine, Chief of Mission for the Andean Region of IDEA International; Iván Ormachea Choque, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Peruvian association, ProDiálogo, Prevención y Resolución de Conflictos [Conflict Prevention and Resolution]; Katalina Montaña, Emmanuelle Pelletier, Rodrigo Zubieta, and Herbert Ortega of the GS/OAS; and Gastón Aín and Iñaki de Francisco, of UNDP. We extend our deepest gratitude to each of them.

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I. AN OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT CONFLICT DYNAMICS IN LATIN AMERICA

Latin America is still the most unequal region in the world. New actors have emerged, demanding active participation in political systems across varying levels of statehood. These three elements: inequity, the emergence of new actors, and varying levels of statehood contribute to the multiplication of social conflicts.

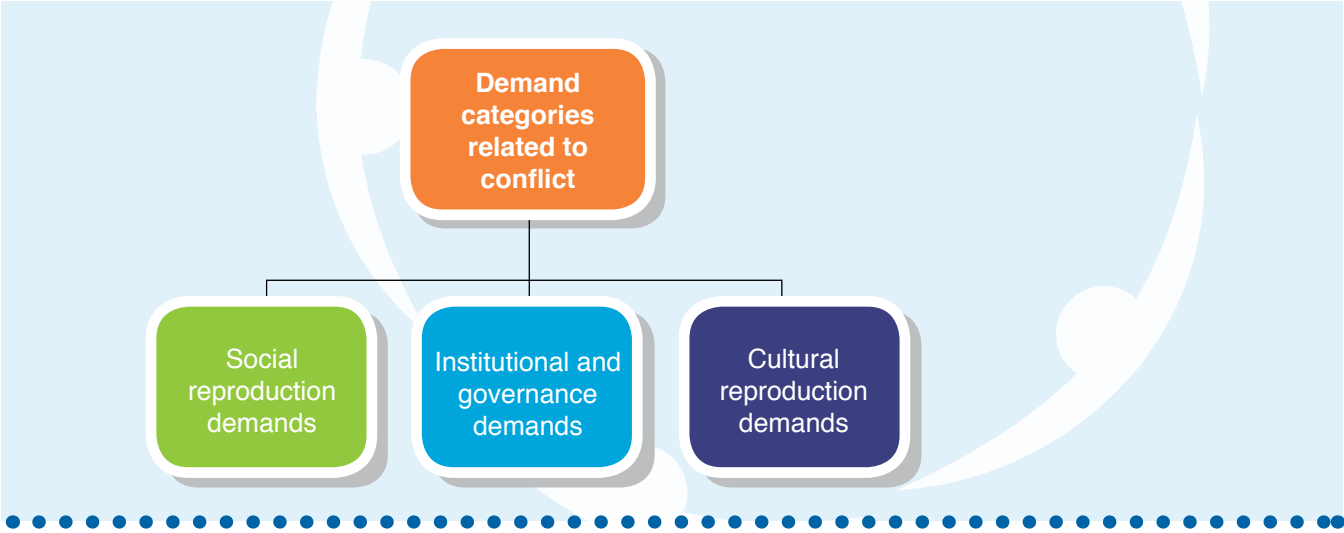
A **conflict** arises when two or more actors perceive their objectives to be incompatible. Conflicts typically have several causes, both circumstantial and structural, and can go through different cycles, levels of radicalization, and degrees of violence. When we talk about **conflict dynamics**, we refer to the environment in which conflict develops during a given period of time, not merely to the sum of individual conflicts. Conflict dynamics develop within complex situations and within multi-dimensional and multi-causal conflicts that have not been fully resolved over time. As a result, the conflicts become entrenched and intensified, interconnected, and, subsequently, begin to feed on each other.

The Latin American region shares a common platform where conflicts unfold, characterized by highly concentrated power structures, political polarization, economies that lack proper competition in international markets, state institutions that are weak or lack legitimacy, crime control problems, persistent poverty and inequity, limited and unequal levels of citizen participation, multiplication of demands related to extractive industries, increased interethnic and intercultural tensions, and inadequate mechanisms for institutional recognition of identities. Current problems in the region, such as drug trafficking and organized crime, increase the levels of complexity and violence.

In the last decade social movements and many organizations in Latin America have become increasingly fragmented and heterogeneous. Current conflict mapping reveals conflicts related to trade unions, informal workers, indigenous peoples, peasants, ethnic groups, women, youth, environmental groups, workers in precarious working conditions and suffering greater job insecurity, and non-governmental organizations that advocate for their own visions and interests with local, regional, and national governments, and with private national and multinational corporations.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Underlying these conflicts there are a number of demands related to: improving living and wage conditions, job creation, access to and quality of education, and economic measures that have a negative effect on living conditions. These types of demands are called **social reproduction demands**. In addition, there are also **institutional and governance demands**, which refer to demands presented to the State for effective and efficient institutional governance, improvement in the delivery of public services, addressing legal issues and breeching agreements. A third category is called **cultural reproduction demands**, which refer to different visions and dynamics of intercultural coexistence that are associated with intercultural, ideological-political, social-environmental, ecological, and gender conflicts, as well as those related to the right of indigenous peoples to consultation.



The rise in extractive activities coincides with greater recognition of the rights of indigenous peoples, following ratification of *Convention 169* of the International Labor Organization and the adoption of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* by most countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. The provisions of both the Convention and the Declaration are interpreted on the basis of two fundamental principles: the right of indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their cultures, lifestyles and institutions, and the other is the right to have effective participation in the decisions that affect them. Furthermore, those agreements establish minimum standards of respect for the rights of indigenous peoples, including the right to prior consultation.

In view of this situation, we can better appreciate the growing need for tools that not only address conflicts in times of crisis and violence, but also for the participative and inclusive building of consensus in a democratic and peaceful framework. Conflicts become driving forces for social change when they are approached in a constructive manner and led by citizens who are open to dialogue. **Dialogue** must be understood as a process of the democratic institutional environment that seeks to transform conflictive relationships and enhance governance.

II. BASIC CONCEPTS AND ELEMENTS OF DIALOGUE

II.1

What is democratic dialogue?

In recent years we have seen the term “dialogue” given to almost any event that brings together a variety of actors within a context framework of disagreement or conflict. But many of these events do not meet the minimum requirements to be considered genuine dialogues, tarnishing the term “dialogue” among various actors and environments. Some examples of these situations that have been incorrectly labeled “dialogues” are debates in which no one truly listens to each other, meetings in which non-inclusive decisions are made in a non-participatory manner, tough negotiations between two parties, and public talks that are used to buy time and simulate a dialogic approach, among others.

These so-called dialogues have generated certain perceptions and expectations, with some attributing to these efforts an almost magical capacity to find solutions. There are others who conceive dialogue as being a last resort or a way of identifying solutions without these being linked to action. Therefore, it is important to clarify what is meant when we refer to “dialogue” in this Guide.

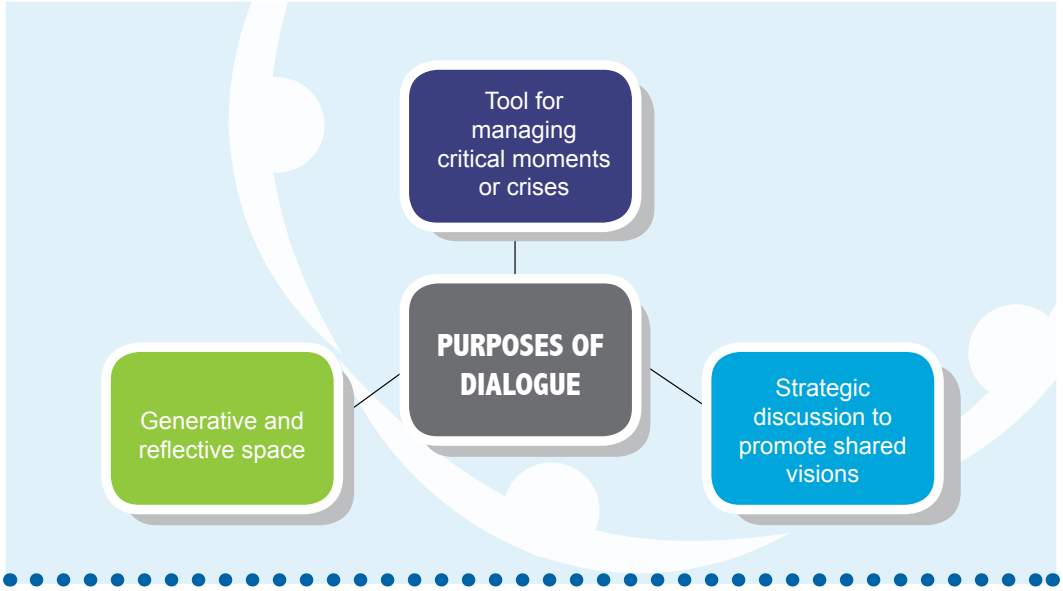
Dialogue is a process of genuine interaction in which human beings listen deeply and respectfully to each other in a way that what they learn changes them. Each participant in a dialogue strives to incorporate the concerns of the other participants into their own perspective, even when they continue to disagree. No participant gives up his or her identity, but each recognizes the human value of the claims of the others and therefore acts differently towards others.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

In this Guide, **democratic dialogue** refers to dialogue that respects and strengthens democratic institutions, seeking to transform conflictive relationships so as to prevent crises and violence and therefore, contribute to enhance democratic governance. Democratic dialogue is always a process of cooperation and teamwork, and may include one or more meetings of participants in the dialogue. A dialogue has a systemic approach to the problem and therefore seeks to include a diverse group of actors related to such problem, and not just parties seeking to negotiate something tangible.

The goal of democratic dialogue is not merely to exchange information, but rather to transform through dialogue. In societies characterized by complex networks with conflicting interests the challenge is not to avoid conflict but to transform it altogether, while strengthening legitimate social structures and preventing violence. Democratic dialogue allows us to address this challenge when applied as a tool for change and for building consensus so as to balance power in society and open new channels of access and participation for citizens. During a dialogue process we work to achieve a systemic understanding of the problem and to strengthen relationships among all stakeholders. This, in turn, makes it possible to identify actions that can transform the underlying system.

For dialogue to help promote change and transform social, economic, and political structures, we must think of it as a container or safe space in which the actors can interact with trust and respect. They must be able to bring their ideas, interests, concerns, demands, and beliefs to the dialogue table so they can work together, in a legitimate and peaceful manner, to transform relationships, generate rationality, and organize consensus. Therefore, a dialogue requires careful preparation of all aspects of the process and not only of the events during which actors will engage in dialogical conversation.



A dialogue process can have different **purposes**. For example, we can use dialogue as a tool for managing critical moments or crises, as a strategic discussion to promote shared visions, or as a generative and reflective space.

When we engage in dialogue to handle critical moments of conflict or crisis, it is possible–and sometimes recommended–to incorporate other types of decision-making and consultation processes, such as debate and negotiations, or even mediation if requested by both parties involved in a confrontation. These complementary processes must be conducted in a **dialogic manner**.

The dialogic approach relates to a code of conduct for actors, and to the quality of interaction that can prove effective in generating positive change in multiple situations.

- Participants demonstrate respect for others, empathy, and openness to different points of view.
- Interaction is transparent and actors speak with authenticity, avoiding secrets and hidden agendas.
- Actors put the learning principle into action, through inquiry and questions that not only promote their own objectives, but also seek to better understand what others are thinking.
- Processes are inclusive and flexible.
- The spaces in which actors interact are legitimate.

In summary, dialogue is based on mutual respect and on building trust. It enables participants to listen to and to learn from each other beyond the issues that divide them. This offers the possibility of improving and positively transforming relations between the actors. Dialogue is important because it consolidates the participation of social, economic, political, cultural, and institutional actors. It strengthens the values of democracy and fosters actions that are more inclusive and sustainable.

Below is a table that compares the major characteristics of dialogue, negotiation, and debate.

NEGOTIATION	DIALOGUE
The expected outcome is a concrete agreement.	The expected result is the transformation of human relationships.
Participants seek to define and satisfy material interests through specific arrangements agreed by the parties.	Participants seek to create new human and political problem-solving capacities.
The parties must be ready to attempt to reach agreement.	Can be fruitful even if the parties are not ready to negotiate but are convinced that they do not want to continue a destructive relationship.
Involves assets or rights that can be physically divided, shared, or defined tangibly.	Involves change in relationships by creating new bases for mutual respect and cooperation.
DEBATE	**DIALOGUE**
Participants listen to each other in order to refute data, trying to demonstrate flaws in what the others are saying.	Participants listen to others in order to get to know each other better and to understand each other's beliefs and interests.
Participants seek to impose their ideas, given that debate should lead to a single answer, so they defend their own views.	Participants express and share their uncertainties as well as their deepest beliefs.
Offers very little new information.	New information emerges.

II.2

What are the governing principles of democratic dialogue?

The governing principles of democratic dialogue are what make dialogue an effective tool to address challenges faced by societies in the 21st Century. Such principles include:

1. **Inclusiveness** refers to bringing together in a dialogue all those who may be part of a problem, given that they are the ones who will be able to find the solution. Inclusiveness is important in contexts where exclusion has existed because the dialogue process will give a voice to those actors that are not normally considered in decision-making processes. Furthermore, inclusiveness opens the door to equitable and effective participation for all actors.

2. **Joint ownership** is related to the commitment participants make to the process when they truly believe in it; that is, those actors believe the dialogue to be meaningful, genuine, and worth participating in.

3. **Learning** refers to listening with openness, and reflecting on what others say and think, while showing respect for their ideas. It is about listening in order to learn and better understand the problem that lies at the center of the dialogue.

4. **Humanity** is related to empathy (willingness to put oneself in somebody else's place) and authenticity (expressing what one really is and truly believes). When participants begin to try to understand each other, the seed of dialogue is sown.

5. **Confidentiality** refers to all participants respecting the trust developed during a dialogue and will therefore not act inappropriately to gain power. Likewise, confidentiality encourages the freedom for participants to express their points of view, without fear of criticism or reprisals.

6. A **sustainable long-term perspective** is related to the search for sustainable, lasting solutions. In this regard, dialogue is different to immediate actions that are sometimes necessary, but not always sufficient for putting an end to violence. Dialogue seeks to transform relationships and achieve profound changes.

7. **Good faith** refers to the fact that dialogue must not include hidden intentions or agendas, and that participants must show integrity in sharing their knowledge, while being patient, flexible, and tolerant.

II.3

What are the roles in a democratic dialogue?

Many types of participants are involved in a democratic dialogue process, each playing one or more of the following **roles**:

- Promoters and guarantors
- Conveners
- Donors
- Managers
- Facilitators
- Process experts
- Dialogue participants

A dialogue initiative usually originates from a few people – generally social leaders- who assume the role of promoters. They are responsible for fostering and promoting the dialogue at the beginning, as well as following up with its correct implementation. Observers and guarantors may complement this role.

Before a dialogue initiative can become a process, a number of people and institutions play the role of conveners, donors, and managers. Conveners extend the invitation to participate in the dialogue, approach potential dialogue participants in order to get them involved, and make sure they participate at the dialogue table. Donors provide the financial resources needed for the dialogue process at all stages. The people or institutions that have the role of dialogue managers are responsible for the operational, technical, and logistical aspects of the process. It is usually the managers that contact and hire the dialogue's facilitator or facilitators, as well as the process experts who provide technical advice. Dialogue participants are those individuals who sit at the dialogue table directly and work together in a participatory manner throughout the process.

Once a proposal to hold a dialogue is presented and funding, technical advice, and a management team are available, a mapping of actors and criteria is carried out in order to achieve inclusive and evenhanded participation with an acceptable balance of power. The goal is to have a dialogue group composed of people that have diverse points of view and knowledge of the problems or demands, and who also have representation, leadership, and the capacity to influence within the context.

It is extremely important to include an internal and external communication strategy for the dialogue. A good communications strategy will enable the dialogue to remain safely contained and confidential. It will also strengthen the transparency of the dialogue process and shields it against potential attacks or challenges.

II.4

What is a facilitator in a dialogue process?

For a dialogue process it is highly valuable, but not essential, to have a professional or formal facilitator. An individual already participating in the dialogue can serve as facilitator. He/she must be respected and neutral, and have experience and credibility. Some possible facilitators might be, for example, one of the promoters or conveners, an impartial third party, international organizations, a religious institution, or the Ombudsman, among others.

The facilitator will be responsible for creating a space of trust for the dialogue participants, and for conducting the process according to the methodology, as well as being involved in its design. This Guide provides methodological guidelines and tools that can help the facilitator to conduct a well structured process.

Main qualities of a facilitator:

- Familiarity with a variety of approaches and tools that can be used in facilitating group work.
- Experience working in different political and cultural contexts, and a commitment to adapt the process to the current situation.
- Knowledge of the different types of roles and functions required to ensure a good implementation of the process.
- Political intuition, or the ability to interpret the numerous contextual political dimensions that could affect and influence the process.
- Cultural sensitivity, or the ability to adjust to culturally diverse situations.
- A collaborative working style.
- Skilled and influential communicator.

The facilitator's functions include:

- Advanced preparation so as to understand the relationships between dialogue participants; power dynamics; the social, political, and cultural context; and the historical background to the problem or demands.
- Guide participants by generating curiosity and asking respectful questions, without siding with any group.
- Listen, understand, and provide feedback to the group about what is being said, so as to encourage reflection.
- Summarize and emphasize points of agreement and disagreement.
- Take notes on all that takes place during the dialogue, to support group memory.
- Use tools to build consensus and trust among the dialogue participants.

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III. STAGES OF A DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE PROCESS

A dialogue process should always be prepared and implemented taking into account the local context and the purpose of the dialogue (as a tool to manage critical moments or crises, as a strategic discussion for encouraging joint visions, or as a generative and reflective space). In this section of the Guide we will address the main stages of a dialogue which are essential for ensuring a good process.

There are four main stages in a dialogue process: exploration, design, implementation, and monitoring. Each stage is important to the process and must be approached very carefully, keeping in mind that the dialogue process is taking place in a unique social, economic, political, and relational context.

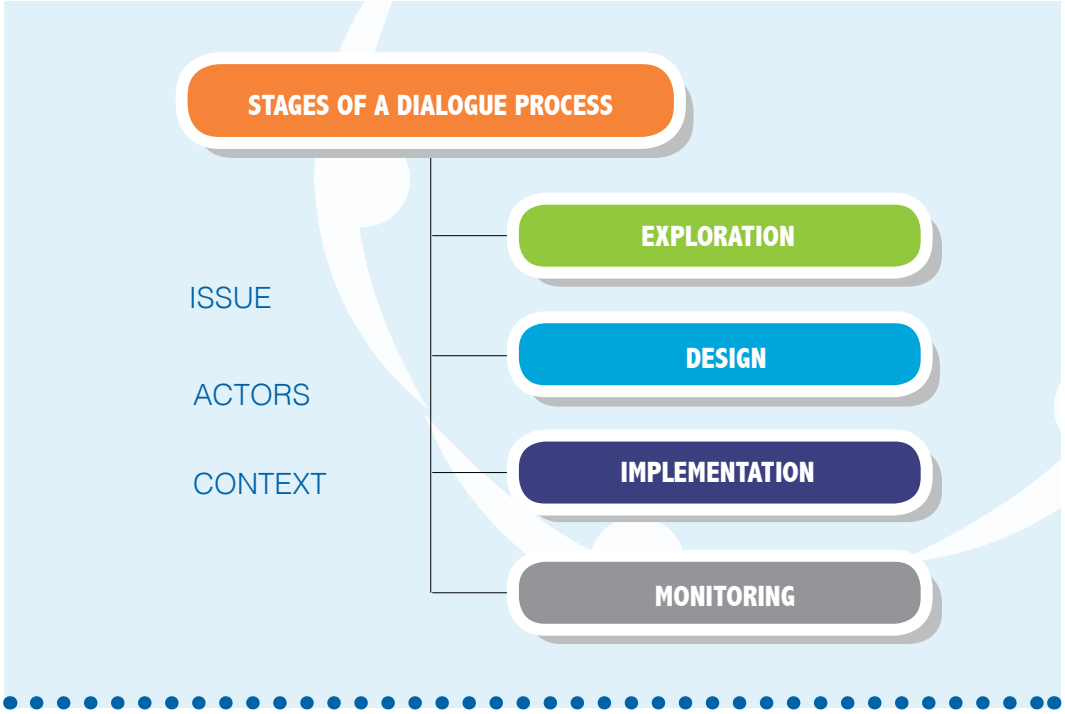
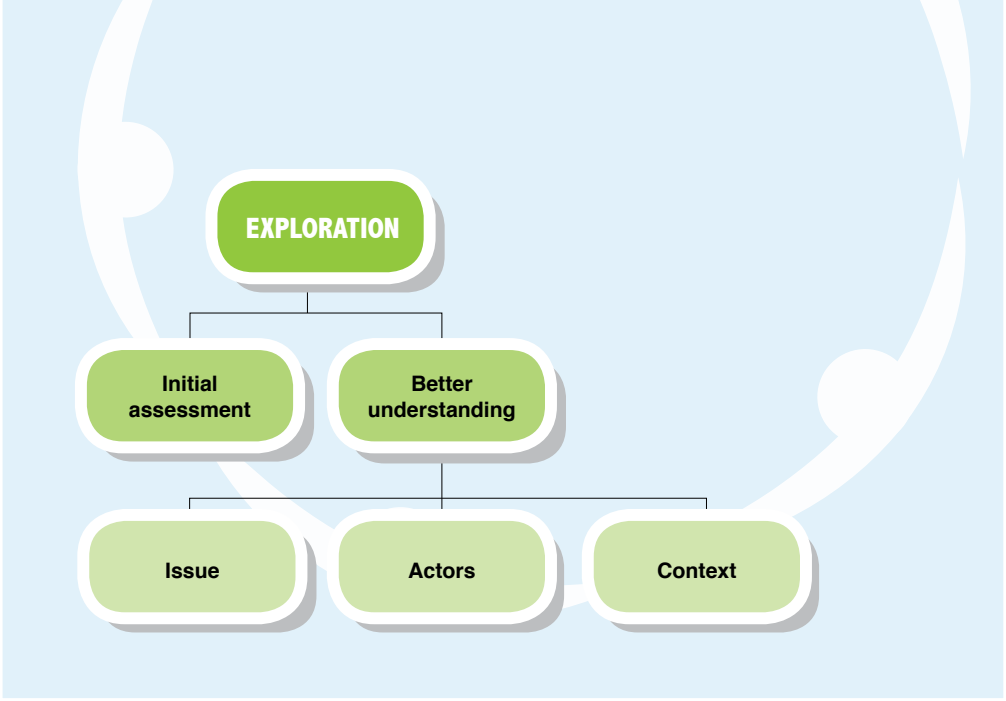


TABLE OF CONTENTS

MAIN ACTIVITIES DURING EACH STAGE OF A DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE PROCESS	
1. Exploration	• Explore existing conditions to determine: if other stages of the process should be continued, if the initiative should be cancelled, or if additional time and resources are needed to prepare the conditions for dialogue. • Understand as well as possible—and, time permitting, from each angle and perspective—the following three fundamental aspects: the issue, the context, and the key actors. • Once it has been determined that the conditions exist to continue with the dialogue process, this stage provides valuable information about the context, the actors, and the main issues. This information will be useful in the next stages of the process.
2. Design	• Develop a solid support framework to support the process: a management and facilitation team, the financial resources, and the external communications strategy. • Define the contents of the process: objectives, timeframes, and the overall agenda. • Select actors that could serve as dialogue participants.
3. Implementation	• Convene the dialogue. • Prepare the events: the methodological roadmap, logistics, and related administrative and financial aspects. • Get the dialogue started in a safe space, apply some guidelines for its development, and define the internal communications strategy.
4. Monitoring	• Identify and prepare documents to support monitoring: briefings, a progress matrix, minutes of meetings, communiqués, evaluations, and periodic reviews. • Prepare reports for donors. • Provide feedback to the facilitating team if it is determined that the process design needs to be adjusted.

III.1

Exploration Stage



It is important to remember that the exploration stage is in fact part of the dialogue process. The questions asked, the individuals with whom conversations are held (in what order and where these conversations take place), the expectations generated in relation to a future dialogue, all of these affect the situation in one way or another. By recognizing this as the exploration stage moves along, the conditions for a successful implementation stage improve, while building trust and credibility from the outset.

This stage involves research and analysis so as to understand the issue on which the future dialogue will focus, or the background and current situation of an escalating conflict. In order to carry out the exploration stage effectively, without giving in to the pressure of moving quickly to the design and implementation stages, sufficient financial and human resources are required, as well as a reasonable amount of time. Additionally, this first stage must establish the participatory nature and the dialogical quality of the process.

The exploration stage requires the participation of, at least, the promoters and managers of the process, as well as some experts and analysts if necessary. The exploration consists of two steps: making an initial assessment, and understanding the issue, actors, and context.

Step 1 – Initial assessment

Using as sources the knowledge and experience of individuals and institutions that conduct this assessment, as well as informal networks, mass media, and published reports, an attempt should be made to answer the following questions:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Who is requesting the dialogue, and why?

What level of power or influence do they have?

What attempts have been made in the past to address this issue or respond to these demands?

Why now?

In what ways has the context changed to make dialogue more possible or necessary at this time?

Who else is working on this issue, and what are they currently doing?

Based on the responses to the previous questions, the decision is made on whether or not to continue. If the decision is not to continue, this could imply either to terminate further efforts, or to initiate a stage that will improve conditions for a good dialogue. For example:

- In a crisis, the levels of violence or agitation may be so high that it is impossible to create a sense of physical safety for those participating in the dialogue.
- In the case of a national dialogue initiative, first of all it is necessary to ensure government participation or support before continuing with the process.
- If it is detected that the initiative comes from a group that is only seeking to advance its own agenda, the process should not continue.
- If a high level of dialogue fatigue is detected, it will first be necessary to work on improving the perception of all participants regarding the initiative.

Step 2 – Understanding the issue, the actors and the context

This step requires numerous consultations, research, and learning. The goal is to understand as well as possible--and, time permitting, from each angle and perspective—the three fundamental aspects: issue, context, and key actors.

It is important to remember that this step in the exploration stage must be inclusive and transparent. The effort is to understand the issue from a variety of perspectives, experiences, and versions. When contacting individuals or organizations during this stage, it is advisable to disclose any conversations that are being held with other people in other spaces, as well as any information sources that are being consulted. This will help to demonstrate the desire for transparency in the dialogue process and will contribute to build credibility.

ISSUE

As a starting point, it is necessary to research the issue or problem on which the dialogue would focus.

Part of the research is based on documents, books, newspapers, and other sources of information available. However, this step must include a high level of participation that involves reaching out to people and institutions, through interviews, consultations, discussion groups and surveys among others. This work will also call for individuals that have technical knowledge and political sensitivity and skills. In practice, this requires that the group working on this stage be broadened to include analysts, community leaders, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), universities, think tanks and respected journalists, among others.

The recommended attitude is one of seeking opportunities for dialogue and of openness to the different views actors hold about the issue.

If research reveals any conflict, then the focus should turn to identifying its history, causes, demands, and to understanding what has already been done either to transform or resolve the situation. It is also important to identify factors that would enable transformation, as well as legitimate dialogue entry points.

ACTORS

The actors in a dialogue process are not only the people who sit at the dialogue table. The actors are all those who participate directly in the dialogue process and those that, in one way or another, can significantly influence said process—either positively or negatively. Actor mapping is recommended.

To map the actors a question matrix can be used, similar to the one below, which can be completed through interviews and reliable indirect sources. This exercise will help identify the main incentives and hindrances that generate a possible dialogue, as well as the expectations and impressions the actors have about the process. It also makes it possible to identify the people who can make valuable contributions to the analysis of the context, power agents (people who have a high level of influence or connections with influential leaders), and potential spoilers of the dialogue process.

It is important that these early conversations with the actors lead to a better understanding of their perspectives and reflection on their expectations, fears, thoughts, or doubts regarding the process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

MATRIX FOR MAPPING ACTORS

Actor	What are his or her interests, needs, concerns, and goals?	What is his or her perception or position on the issue?	What is his or her connection with other actors, and the quality of those relationships?	Is he or she open to engage in a dialogue process? How would he or she like to participate? Who else does he or she think should participate in the process?	Does he or she have power? How would he or she influence the process?	What could be his or her role in the process?

CONTEXT

Much of the information gathered during the analysis of the issue and the actors will be useful for understanding the context in which the dialogue process will develop. However, it may be useful to think of the context as something broader and deeper than the situation in question, including three different but complementary aspects: historical, political, and socio-cultural. It is important to consult different information sources and interview people with different perspectives to gain a more complete understanding of the situation.

The historical context includes the origins of the current situation regarding the issue or problem and its history: how it began, what has been done about it, recent changes that could open up new opportunities to reach consensus. It is also advisable to understand local ways for managing conflicts.

The political context goes beyond government structures and tackles power issues. Some important aspects to understand include: the credibility and stability of government institutions and authorities, the level of cohesion or tension between the government and other political actors, the political party system, the state of democratic governance, divisions among ethnic groups, external political pressures, people's apathy and disenchantment with the political system, among others.

In the socio-cultural context it may be useful to elaborate a graphic mapping of the social groups according to their levels of inter-dependency, cohesion, or even polarization. Often, cultural differences are an essential component for understanding the social landscape.

After conducting the exploration stage it is possible that the conclusion will be that a dialogue process is not feasible or appropriate. Launching a dialogue process prematurely can cause more harm than good.

A dialogue process may not be advisable if...

- There seems to be a significant power imbalance that would inevitably compromise the dialogue, increasing the possibility that the most powerful group might co-opt the process.
- Violence, hatred and distrust are stronger than the will to find common ground.
- Key groups or sectors are not internally organized or lack a coherent sense of collective identity.
- Key parties are not willing to participate, lack of political will.
- Key parties express their willingness to participate, but give the impression of responding automatically to the proposals, without any real intention to see the process succeed.
- Time pressure is too strong.
- There is no underlying legal framework.
- Key parties lack the ability to provide continuity to the process.

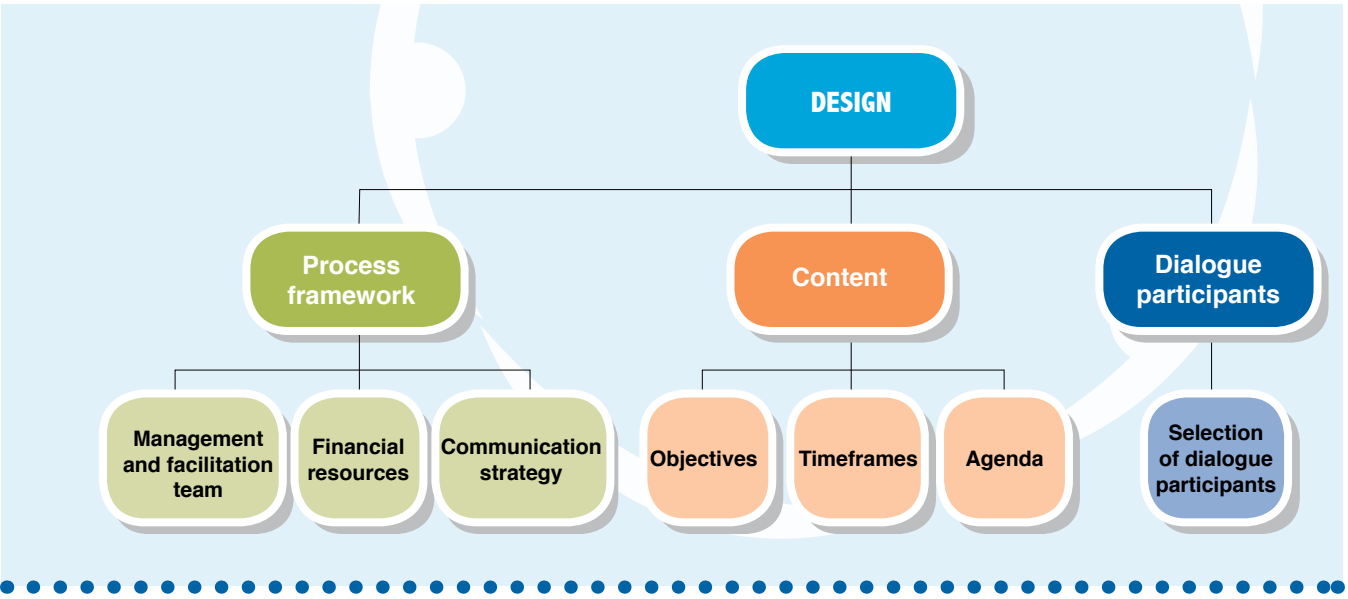
However, when circumstances are not favorable, it is not necessary to abandon the initiative completely. It is possible to work with the actors to prepare conditions that will allow a dialogue process to be conducted successfully in the future. For these, there are several possibilities such as:

- Building coalitions can contribute to a relative balance of power.
- Sectorial dialogues can help build consensus within smaller groups that might later participate in a broader dialogue process.
- Bilateral talks can bring opposing and polarized parties closer together.
- Negotiation/ mediation efforts in violent or potentially violent conflicts can create an atmosphere to reduce tensions and increase willingness to participate in future dialogue.
- Capacity strengthening leading to dialogue can empower the actors.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

III.2

Design Stage



There is no universal design that can be made to fit all types of dialogue processes. In the design stage, all the information and knowledge gathered during the exploration stage will be very useful. Just as in the exploration stage, adopting a dialogic approach will increase the likelihood of obtaining positive results. A dialogue process designed unilaterally will reduce the possibility of process ownership, will not make the objectives clear to the actors, and will not include a full range of perspectives. Very often this stage is referred to as the co-design stage, implying that the design should be developed by several individuals or institutions committed to the dialogue process.

Promoters and conveners participate in this stage. As the process progresses, managers and facilitators join in. The different components of the design stage will be explained below, including a set of guidelines for each component.

PROCESS FRAMEWORK

Includes aspects related to the structure that supports the dialogue: the management and facilitation team, the financial resources needed to implement the process, and the external communications strategy.

- ⇨ Management and facilitation team
- ⇨ Financial resources
- ⇨ Communications strategy

Management and Facilitation Team

All actors in the dialogue process have a close relationship with the management team, which is accountable to the promoters, conveners, and donors. This team must provide service and accountability to the process.

The following roles must be clearly assigned:

- coordinator
- administrator
- financial officer and individual responsible for preparing reports for donors
- logistic coordinator
- documenter
- spokesperson
- facilitator(s)

Financial Resources

The mobilization of resources should guarantee that all stages of the dialogue process can be implemented properly and in a timely manner.

It is important to establish a good relationship with all donors and comply with their reporting and monitoring requirements.

Communications Strategy

An "external" communication strategy of the dialogue process should be defined. This means having a clear strategy for relating with the media and with social networks. In the following stage of the process, the internal communications strategy of the dialogue group should be defined.

Information managed inadequately can have a negative effect on the process. For this reason there should be agreement from the beginning of the process on how to inform the general public about the process and who will be the spokesperson(s) for this task.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Aspects to consider include the following:

- Define the name of the process and its graphic image.
- Create a message with general information about the process.
- Identify who will serve as spokespersons for the process.
- Define the modality and times for issuing messages or communications about the process to the general public.
- Determine how the process will be documented.

CONTENT

The objectives of the dialogue, its agenda and timeframes are defined. To accomplish this, it is highly advisable to include a wide diversity of actors related to the dialogue process.

⇨ Objectives
⇨ Timeframes
⇨ Agenda

Objectives

In general, the purpose of a dialogue initiative emerges as a result of societal challenges that need to be addressed. In practice, it is necessary to define the main objectives, focusing on specific issues or problems. The definition of the objectives of the dialogue process should be carried out in a participatory manner including all the actors already involved in the process.

It is important to clarify that the dialogue itself is not the objective, but rather the means for reaching the objectives. Likewise, it is important to build trust in the dialogue process without creating false expectations about what can be achieved.

Three steps to achieve a good definition of objectives are:

1. Define the result objectives which explain the specific outcomes the dialogue process will have (for example, tangible results such as a specific agreement, new legislation or policies; or intangible outcomes such as capacity building or a greater understanding despite the existing differences).

2. Determine the process objectives (such as building trust, strengthening relationships, inclusive participation, building consensus, identification of dissent, or greater understanding of the issue, among others).

3. Consider context-specific objectives (for example, reduce violence, increase citizen participation, and strengthen political parties, among others).

Timeframes

Timeframes and opportunity are fundamental considerations in the design of a dialogue process. Tension between timeframes and the objectives are common, so it is essential to be flexible with scheduled times so as to be able to adjust to changes in context and to the different internal paces of the dialogue group. In fact, effective time management is a fundamental factor for success. To ensure that dialogue participants are committed throughout the process, it may be useful to refer to time in terms of stages or phases.

When a dialogue includes actors such as indigenous peoples, Afro-descendent and rural communities, it is crucial to consider the specific dimension of time in relation to their customs and seasonal activities. Examples of these differentiated perspectives about time are the value and importance given to activities surrounding the "life cycle", such as fruit-picking season, planting, rituals, or trade fairs.

Agenda

For preparing the agenda, the individual who will serve as facilitator should be already available. The facilitator, together with the managers, promoters, and conveners, review the objectives defined for the process and the time available. Using his/her knowledge of methodologies, the facilitator will guide the preparation of the agenda, defining:

- The main events of the process (workshops for the dialogue group, sometimes called "formal spaces").
- Secondary events (conversations, panels of experts, learning journeys, training meetings, field visits, ritual ceremonies, among others.).
- Dates and duration.
- Work blocks for each event: objectives, methodological procedures, inputs, and duration.
- Resources necessary to carry out each event.
- Support roles for each event (presenters, moderators, recorders, documenters).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE DIALOGUE PARTICIPANTS

Together with the definition of the purpose, the mapping of actors that was done during the exploration stage provides the basic information for deciding who should be invited to take part in the process as a dialogue participant. The success of the dialogue is closely tied to these decisions since dialogue participants not only contribute with their ideas, experiences, and various points of view, but they can also be responsible for tasks or actions agreed on in the dialogue and after the process is over; or according to their own changes, they may contribute to a change process in their institutions and sectors. Therefore, when designing the process, one of the essential steps is to develop the selection criteria for dialogue participants.

Inclusion, one of the main principals of dialogue, requires an effort to create a dialogue group that represents a microcosm of the social system which contains the problem or issue being addressed. In practice, this implies choosing a diverse group of actors by using criteria such as age, gender, ethnicity, geography, social sector, and socio-economic and political status, depending on their relevance to the specific context. However, ensuring a real microcosm is easier said than done. It might be useful to try to include different voices in the dialogue, rather than focusing solely on differences among specific individuals. This is particularly relevant in contexts in which certain voices have historically been excluded from important conversations.

Many decisions must be made when choosing a dialogue participant. Some of the considerations include:

1. Key persons or more people? A “more people” approach focuses on setting up dialogue groups with a large number of participants. The “key persons” approach focuses on choosing individuals who are highly influential; these individuals are often either ports of entry to the population or interest group, have the power to influence opinion or drive change, or can guarantee the sustainability of the agreements reached.

2. Top-down or bottom-up? This perspective is similar to the previous one but it focuses more on the dynamics of power that may be relevant to the objectives of change of the dialogue initiative.

3. Individuals or representatives? It is important to be precise about whether the participants in the dialogue should be invited to participate as individuals or as representatives of organizations or groups. In either case, when the objective is to reach agreements and then take action, it is recommended to have a group of actors with the ability to make and accept commitments.

4. Adopting a tripartite approach. Another approach is to involve the three main social sectors: government, business and civil society.

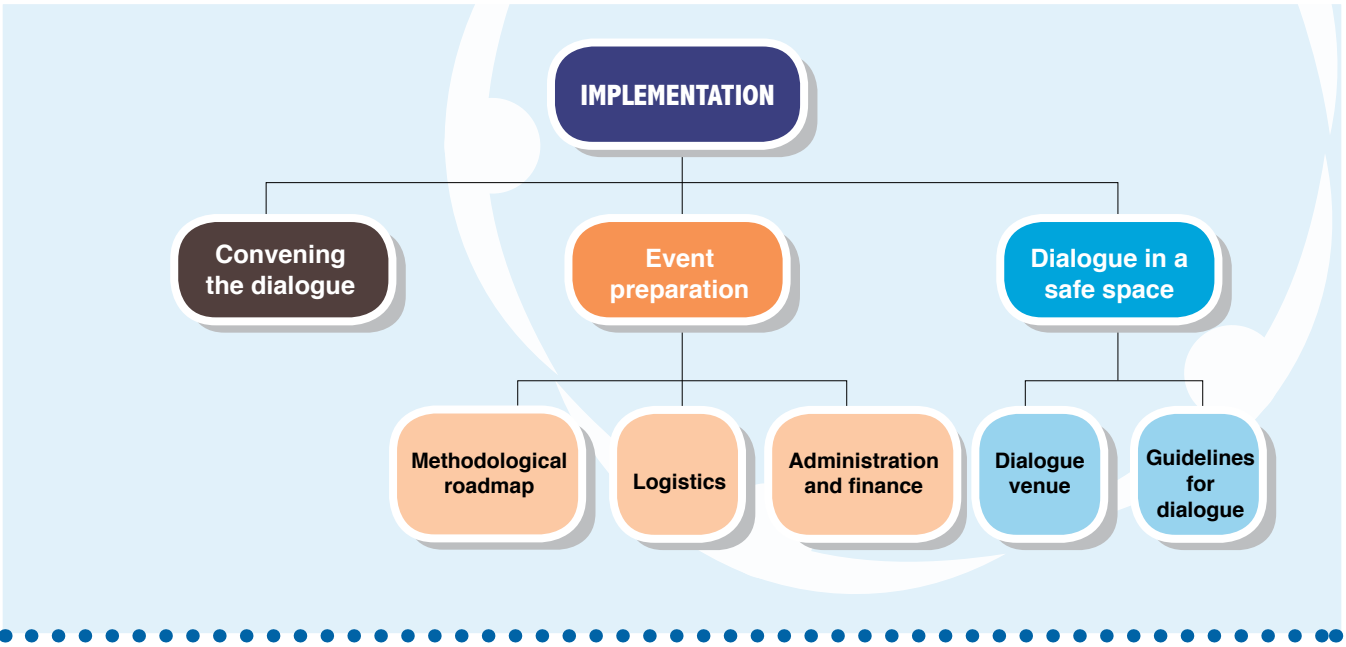
In general, dialogue participants must be open-minded individuals with the potential to become agents of change. However, sometimes it is necessary to develop a strategy to deal with individuals whose participation could place the dialogue process at risk, or who could block or undermine the legitimacy of solutions that result from the dialogue process; in other words, potential spoilers. It is important to decide whether to include a potential spoiler in the process as a dialogue participant or whether to involve this person in some other way in the process. However, be careful since there are limits to the principle of inclusion. It may be counterproductive to include individuals who will merely sabotage the meeting because they do not want to listen to what representatives of the other side have to say or do not wish to take the process seriously. This is not only a waste of an opportunity, but it also generates negative effects among dialogue participants and on the process.

In addition to the role of dialogue participants, other forms of participation can be considered for those actors who are not seated at the table. Alternative roles include observers, promoters, or experts who can make presentations during the formal events of the process. Another possibility is to include in the communications strategy groups of individuals or institutions that are periodically informed on the progress of the dialogue process even though they do not form part of the dialogue group.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

III.3

Implementation Stage



Dialogue acquires movement in the implementation stage. This stage includes the physical presence of dialogue participants, the organization of formal and secondary events, and the creation of a reliable and safe space that serves as the "venue" for the dialogue. Success of this stage has to do mainly with the efficiency in the management process and with the capacity of learning and shaping the design to adjust to the process as it unfolds. This is not an improvisation, but rather keeping an open and alert mind to new knowledge that emerges at each event, to the changes in the context, and to the perspectives and appreciations of dialogue participants in order to adapt the direction of the dialogue process when necessary.

A series of recommendations and guidelines are presented below for each component of this stage in which promoters, conveners, managers, facilitators, experts, and dialogue participants take part.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONVENING THE DIALOGUE

The initiative to commit to a dialogue process begins at the exploratory stage, generally based on the concern of promoters who see dialogue as an option for working on the issue or conflict. Based on this decision, and depending on the progress of the exploration and design stages, more individuals join the initiative and additional conveners become part of the dialogue process. These may include: local leaders, religious leaders, ombudsman offices, and members of the international community among others.

At this stage of implementation, convening the dialogue refers to extending a direct and personal invitation to future dialogue participants. Usually it is the conveners, with support from the management team, who issue the invitation. Some recommendations for a successful convening process are:

- Address each invitation personally, that means, using the name of each invited participant, and not simply “Dear Sirs” or “To Whom it May Concern”.
- If the individual has a very busy schedule, contact his or her assistant to determine when would be the best time to make sure he or she receives the invitation.
- The invitation can be sent by regular post or by email. It can even be delivered in person. It is advisable to ask for a return receipt from each invited person.
- Include with the invitation some general information about the process, the promoters, managers, donors, and facilitators. In other words, information that will help the invited individual to understand the objectives of the process, its general agenda, and who is supporting it.
- While extending the invitation, take the opportunity to request that invitees provide data that can be helpful in organizing events and documenting the process. For example: full name, age, gender, address, telephone number, assistant’s contact information, any physical condition that should be known and taken into consideration to support him or her better during the events. Sometimes it might be appropriate to ask for a photograph and a short biography that can be compiled with others to have a more personalized dialogue experience. All data collected should be confidential.

In some cases, the invitation itself will not be enough for the person to accept. In such cases, it is advisable that one of the promoters or guarantors contact the invitee directly, to resolve any questions and get that individual on board.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

EVENT PREPARATION

- ⇨ Methodological roadmap
- ⇨ Logistics
- ⇨ Administration and finance

A dialogue process may include one or more events. Some events are "formal" and are methodologically structured, whereas "non-formal" events are open spaces without a formal structure that contribute to generating trust in the dialogue group. It is important to keep in mind that all events are part of the dialogue process and are not isolated from each other, but rather must be interconnected.

The events in a dialogue process will depend on the overall design, the timeframe and current context, as well as the individual participants and the number of those participating, and the agenda prepared during the previous stage. Constant communication must always be maintained with dialogue participants to gage their perceptions of the events and the process, as well as to keep them motivated so they continue to participate.

Methodological Roadmap

In the previous stage the overall agenda for the dialogue process was developed. The facilitator must prepare a methodological roadmap for each event in the process which should cover the following:

- Objectives
- Working blocks
- Methodology, preparations, inputs, expected outcomes, and duration for each block
- Supporting roles (presenters, moderators, recorders, and documenters)

Logistics

For most dialogue processes participants arrive with fears, distrust and uncertainty, believing that there may be other intentions or hidden agendas. The facilitation of the event requires timely and thoughtful logistical support that helps foster a favorable atmosphere for the dialogue.

Tasks prior to the first event:

- Select and contract a physical place where the formal events of the process will take place, known as the "dialogue venue."
- Contract services for accommodations and meals when necessary.

- Contract transportation services as needed.
- Contract additional services, such as audio, projection, language interpretation.
- Prepare all materials and equipment that will be used to facilitate the process and the activities within the dialogue group.
- Based on the process design, hire speakers, trainers, thematic experts and others as necessary.

Tasks prior to any event:

- Follow-up to the invitation: contact dialogue participants to make sure they have all the necessary information and will be able to attend. This usually requires making telephone calls, sending reminders, and making personal visits. Invitees to the event should be treated as warmly and respectfully as possible.
- Confirm aspects related to transport for the event and provide directions on how to get to the event and instructions for access to the meeting place, particularly when dealing with participants who are coming from far away.
- The logistics coordinator must meet in advance with the location staff to ensure that everything needed for the event is ready (lodging, meeting room, setup, equipment and services).
- When the event is to be held in communities outside of the city, contact leaders or persons in charge to establish any special requirements in the community (for example, power generators, water, sleeping bags).
- Clearly define the roles of support and logistical staff (guides, interpreters, secretaries, documenters, and audio and equipment technicians).
- Make sure to take the material and equipment to the workshops (computers, audiovisual equipment, office supplies, materials for working groups, maps, models and others).
- Prepare evaluation materials for the participants (forms, progress matrix).

Administration and Finance

The administrative and financial aspects of the dialogue process involve constant and efficient efforts that cannot be disregarded or procrastinated. These include:

- Hiring consultants, experts, analysts, speakers, trainers.
- Contracting services for the events.
- Managing the budget for the process.
- Compiling information and preparing accountability reports.

DIALOGUE IN A SAFE SPACE

- Dialogue venue
- Guidelines for dialogue

Dialogue Venue

For dialogue to be conducted properly, dialogue participants must feel comfortable and confident, perceiving, as the process moves forward, that they are participating in serious and important conversations that are moving toward positive change.

The physical place or "venue" chosen for the dialogue (or at least for the main events) is fundamental for creating a warm environment that will enable a sincere and thoughtful conversation. The quality of attention for each of the dialogue participants will help to improve attitudes during the dialogue. Clear guidelines on how the event should unfold helps to build confidence about what can be expected from the process.

Some options for physical spaces include: available spaces in social organizations, universities, churches, municipal government offices, hotels, convention centers or other offices close to the participants that provide a certain level of comfort and privacy in a neutral space. The venue should also provide adequate infrastructure, safety, and accessibility for dialogue participants. It is also important to consider the symbolic meaning that a selected venue might pose and, in order for the process to move forward effectively, it must be accepted and appreciated by all participants.

Guidelines for Dialogue

When holding a dialogue, make sure to have basic guidelines to help organize, create safety and build trust. The particularities of each context must be considered. Some guidelines for behavior, procedure, and communications are the following:

1. **Behavioral guidelines.** With the guidance of the facilitator, clear rules should be established among all participants. This will assure that all dialogue participants feel comfortable and committed to the process. It is recommended that some sort of agreement be reached among all participants. This agreement should be written on a flip-chart or poster and kept visible in the meeting room throughout the entire event. The agreement should include items such as punctuality, equitable time management, equal opportunity for all to participate without interruption, tolerance and courtesy, limiting cell phone use to emergencies only, among others.

2. **Procedural guidelines.** These are important elements of the process that must be communicated in a clear and timely manner; examples of these are the roles of each participant and the agenda for the event.

3. **Communications guidelines.** The process must remain transparent at all times. To achieve this, it is crucial that the dialogue participants reach a consensus on both, the internal and external communications strategy.

4. **External communications strategy.** This strategy will have been prepared during the design stage. Nevertheless, this strategy must be shared and validated by the dialogue group at the first event in the process. Furthermore, the dialogue group may discuss a strategy for linking the dialogue process with other spaces.

   It is important to remember that the dialogue process is open and transparent, but that this does not necessarily mean that any observer or the media will be allowed to be present during the dialogue sessions. The presence of "others" who have not been authorized by the dialogue group can jeopardize the success of the event.

   As the dialogue process advances, it is possible that the dialogue group may decide to share some of the results. This can be done through information campaigns, press conferences, debates, interviews, assemblies, community councils, community radio broadcasts, and even through songs.

5. The **internal communications strategy** should consider the following aspects:

   - Documentation of the process, which includes progress reports, the progress matrix, evaluations, presentations, and all documents that contain information about how the process is unfolding.
   - Minutes of meetings.
   - Invitation mechanisms for upcoming events.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

III.4

Monitoring Stage

”Monitoring” refers to the ongoing process of gathering information to reflect and assess progress in relation to reaching the objectives of the dialogue process. Monitoring also helps identify either positive or negative consequences arising from the process and sheds light on the reasons for its success or failure.

Monitoring is part of the dialogue process from its beginning. This is not a stage that occurs at the end of the process, but rather an ongoing activity usually overseen by the management and facilitation team. Many of the inputs for monitoring come from the work of the dialogue participants during the process. Proper monitoring provides information for learning, permits making adjustments to the original dialogue design, and will serve as the basis for accountability to donors.

Some tools that help during the monitoring stage:

- Documentation or reporting on each process event.
- The progress matrix of the process constructed with dialogue participants at the end of each formal event.
- Written evaluations prepared by dialogue participants after each event. These should include: event organization (invitations and logistics), how participants feel, trust-building, the quality of the interaction, and their opinion on how the event was handled (in good faith, impartially, and respecting the uniqueness and interests of each actor).
- Minutes of the meetings.
- Communiqués.
- Assessments drawn from interviews of dialogue participants in informal spaces.
- Periodic reviews made by the management and facilitation team.

IV. TOOLBOX

The tools included in this section are some of the resources for implementing activities and creating group dynamics throughout the different stages of the dialogue process. They are not the only tools available, but we have included them because they are often used in dialogues with a variety of purposes. The group of individuals in charge of the process (promoters, managers, conveners, and facilitators) must evaluate any of these tools to determine if they are the most appropriate and timely.

Conversations that take place between two or more individuals who take turns expressing his or her ideas and emotions, become richer and take on more versatile dynamics, as dialogue participants become aware of the opportunity to ask questions and try to understand any assumptions hindering effective communication.

Some common assumptions are…

- Believing that *conflict is negative* and therefore is a battle that must be won, rather than a problem that must be resolved together.
- Thinking that *working on human relations with dialogue participants does not make sense and is a waste of time*. This thought shifts attention to substantive matters instead, and overlooks the level of relationships.
- Thinking that *the only reality is the one "I" see and experience*. This thought detracts from the task of understanding points of view and realities different from our own.

In dialogue processes, dynamics take place to help increase awareness of the different elements comprising our reality; participants seek to achieve mutual understanding, examine underlying assumptions that shape behavior, understand different perspectives, and recognize new possibilities and opportunities, and come up with actions for change. The dialogue process must always be conducted transparently and permit social auditing and monitoring.

The following toolbox contains 16 practical tools which can be used at different phases of the dialogue process: at the beginning, during the events to facilitate understanding and constructive conversation, when it becomes necessary to bring important and relevant information to the dialogue participants, and when closing events and monitoring and follow-up need to be facilitated.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Tool	Purpose	When employed
Check-in	Get to know who the participants are, their reasons for participating, and their expectations and fears related to the process. Strengthen human relations. An open, empty space that might otherwise seem unfriendly or unsafe for many becomes a container for the group's hopes and expectations.	At the beginning of the event
Imaginary line	Highlight the group's heterogeneity as something important that allows participants to have a more complete version of reality in the dialogue group. Show our assumptions regarding issues related to the dialogue process. Connect with ourselves and with others, building confidence among the dialoguers.	During the event to facilitate constructive conversation
The powerful question	Motivate everyone to engage in conversation and help them to share a better understanding of the issue.	
The plenary and the talking object	Wrap up a group work session and generate conclusions and collective learning.	
World café	A dynamic conversation to stimulate innovative thinking and strengthen group identity. Deepen relationships and collective ownership of the results from the dialogue group.	
Dialogue in pairs	Reduce polarization on certain issues.	
Story circle	Build empathy and bonds of trust.	
Scale models	Feed new information into the process, reduce inherent prejudice among participants, and show the physical appearance of a project and its impacts.	Enrich the dialogue process with new information
Material devices	Feed new information into the process and gain a better understand of the dimensions and quantities involved in a project.	
Scale maps	Feed new information into the process. Understand locations, distances, access routes, and culturally important areas associated with a project.	
Learning journeys	Feed new information into the process. Better understand the daily reality of the visited location that is associated with the problem on which the dialogue process is focused.	
Talks with experts	Feed new information into the process and learn about the problem and related issues from the best source possible.	

Progress matrix	Review progress of the dialogue process and identify actions that can strengthen the work done in each event. Obtain input to make the necessary adjustments to the dialogue process.	Near the end of the event to facilitate monitoring and follow-up
Next steps	Ensure that the participants leave the event with a feeling of shared purpose. Reach consensus about specific activities to verify work done during the event and secure individual commitments that facilitate monitoring and follow-up.	
Check-out	In addition to wrapping up the event or an activity within the dialogue process, listen to the thoughts and feelings of each dialogue participant with respect to what he or she has experienced and learned. It is useful for making a quick and first-hand assessment of the event.	
Event briefing	Record everything that takes places during the event as an aide memoire for the dialogue group and as an instrument to facilitate communication, monitoring and follow-up.	

The following pages detail each of these tools: their purpose, when they can be used, timeframes, necessary materials, and procedures.

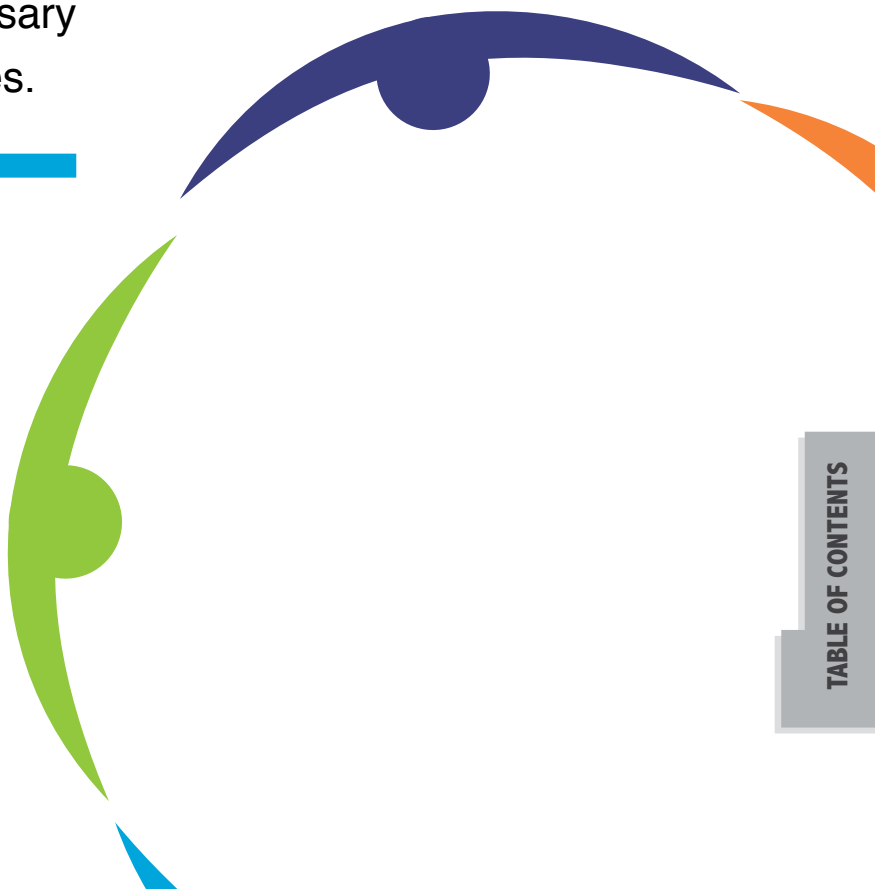


TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHECK-IN		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
Useful for getting to know the participants, their reasons for participating, expectations and fears regarding the process. Strengthens human relations. The open, empty space, which may seem unfriendly or unsafe to many, becomes a container for the group's hopes and expectations.	At the beginning of the event. It can be repeated more quickly at the beginning of each day to go over and reflect on the previous day's work.	• Two minutes maximum per participant. • A private and welcoming atmosphere. • A talking object (the one holding the object is the only one allowed to speak). • A circle of chairs.

Procedure

- All those present are asked to take a seat in the circle of chairs (including promoters, conveners, observers, guarantors, dialogue participants, facilitators, managers, donors, among others). A generative question is asked, such as: *What are your expectations and fears regarding this dialogue process?* If the Check-in is being done on the following day, the question should have to do with the previous day's work, for example: *What was the most positive thing about yesterday's work and what do we still have to work on?*
- All those present are asked to speak in turn, and the first person is given the talking object (a microphone, cloth ball, or other object). Each participant states his or her name, where he/she is from, what he/she does, and then responds to the generative question. A maximum of 2 minutes is allowed per person.
- Each contribution is written on two flip-charts: one for expectations and another for fears expressed about the process. If needed, the agenda can be adjusted to address the fears and expectations that arise, and expectations beyond the scope of the dialogue process are clarified. At the end of the workshop, the group can go back to the flip-charts to review their initial fears and expectations.
- The flip-charts should be placed up on a wall, visible to all, and left there throughout the event.

IMAGINARY LINE		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
Highlights the group's heterogeneity as something important that allows us to have a more complete version of reality in the dialogue group. Shows our assumptions regarding issues related to the dialogue process. Allows us to connect with ourselves and others, and to build trust among dialogue participants.	This can be used as the first exercise after the Check In or at the beginning of a new topic. It should not be used at the beginning if the participants are extremely polarized.	• Between 15 and 30 minutes. • Adhesive tape and a large area in which the dialogue participants can stand and easily move around the imaginary line.

Procedure

- Divide a large space in the room with a line of adhesive tape on the floor. The tape can be substituted with rope or any other material as long as the participants can see a dividing line across the floor.
- Tell the group that a statement will be made and that the dialogue participants who agree with the statement should move to the right side of the line, those who do not should move to the left side, and those who are undecided should stay in the middle.
- The facilitator makes a statement out loud and waits for the group to react, get positioned, and talk among themselves.
- The facilitator asks the dialogue participants why they chose their spaces. All those who ask for the floor may participate.
- Once the dialogue generated by the statement is thoroughly explored, another statement is made and the exercise is repeated as many times as needed.

It is important that the facilitator make it clear that there is no "correct" or "winning" position. The purpose of this tool is to share our beliefs and assumptions on something. The dialogue generated during the exercise is the most important thing.

Examples of statements that can be used during this exercise:

- *"Sometimes it's a good thing to take decisions for someone else".*
- *"Dialogue is not possible in this country, because everyone has a hidden agenda".*
- *"I am not authoritarian".*
- *"It is possible to arrive at a consensus on this issue".*
- *"Conflict is necessary".*
- *"The ability to listen respectfully and closely is crucial for this dialogue".*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE POWERFUL QUESTION		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
Motivates everyone to participate in the conversation and helps to gain a better understanding of an issue.	At any point in the dialogue process to open the discussion up into small or medium sized groups. At any point to give each dialogue participant the opportunity to share what he or she views as true and meaningful.	• It depends on the design of the event, but this type of group discussion usually takes 1 hour. • It is a good idea to have a plenary after the group discussions.

Procedure

People become deeply engaged when they feel that their thoughts are helping to answer questions that are important to them. A good question is powerful when it motivates everyone to participate and contribute to the conversation.

The questions we try to answer guide us towards a particular way of thinking and affect the result of our conversations with others. For example, if we ask: *"What is wrong here and who is to blame?"* we are building a critical, finger-pointing and defensive dynamic. But, if we ask: *"What can we learn from what happened and what possibilities do we have before us now?"* we are encouraging reflection, learning and cooperation between dialogue participants.

In a dialogue process, it is more effective to ask questions that allow participants to explore possibilities and connect with the topic being discussed. It is best not to ask questions that mention "the truth" about something, because this will likely give rise to a controversial, fruitless discussion. It is best to use phrases such as: "what is useful", "what has worked", or "what is visible".

A powerful question:

- Is simple and clear
- Engages our thinking
- Creates energy and encourages exploration
- Focuses our attention and thinking
- Opens up new possibilities
- Invites deeper reflection
- Invites us to listen to other opinions in order to complement our answer.

THE PLENARY AND THE TALKING OBJECT		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
Wrap up a group work session. Generate conclusions and collective learning.	When it is important to gather all the dialogue participants together and wrap up a topic using a balanced and fair pace of conversation to move towards generative dialogue and connect thoughts and ideas.	• Two minutes per participant. Total time is calculated by multiplying the number of participants by two minutes. • Additional time can be assigned if participants still need to talk after a first complete round. The plenary should not exceed 2 hours. • Flip-charts to write down main conclusions within the sight of the group. • A talking object (cloth ball, microphone). • A 2 minute sand timer or chronometer can be used and should be placed where everyone can see it. • Circle of chairs.

Procedure

- All dialoguers take their seats in a circle of chairs.
- Explain that this is the plenary and during the first round everyone can express themselves once, for two minutes.
- Explain that the **talking object** will be held by the person who has the floor and that no one should interrupt in any fashion. The person holding the talking object has the "power" to speak for 2 minutes, or rather, the "responsibility" to speak. Those who are not holding the talking object have the power and responsibility to listen.
- The responsibility of the person who speaks is to focus on the issue and express his or her thoughts as clearly as possible.
- The rest should listen under the assumption that there is something wise and important to hear. They should listen openly, ready to be influenced, and from the perspective of the speaker. They should appreciate his or her points of view, although they may not agree with them, understanding that what they are hearing is valid for the person speaking and represents part of the complete reality that no one is capable of seeing on their own.
- Explain how the two-minute periods will be measured and that there will be no exception to this time allotment. A sand timer or stopwatch can be used for this purpose (a traditional stopwatch or one projected on the screen using any available computer application).
- Explain how the main points will be written down on the flip-charts and in the minutes of the event so everyone can concentrate on listening. A volunteer starts and is handed the talking object, and the timer is started. When the participant is done, he or she hands the talking object to the next person, and so on until the circle is complete. If someone is not prepared to speak on his or her turn, he or she may "pass" and hand the talking object to the next participant.

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- After one complete round, the facilitator takes the talking object, and if there is time, begin another round. This time the talking object does not make a complete circle, but is given only to those who ask for the floor. Time is counted the same as in the first round.
- The facilitator indicates when there are only 10 minutes left (equivalent to five final contributions).
- The plenary concludes and this is a good time for a 15 minute break (perhaps a coffee break).
- Depending on the issue and the purpose of the plenary session, a synthesis of the contributions can be written on poster paper or on a computer with a projector that is visible to everyone in the dialoguing group.
- The posters are placed on the wall in view of everyone, and left there throughout the remainder of the event.

WORLD CAFÉ		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
A dynamic conversation to stimulate innovative thinking and strengthen group identity. Deepens relationships and collective ownership of results by the dialogue group.	When it is necessary to explore the thoughts of all the dialogue participants regarding one or several powerful questions in a dynamic and innovative fashion. To create participation, share knowledge, stimulate thought and explore possibilities of actions related to matters relevant to the dialogue process.	• Between 1 and 2 hours. • It is best to use round tables 90 to 100 centimeters in diameter. • Colored table cloths (optional). • Flip-chart paper or construction paper to cover the surface of the tables. • Markers or colored pens. For greater legibility, use dark colors, such as green, black, blue and purple. Add one or two brighter colors per table (red, light green, light blue, orange) to add details or emphasis. • Vases or candles (optional). • Jugs, cups or glasses to hold the markers on each table. • A side table for snacks and refreshments. • Background instrumental music (recommended).

Setting the stage

- If possible, select a space that has natural light and an outside view, to create a more inspiring and welcoming environment.
- Make the space look like a real café, with small tables for four or five people. Having less than four people at a table might not provide enough diversity of perspective, and having over five limits the amount of personal interaction.
- Arrange the café tables casually and not in a row.
- Use brightly colored tablecloths (or construction paper) and a small vase with flowers on each table. If allowed, place a candle on each table as well. Place plants or greenery around the room.
- Place at least two large sheets of paper on each tablecloth and a cup filled with colored markers. The markers and paper will encourage the participants to draw and connect ideas. This way, people will also be able to jot down the ideas as they arise.
- Consider placing artwork in the room or posters with inspiring quotations, and put on some background music (instrumental and soft) while participants arrive and are welcomed.
- To honor the tradition of community and hospitality, offer drinks and snacks at each table.

Procedure

- Seat four or five people at the small café-style tables and select one host per table. Explain the host's role and the way in which the others will move around to other tables as time passes. You can use the image of a bee moving from flower to flower, pollinating. The host is the only person who remains seated at the same table during all the rounds and takes notes on the main points made by the dialogue participants visiting that table, to share them with the next participants who come to the table.
- Share the powerful question used to start conversations with the participants.
- Establish progressive rounds of conversations (usually three), each lasting about 20 to 30 minutes.
- Encourage the hosts and other members at the tables to write and draw key ideas on the paper that has been placed on the table.
- After the first round of conversations is over, ask the hosts to remain at the table while the rest of the group acts like traveling pollinators and moves to the next table.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- When a new round of conversations begins, each table host welcomes the new visitors and briefly shares the main ideas, issues, and questions that came up from previous group's conversation.
- This can be repeated several times. It is recommended to have three rounds and then move on to a plenary in which the hosts share what was discussed at their tables.
- It is in these municipal council-style conversations where patterns can be identified, collective knowledge grows, and possible actions emerge.

Once you know what you wish to achieve and the amount of time you have available for the World Café, you can decide the proper number and length of rounds, the most effective use of powerful questions, and the most interesting way of connecting and cross-pollinating ideas.

The World Café can finish up with the plenary or move on into another dynamic using what was discussed during all the rounds.

DIALOGUE IN PAIRS		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
Reduce levels of polarization on certain issues.	At any time during the event when there is a need to reduce levels of polarization.	• Twenty minutes of conversation in pairs. • Time for the plenary session.

Procedure

- Select a topic.
- Ask dialogue participants to organize themselves in pairs. It is better if they do not know their partner very well.
- Establish the time for pairs to engage in dialogue. Let them know they are welcome to talk outside the main room, or in a garden or other quiet place.
- When all pairs have returned to the room, each participant is asked to share with the rest of the group what their partner's opinion is on the topic. This can be done by using the plenary tool.
- It is important to take into consideration that the objective of this tool is not to reach a consensus, but to decrease polarization.

STORY CIRCLE		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
Build empathy and bonds of trust.	Preferably in the evening, after the event or after the first day of the event has concluded.	• Between 1 and 2 hours. • Private and friendly environment. • A comforting beverage. • Chairs arranged in a circle.

Procedure

- Participants sit on chairs in a circle.
- Explain to the group that anybody who wishes to do so may share his or her story in order to answer the powerful question. For example, if working with a local development group, the question might be: What inspired or motivated you to participate in the development of your community? Or in the case of a group working on issues related to peace, the powerful question might be: What motivated you to work for the reconciliation process?
- Agree with the group on how time is to be measured. Do not use a chronometer for this activity. It will end when the total time assigned to the activity runs out.
- Agree with the group that once a participant begins his or her intervention, there will be no interruptions.
- Moments of silence should be respected. When there is silence after listening to any of the stories, it means that the group has been touched by the story and needs some time to reflect, understand and be ready to continue with another story. The facilitator will decide when to interrupt the silence, based on the story and on the group's reaction; the interruption will be gentle and warm.

SCALE MODELS		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
Feed new information into the process. Reduce the inherent prejudice among participants. Show the physical appearance of a project and its impacts.	In intercultural dialogues with indigenous peoples and peasant communities, this tool helps to understand the impact a project may have on the environment. It is useful in consultation processes.	• Between 1 and 2 hours. • Scale model developed before the event: dams, water treatment plants, oil wells, mines, roads, among others.

Procedure

- Identify the scale to be used and ask technical experts to build a model of the project.
- The model will include the improvements or changes the project will cause and the physical implications it will have on the surroundings (excavations, pipelines, waste disposals, changes to water sources, among others).
- Depending on the type of project, the model should offer crosscutting views.
- Technical experts should introduce the model, followed by a question and answer period.

USE OF MATERIAL DEVICES		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
Feed new information into the process. Gain a better understanding of the dimensions and quantities involved in a project.	In intercultural dialogues with indigenous peoples and rural communities, this tool helps to give an idea of measurements and dimensions compatible with those used locally. It is useful in consultation processes.	• Between 1 and 2 hours. • Materials prepared before the event and taking into consideration local units of measurement and dimensions.

Procedure

- The team of technical experts converts technical data according to those dimensions used in the area.
- Physical representations of the devices that will be used in the project are presented. For example, a pipeline made of cardboard in its original size and expressed using units of measurements known or used in the location (for example, centimeters instead of inches, meters instead of kilometers).
- With regard to quantities, seeds or fruits may be used which, when gathered together, will help to understand the quantities involved in the project.
- After listening to the presentation made by the technical experts, the session opens up for questions and answers.

SCALE MAPS		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
Feed new information into the process. Understand locations, distances, access routes, and culturally important areas related to a project.	In intercultural dialogues with indigenous peoples and peasant communities, this tool helps to understand where a project will be located. It is useful in consultation processes.	• Between 1 and 2 hours. • Maps prepared before the event using official information or topographic maps in whatever scale is available.

Procedure

- The specialized technical team prepares maps that show the location of the project, community, access routes, important places and sacred sites. Data used comes from available official geographical information and field visits.
- Explain the map, making clear reference to the sites that are important to the community, access routes, and distances, using measurement units that are known locally.
- After listening to the presentation made by the technical team, the session opens up for questions and answers.

LEARNING JOURNEYS		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
Feed new information into the process. Contribute to a better understanding of the daily reality of the place to be visited which is also related to the problem on which the dialogue process is focused.	When it is necessary to learn directly about realities on-the-ground.	• Half a day or one day. • Prior preparation with journeys' hosts. • Transport to the sites to be visited and food. • Question guide for dialogue participants. • Chairs arranged in a circle for plenary meeting upon return.

Procedure

- Organizers choose the sites to be visited in advance, and contact the individual who will host the dialogue groups when they visit, to explain the purpose of the visit. All logistical arrangements must also be made in advance.
- Before leaving for the activity, dialogue participants are organized into teams and each participant receives the following guide:

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Stay silent for 10 minutes, relaxing your mind, and then write down your answers to the following questions:

Think about yourself. What do you feel? What are you thinking? Pay attention to your thoughts. What do you think you know about the place and people you are about to visit? Write down your assumptions and expectations. The intention to write them down is to simply be able to consciously put them on hold and arrive at the site with an open mind and without prejudice.

What would you like to learn or know about the place you are about to visit and the people you will meet? Write down your questions and areas of interest or curiosity.

When you have finished, share your notes about yourself (your thoughts, feelings, wishes) with your team. Then, share your questions and areas of interest regarding the visit.

- Upon arrival at the site, participants will meet the host (who works there and has been approached before about leading the visit). A team representative presents the process and explains the purpose of the visit ("to learn", "to engage in an open and honest conversation" and "to understand the situation from the local perspective"). Each of the visitors and hosts introduces him or herself briefly.
- During the visit, the dialogue participants:
    * Turn off their cellular phones and are fully present.
    * Listen and observe carefully. It is important to smell, touch, taste, hear, and see. Pay attention to both visible and invisible elements: listen to the words and their "rhythm."
    * They play the role of learners.
    * They ask questions to the people they are visiting; they pay attention to their way of thinking, their perceptions and feelings. They try to perceive things from the point of view of the people they are interacting with, employing empathy and not judging them. They observe their own thoughts and emotions: their reactions, judgments, projections. They avoid giving advice.
    * They collect stuff and absorb verbal expressions and other things that may have had an impact on them. When appropriate, they separate themselves from the group and interact with other people at the site. Everything that happens, even the unexpected, is part of the learning journey.
- After the visit, the dialogue group meets once again. They are given 10 minutes to think about the journey they have just participated in.
- Then a plenary session can be arranged in which they all share their experiences and what they have learned.

TALKS WITH EXPERTS		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
Feed new information into the process. Allows learning about the problem and related issues from the best sources possible.	When the problem on which the dialogue process focuses is complicated and multifaceted, and when it is necessary to provide dialogue participants with a more complete and informed understanding.	• Two hours. • Experts who have previously been contacted and invited. • Table for the panel. • Slips of paper on which participants can write their questions for the panel.

Procedure

- Well in advance of the event, experts are selected and invited to meet with the dialogue group to share information about the issue. It is important to include all invited experts to participate in a conference call or meeting to coordinate the manner in which the issue is to be addressed and ensure that the presentations fit together with each other. The person who will moderate the expert panel should also participate in this meeting.
- The experts and the moderator sit at the table for the panel in front of the dialogue participants.
- Participants are told that they should write down their questions on a slip of paper (three slips of paper can be given to each dialogue participant when they enter the room).
- The panel moderator introduces each expert and gives them all the opportunity to speak.
- After each expert presentation, the slips of paper are collected in silence, and given to the moderator.
- After all experts are finished with their presentations, the moderator will arrange the audience's questions by topic and give these questions to the experts.
- The experts answer the group's questions, and the talks continue.

PROGRESS MATRIX		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
Review progress of the dialogue process and identify actions that can reinforce and strengthen the work accomplished in each event. Obtain inputs to make the necessary adjustments to the dialogue process.	Often a dialogue process consists of several different events separated over time. This tool is applied at the end of each event, before establishing the next steps and ending the current event.	• Approximately 1 hour. • A flip-chart or a computer and projector to complete the matrix in front of the group.

Procedure

- A matrix of the event that is about to conclude is put up in front of all the participants (it can be on a flip-chart or by using a projector to show a computer screen). It should include columns for the name, objectives, results and upcoming activities.
- The name of the event is entered.
- The general and specific objectives of the event are stated (they may be divided into general objectives and specific objectives or there can be just one category, "Objectives").
- The results achieved for each objective should be added.
- Activities that need to be organized and developed in the near future should be identified, complying with the objective through the results.
- Future events will include the progress matrixes from previous events and they should be presented in plenary so that dialogue participants can see progress in the dialogue process as a whole and not only in relation to the event that is concluding at that moment.

An example of a completed progress matrix at the end of an event is shown below:

EVENT CONCLUDED	GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE EVENT	SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES	RESULTS	UPCOMING ACTIVITIES
First dialogue workshop	To draw the dialogue's actors closer together.	Identify shared viewpoints on chosen issues.	Actors have been able to work together and have identified three shared ideas that will be implemented in future actions.	Specialized information is needed, so a meeting between community leaders and two specialists will be held as well as a talk with 3 experts on the issue.

NEXT STEPS		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
Ensure that the participants leave the event with a feeling of shared purpose. Reach consensus about specific activities to follow up on work accomplished during the event and secure individual commitments that facilitate monitoring and follow-up.	After the event has concluded and before Check-out, specifically in cases in which the intention is to jointly develop a list of actions in a visible and committed manner, clearly identifying responsible parties and implementation dates. It is also useful for determining arrangements for the next event, as well as date, location and means by which the group will be contacted to convene and share information on the dialogue process.	• Between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on the number of future actions. • Chairs arranged in a circle. • Flip-chart to write down the following steps to be taken.

Procedure

Dialogue is connected with action. At each event and at the end of the entire dialogue process, participants are expected to leave with a shared sense of purpose and with a commitment to a common future, as well as steps defined to achieve such future.

- The following question is asked in a plenary session: What cannot be overlooked in regards to the follow-up on the work carried out to date?
- As participants give their suggestions, the facilitator groups them together and writes them down on flip-charts.
- A brainstorming session can be held to identify some concrete actions. Those responsible for implementation are identified, as well as the start and end dates. The names of people who will be kept informed of each action can also be written down.
- Actions needed for the upcoming event should be included, if applicable.

CHECK-OUT		
Purpose	**When to use**	**Time and materials needed**
In addition to wrapping up the event or an activity within the dialogue process, listen to the thoughts and feelings of each dialogue participant with respect to what he or she has experienced and learned. This is useful for making a quick and first-hand evaluation assessment of the event.	As a final activity to conclude the event.	• Between 15 and 30 minutes, depending on the group size. • Flip-charts to take note of what each participant shares with the rest of the group. • Chairs arranged in a circle.

Procedure

- Dialogue participants are invited to sit in a circle, similar to the seating arrangement during a plenary meeting.
- Ask them to voluntarily express, in one sentence, their feelings as they leave the event. This activity can be either open-ended or in response to a powerful question.
- It is important to take into consideration that it is the last item on the agenda and that it provides a formal ending to the event.
- Some powerful questions that can be used with this tool are: What were the most powerful lessons? What was more useful to me? What has become clearer? What is my feeling as I leave the workshop?
- The facilitator summarizes each participant's comments on the flip-charts and thanks everyone for their participation in the event.

EVENT BRIEFING		
Purpose	**When to used**	**Time and materials needed**
Record everything that takes places during the event, as a group aide memoire for the dialogue group and as an instrument that will facilitate communication, monitoring and follow-up.	Throughout the whole event.	• The entire event. • Computer (preferably 2).

Procedure

- Ideally a table and 2 comfortable chairs, as well as an electrical outlet, are placed near the group of dialogue participants (but without disrupting their dynamic). Two people can be seated there constantly with their computers, taking notes of what is happening.
- The two people take turns to record everything that happens. The person who is not taking notes reviews and respectively completes previous notes.
- At the end of each day, both records are unified in order to create a complete daily record. This is repeated each day throughout the event.
- It is important for all participants to be aware of the function of the people who are working on the briefing of the event.
- At the end of the event, the way and date on which the event briefing will be delivered to all participants is agreed on.
- The completed event briefing is incorporated into the documentation of the dialogue process.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

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The Crisis Prevention and Recovery Practice Area of the UNDP Regional Center for Latin America and the Caribbean

The Crisis Prevention and Recovery Practice Area is part of UNDP efforts to combat both the causes and the consequences of crises undermining the development of the populations that are affected by them.

Its aim is to maximize the impact of Country Offices and regional initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean by providing technical advice and support for capacity building, formation of strategic alliances and experience exchange through communities of practice, networks and associated experts and centers of excellence.

The Area works with more than 20 Country Offices and several regional initiatives, in addition to the New York, Geneva and Panama teams, other practice areas of the Regional Center and various United Nations agencies. Efforts focus on three areas: Conflict Prevention and Democratic Dialogue, Citizen Security, and Disaster Risk Management and Recovery.

The Department of Sustainable Democracy and Special Missions of the OAS Secretariat for Political Affairs

The Department of Sustainable Democracy and Special Missions (DSDSM/SPA) of the SPA provides support to the OAS General Secretariat in the promotion, protection and defense of democracy through attention to political, social and institutional conflicts and the strengthening of representative institutions in the region. The DSDSM promotes democratic values and principles through five sections:

The Political Analysis and Scenarios System systematically follows the political situation in the countries of the region in order to inform the authorities of the General Secretariat. The system operates through three instruments: monitoring, early reaction and resolution.

The Section for Institutional Strengthening in Dialogue and Mediation works to strengthen the OAS capacity in this field and provides technical support to member States to develop their capacity in the prevention, management and resolution of social conflicts.

The Peace Fund works on cases resulting from territorial disputes and develops programs to strengthen institutional capacity and experience in the field of peaceful settlement of international disputes through the Inter-American Peace Forum.

The Special Missions Section provides assistance and technical support to missions established by the Permanent Council and/or Secretary General through the mechanisms established by the Inter-American System.

The Section for the Strengthening of Representative Institutions conducts programs for the modernization and improvement of technical and human capacities in regional, national and local representative institutions. It also supports institutional strengthening, political dialogue and horizontal cooperation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Practical Guide on Democratic Dialogue

Dialogue is a process of genuine interaction in which human beings listen deeply and respectfully to each other in a way that what they learn changes them. Each participant in a dialogue strives to incorporate the concerns of the other participants into their own perspective, even when they continue to disagree. No participant gives up his or her identity, but each recognizes the human value of the claims of the others and therefore acts differently towards others.

The goal of democratic dialogue is not merely to exchange information, but rather to transform through dialogue. In societies characterized by complex networks with conflicting interests the challenge is not to avoid conflict but to transform it altogether, while strengthening legitimate social structures and preventing violence. Democratic dialogue allows us to address this challenge when applied as a tool for change and for building consensus so as to balance power in society and open new channels of access and participation for citizens. During a dialogue process we work to achieve a systemic understanding of the problem and to strengthen relationships among all stakeholders. This, in turn, makes it possible to identify actions that can transform the underlying system.

For dialogue to help promote change and transform social, economic, and political structures, we must think of it as a container or safe space in which the actors can interact with trust and respect. They must be able to bring their ideas, interests, concerns, demands, and beliefs to the dialogue table so they can work together, in a legitimate and peaceful manner, to transform relationships, generate rationality, and organize consensus. Therefore, a dialogue requires careful preparation of all aspects of the process and not only of the events during which actors will engage in dialogical conversation.

Democratic Dialogue

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TABLE OF CONTENTS