

# Interreligious Dialogue Resource Guide

KAICIID

**International Fellows Programme**

Practitioners of Interreligious Dialogue



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## NOTE FOR READERS

This Interreligious Dialogue Resource Guide has been developed specifically for the use by the KAICIID International Fellows Programme (KIFP). For information about KIFP please visit the KAICIID Website Fellows Page:  
<https://www.kaiciid.org/what-we-do/kaiciid-international-fellows-programme>



## KAICIID Fellows Programme **Interreligious Dialogue Resource Guide**

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

About KAICIID / About KAICIID International Fellows Programme (KIFP) / Expectations and responsibilities / Introduction to KIFP IRD Resource Guide

## 1.1 About KAICIID

**The International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) seeks to bring religious leaders and political decision-makers together to develop and implement multilateral social cohesion building and coexistence initiatives. KAICIID supports experts, trainees and organizations working in this area through capacity building programs, workshops, training and partnerships.**

The International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) is an intergovernmental organization that promotes dialogue to build peace and promote social cohesion. It does this by enhancing understanding and cooperation between people of different cultures and followers of different religions. The Centre was founded by Austria, Saudi Arabia and Spain. The Holy See is the Founding Observer. Its Board of Directors comprises prominent representatives from five major world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism). The Board designs and supervises the Centre's programmes.

KAICIID mandate is to promote the use of dialogue globally to enhance understanding and cooperation. Over a seven-year-long negotiation and development process, KAICIID's mandate and structure were designed to foster dialogue among people of different faiths and cultures that bridges animosities, reduces fear and instils mutual respect. Intercultural and interreligious dialogue helps build communities' resistance against prejudice, strengthens social cohesion, supports conflict prevention and transformation and can serve to preserve peace.

As an international organization, KAICIID supports the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in particular the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. The Centre also combats all forms of discrimination based on culture and religion. We implement programmes to overcome stereotypes in a long-term process that leads to a culture of dialogue that enables greater understanding of people of other cultures and followers of other religions.

## 1.2 About KAICIID International Fellows Programme (KIFP)

**The KAICIID International Fellows Programme (KIFP):** supports leadership development and learning throughout the world. Every leader from a religious community and educator has the potential to impact their followers, students, and peers in ways that are consistent and resonate with their deepest held beliefs. Changing people's attitudes towards others does not require reducing the commitment toward ones' own faith tradition, but it does require skills and know-how in order to create connections across religious and cultural lines.

KAICIID envisions a world where people of faith are able to respectfully acknowledge each other and respect their differences. Interreligious dialogue, conducted

properly, provides a firm foundation rooted in common human values that can lead to reconciliation, peace and a creative coexistence. The KAICIID International Fellows Programme (KIFP) aims to fulfil this vision.

The Centre's Fellows programme was inaugurated in 2015 and gathers people from diverse world religions and nearly every continent, fostering a spirit of understanding and cooperation. The programme empowers an interreligious network of peacebuilders who understand religion's complex and important role in such work.

KIFP creates unique opportunities for dialogue and learning for those working in the religious sphere, including religious leaders, educators, and dialogue practitioners to increase their capacity in the field of IRD. Fellows benefit from the knowledge, tools and experience providing during residential and online trainings.

Through KIFP, KAICIID is supporting leaders who are establishing connections and passing on the skills and practices that contribute toward building a lasting foundation for peace.

As a result of Globalization, which is characterized by increased economic and technological interconnectedness, encounters with religious and cultural diversity is made inevitable. Therefore, a global platform must be developed to equip future leaders to engage effectively with reality. What is needed today is a lasting sustainable infrastructure linking religiously and culturally diverse individuals, institutions and countries. Currently, not enough schools are training religious leaders in IRD or equipping them with the skills and competencies to navigate the complex diversity of culturally and religiously informed perspectives as well as other worldviews. . In many regions across the globe, most young religious leaders are not equipped to interact with those from other parts of world. By surveying its Fellows, KIFP found that at least half of their affiliated institutions had no existing IRD work or faced significant challenges in implementing activities and programmes. The Fellows programme works to fill this critical educational void.

Fellows are the change-agents and connectors within their intuitions and communities: They are a network of select leaders, educators and actors from religious, interreligious and academic institutions across the world creating a global framework on which dialogue and cooperation will traffic in years to come. All Fellows are committed to involving others by educating and empowering future leaders to be facilitators and leaders in IRD and by encouraging their institutions and communities to collaborate for change.

Whether in person or online, during the one-year programme the Fellows participate in a series of capacity-building activities. These trainings help the Fellows to practice diverse dialogue strategies, build community among themselves, and enhance their knowledge and skills in IRD. The intensive trainings centre on the precise skills the Fellows say they need most: dialogue design, facilitation, communication, outreach, peacebuilding, conflict transformation, and evaluation, among others.

Fellows learn to design sustainable models that incorporate best practices from the field. They receive valuable tips and know-how on mobilizing partners and resources, tracking, and reporting on their initiatives. As an essential part of their training, the Fellows

implement IRD projects tailored to the needs of their institutions and communities. During their final training, Fellows reflect on their projects and receive helpful feedback on their work from their trainers and peers.

Fellows indicate that through their participation in the programme, they better understand the transformative nature of IRD and the importance and potential of authentic interreligious collaboration. They learn from the trainings and also from one another, sharing perspectives and stories on IRD from region to region. They appreciate the strong bonds they forge, through a shared commitment to dialogue and peace, within a religiously and culturally diverse and growing peer community of active IRD practitioners.

Each Fellow upon graduation from KIFP becomes a member of **The KAICIID Fellows Network (KFN)**, which is now a rapidly developing global community of religious leaders, interreligious practitioners and educators from various traditions and beliefs who are active peacemakers in their communities. KFN builds upon the momentum and enthusiasm generated by the Fellows training experience, catalysing synergies and collaborations among KIFP alumni and their institutions. The Network provides continuing learning and professional development opportunities to reinforce lasting outcomes in the field.

The KFN sustains lasting communication and cooperation of Fellows and establishes a sense of continuity and shared identity among all Fellows. Through the Network, Fellows can connect with further education, training and resources to support and promote their work. By working together, inspiring and supporting one another, Fellows become a cornerstone for expanding a foundation for lasting peace.

### 1.3 Expectations and Responsibilities of a KIFP Fellow

KIFP Fellows should see themselves as ambassadors of Interreligious Dialogue who are committed to the principles of dialogue. While Fellows do not officially represent KAICIID and therefore cannot speak on behalf of the organisation, Fellows are expected to conduct themselves in public in such a way that reflects core values and principles enshrined in KAICIID's establishment agreement. Therefore each Fellow is expected to act professionally at all times during their participation in the programme and online.

#### **KIFP Core Values**

- 1 Respect for diversity of religions, culture, gender and geographic affiliations
- 2 Transparency, Integrity, and Dignity
- 3 Inclusive of diverse perspectives
- 4 Empathy and Compassion
- 5 Putting Skills into Practice

There is an expectation that upon graduation, KIFP Fellows will continue their involvement with the Fellows Network and be agents for positive change and ambassadors for dialogue and pluralism.



## Expectations of a KAICIID Fellow

- Be **Punctual**
- **Attend** KIFP trainings and sessions
- Complete assigned **readings** and coursework
- Give **attention** to the person who has the floor (permission to speak).
- Ask before touching someone or crossing **personal boundaries**.
- **Respect differences of** opinion, belief, point of view both in sessions and online
- Maintain **confidentiality** – What is shared should remain in the group.
- Be as **open and honest** as possible without disclosing others' personal or private issues.
- Have a **right to pass** – It is always okay to pass on giving an answer.
- **Non-judgmental approach** – We can disagree without putting the other down.
- **Claim your opinions** – Offer your opinions using the first person and avoid generalisations.
- Be **supportive** of other Fellows.
- Be **sensitive to diversity** – Exercise care to avoid insensitive or careless towards others.
- **Anonymity** – It is okay to ask any question or make any comments by using a suggestion box.
- Complete **initiatives on time** and professionally.
- **Avoid using or promoting divisive and/or incendiary images or messages in online and offline forums and conversations.** Fellows are expected never to provoke hatred or violence or to disparage others based their religion, culture or belief.

### 1.4 Introduction to KIFP IRD Resource Guide

The purpose of this guide is to serve as a guide to accompany Fellows through the programme and to keep as a reference after graduation. This guide is a useful resource and toolbox covering the majority of the IRD and Intercultural material presented during trainings as well as further information on select topics and exercises. We strongly recommend that those Fellows who are less experienced with IRD to spend time reviewing it. The guide includes important concepts, helpful ideas and practical information, to build and strengthen IRD and Intercultural work. This material may be used for training, teaching and facilitation or may just be useful for becoming reacquainted with aspects of the training that need to be refreshed.

***“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”***

*African Proverb*

# Chapter 2

## An Overview of Dialogue



## Chapter 2: An Overview of Dialogue

Why Dialogue? / What is Dialogue? / What Dialogue is not / Definitions of Dialogue

### 2.1 Why Dialogue? - A Culture of Respecting Differences

Difference is the natural state of the world. It is one of the most important values that humans must learn and recognise. We must develop a deep understanding other various dimensions of this value as differences exist everywhere - at home, at school, in nature, in urban areas, and in society in general.

At the physical and functional levels of human diversity, there is the diversity in belief and way of life. Interreligious and intercultural dialogue is an effective tool to cope with the tensions that the inability to deal with differences might produce. It can create an opportunity to prevent violent conflict and bring about coexistence, cooperation and common cultural and human understanding. Dialogue offers the space for an exchange of experiences that can assist us in building thriving societies.

Respect for different cultures or opinions does not necessarily mean agreeing with or endorsing the values associated with it; rather, it is an acknowledgment of the existence of this culture or practice. The identity of a person (for example: gender, religion, race, nationality, social background, political orientation, etc.) must be respected and acknowledged.

For this purpose, we have to work to integrate respect for diversity as part of our religious and cultural understanding. We should cooperate, engage with each other and build our relationships on the foundation of recognising our commonalities and uniqueness. thus, facilitating and engaging in dialogue is a valuable skill for both future leaders and existing leaders alike.

#### Celebrating Diversity

Cultural richness and diversity surround us in our daily life through different languages, music, art, religion, beliefs, traditions, ways of interacting with the environment, etc. Our world is constantly changing because of globalization, modernization and various types of migration. Its cultural landscapes are changing with it, making it extremely important to understand the richness of diversity on individual, group, societal, local, regional, national, and international levels.

#### **Interculturalism in the Workplace<sup>1</sup>**

"The modern workplace is increasingly globalised and competitive. Communicating with customers, colleagues and partners across international borders is now an everyday occurrence for many workers around the world. Consequently, employers are under strong pressure to find employees who are not only technically proficient, but also culturally astute and able to thrive in a global work environment.

“A survey of HR managers at 367 large employers in nine countries: Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Jordan, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States done by the British Council, Booz Allen Hamilton and Ipsos Public Affairs shows that there is real business value in employing staff who have the ability to work effectively with individuals and organisations from cultural backgrounds different from their own. In particular, employers highlight the following as important intercultural skills:

- The ability to understand different cultural contexts and viewpoints
- Demonstrating respect for others
- Knowledge of a foreign language.

Employees with these skills are seen to benefit organisations through their ability to:

- Bring in new clients
- Work within diverse teams
- Support a good brand and reputation for their organisation.

Conversely, employees who lack these skills may leave their organisations susceptible to risks including:

- Loss of clients
- Damage to reputation
- Conflict within teams”

#### “Five Key Benefits of Fostering Diversity in the Workplace

- **Increased Creativity** - A diversity of ideas and viewpoints can lead to creative breakthrough. A company made up of employees from diverse ethnic backgrounds, generations, genders, races and religions (just to name a few) has more creative energy to harness than one with a more homogenized workforce.
- **Foster Innovation** - Different practices that arise from having lived in a foreign country or speaking a foreign language or practicing a certain religion can lead to innovative products
- **Better Consumer Understanding** - If you don't have somebody with a diverse viewpoint in your boardroom then you very likely don't have your finger on the pulse of a demographic group you purport to serve if somebody's not advocating for that position.
- **Richer Brainstorming** - A diversity of opinions, ideas and input can lead to richer, more productive discussions during brainstorming sessions. In contrast, an environment where everyone's opinions mirror each other has a high probability of producing stagnant results.
- **Better Decision Making** - Diverse perspectives lead to better decisions for the company, the employees and the customers.”<sup>2</sup>

## 2.2 What is dialogue?

Dialogue deals with personal and collective preconceived notions and prejudices by focusing on questioning, listening, the suspension of judgment, and the search for commonalities based on respect of differences.. Dialogue deals with thinking and understanding, and has a mission to clarify and overcome misunderstanding. Dialogue therefore focuses on listening, understanding, and acknowledging the perspectives and views held by others. . This is done through: building relationships; finding common ground; and focusing the dialogue process on similarities and differences. The final purpose is thus to build bridges of communication among those who are different and to transform the relationship from a state of intolerance, stereotyping and misunderstanding to a state of deeper understanding and respect of each other's differences. If applied properly, dialogue process can also produce an agreed upon joint plan of action. This is done through a work methodology/process led by dialogue facilitators (Chapter 6) who help foster a safe environment for dialogue which supports equal and fair participation from all parties in order to reach a common understanding.

**Dialogue is a transformative peacebuilding method.** It is transformative because it changes individual perceptions of the other and therefore of the conflict. As a result, it transforms the relationship between the parties from an adversarial relationship to a relationship of understanding and respect. It helps the participant to differentiate between the person and the problem; it helps to view the individual within the larger group that is perceived as an adversary.

**Dialogue is a safe space or "container" for people to surface their assumptions,** and to question their previous perceptions and judgments. It has emphasis on questioning, listening, and co-creation. It is a safe and mutual space where people can suspend their judgment and take the risk of sharing their feelings and perceptions. William Isaacs defined it as a conversation with a centre, not sides<sup>3</sup> (box #3)- therefore, dialogue has no adversarial sides and is always focused around a purpose at its centre.

**Dialogue**, as I define it, is a conversation with a centre, not sides. It is a way of taking the energy of our differences and channelling it toward something that has never been created before. It lifts us out of polarization and into a greater common sense, and is thereby a means for accessing the intelligence and coordinated power of groups of people.

Dialogue fulfils deeper, more widespread needs than simply "getting to yes." The aim of a negotiation is to reach agreement among parties who differ. The intention of dialogue is to reach new understanding and, in doing so, to form a totally new basis from which to think and act...We do not merely try to reach agreement, we try to create a context from which many new agreements might come. And we seek to uncover a base of shared meaning that can greatly help coordinate and align our actions with our values.

William Isaacs, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*

**Dialogue can build relationships, raise awareness, and contribute to resolving conflicts.** Therefore, dialogue must be approached with an attitude of learning and seeking understanding and collaboration. Such an attitude always puts the relationship and the purpose at the forefront.

## 2.3 What Dialogue is Not

Recently, Dialogue is being mentioned more and more as a nonviolent method that people utilize in resolving conflicts and in building peace. However, the term is often overused or misused in describing any efforts toward solving disagreements non-violently. Therefore, as important as defining what dialogue is, is to understand what dialogue is not:

- **Dialogue is not "Advocacy"**: in advocacy, the objective is to rally support for a specific idea or action in general. Therefore, the intention is to convince others of your perception. In dialogue, convincing others should not be the objective.
- **Dialogue is not a "Conference"**: in conferences, people come to share their theories and statements in a formal setting. Dialogue is less formal and based more on sharing personal and collective experiences, it is not a space for intellectualizing and theorizing.
- **Dialogue is not a "Consultation"**: in consultations, the organizers receive feedback or opinions on certain topics from the participants to get their feedback and sometimes to identify their needs or to develop recommendations for solutions. Dialogue is not a relationship between a beneficiary and a service provider where feedback is needed in one direction.
- **Dialogue is not a "Salon" nor a "Discussion"**: in salons and discussions, participants explore a topic with the intention of learning more about a topic, with less emphasis on the participants. In dialogue, the participants and their relationships are at the centre of the process.
- **Dialogue is not a "Debate"**: in debate, each party tries to prove that their ideas are the right ones, and disqualify the other party's ideas. In Dialogue, participants come to learn about each other, rather than informing each other or proving each other is wrong.
- **Dialogue is not a "Negotiation"**: in negotiation, the parties come with the pressure of reaching an agreement. In dialogue, the intention is to learn about the other party's perception of the topic without the pressure of reaching a resolution.

## 2.4 Definitions of Dialogue

Knowing what dialogue is not, does not mean all other things are dialogue. Definitions of the concept of dialogue vary according to its objectives and style, but most activists agree that dialogue is used as an important means to build peace; it serves as a secure communication method between individuals or groups aimed at the exchange of views, knowledge, and impressions to reach a common understanding on the dialogue's subject matter.

The goal of the dialogue, as Shafiq and Abu-Nimer describe it, "is not to eliminate differences of opinion and conviction, but to gain an understanding and acceptance of those differences". They add, "Dialogue is not about seeking to defeat or silence others, but

## The main differences between dialogue and debate

Debate	Dialogue
Oppositional approach.	Collaborative approach.
Each party is trying to prove one owns point or prove the other wrong.	The parties are working together towards common understanding.
One assumes there is one right answer.	One assumes having part of the answer or a perspective of it.
Winning is the goal; with win-lose approach	Finding common ground is the goal.
One communicates through pre-determined position.	One communicates at the levels of interests, needs and feelings.
One listens to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments.	One listens to the other side in order to understand.
Defends assumptions as the truth.	Reveals assumptions for revaluation.
Causes critique of the other position.	Causes introspection of one's own position.
Defends one's own positions as the best solution and excludes other solutions.	Opens the possibility of reaching a better solution than any of the original solutions.
Creates a closed minded-attitude, a determination to be right.	Creates an open-minded attitude, an openness to being wrong and an openness to change.
Prompts a search for glaring differences	Prompts a search for basic agreements.
Involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feelings or relationship and often belittles or deprecates the other person.	Involves a real concern for the other person and does not seek to alienate or offend.
One communicates through pre-determined position.	One communicates at the levels of interests, needs and feelings.



about learning, understanding, and increasing one's knowledge of them".<sup>4</sup> What generally distinguishes dialogue from the other means of resolving conflict is that it falls within the framework of the transformative mechanism of the conflict (conflict transformation), which transforms the conflict from a competitive relationship into a cooperative one by focusing on a common relationship and its sustainability.

Before going into dialogue as a peacebuilding method, its principles, models and design, we need to understand more how conflicts arise. The next chapters start with introducing the concepts of cultures, identities and worldviews and how they contribute to constructing our perceptions and misperceptions of the other. The following chapters not only explain conflict, but also introduce peacebuilding, and dialogue as a peacebuilding tool.

## Suggested Reading

- Bohm, David. (2013). *On Dialogue*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Isaacs, William. (1999). *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*. Doubleday, New York.
- Mette Lindgren Helde. *The Dialogue Handbook - the art of conducting a dialogue and facilitating dialogue workshops*. Danish Youth Council (2013).



# Chapter 3

## Identities and Perceptions



## Chapter 3: Identities and Perceptions

Culture / Identity / Worldview / Perceptions & Misperceptions / Contact Theory and Dialogue

Identity and culture are intrinsically related and contributes to fulfil one of the main basic human needs, which is the sense of belonging. Humans in general thrive for the recognition of their own identity as it fulfils a basic need. A person's identity is about his/her relations with others and the self-identification with a group. A human being needs to feel that it is part of a group, and belonging to a group is both through self-identification and/or through others acknowledgement. Every social group has its own way of life, traditions and many other traits within the parameters of what we call culture.<sup>5</sup>

By birth and throughout life, humans adopt the ways of the different social groups they belong to. In the process, the individual identity is modelled and has an influence on how each person relates to others. In the process of interacting with others, people perceive and are perceived through the lenses of individual's identities and group cultural traits. In this exchange, it can happen that words, actions, and intentions are misperceived, leading sometimes to a conflict situation.

Before exploring identities further and how our perceptions of the other can lead to a justification of violence against them, we need to learn some important elements about culture and how our different identities are constructed.

### 3.1 Culture

Defining culture is tricky and difficult. A general definition states that culture is

"... a complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."<sup>6</sup>

However, culture is also about how we see and experience the world...

"Culture is how people perceive the world; it is their social and cognitive dynamic frame that shapes their experience and behaviour, consciously and subconsciously. It is socially transmitted to the individual to construct the group common views and meanings - it is the collective knowledge, values, and behaviour that distinguish a group of people from another"<sup>7</sup>

It is the "software of the mind"<sup>8</sup> and defining culture has many angles, it might be better to learn about its features, elements, and characteristics; and even the mistakes that we make when trying to understand what culture is.

#### Four key features about culture:<sup>9</sup>

- 1 It is a quality not of individuals as such, but of the society of which they are a part.
- 2 It is acquired, through acculturation or socialization, by the individual from that society.
- 3 Each culture is a unique complex of attributes subsuming every area of social life.
- 4 Also distributed unequally among its members.

The elements of a culture include the norms, values and beliefs that keep the group together. The way we express and communicate through language, symbols, and the arts. Also part of our culture is the way we entertain ourselves and spend our free time. Our eating habits and the ways we prepare food is also part of our culture. How we select our leaders and integrate institutions can also be seen as cultural. In short, culture is a set of codes that define shared meanings among a group of people.

Our cultures help us to give meaning to what is around us, in other words, it shapes our worldview. It puts meaning behind the words and the rituals, it is the “software” that helps us to give meaning and value to different things we see and experience. However, since we do have different cultures and different identities, that means, sometimes we might give different meanings and different values to the same things, which might create misunderstanding and conflict.

### Some Common Misconceptions about Culture:<sup>10</sup>

- **Homogenous:** it is wrong to think that the members of one culture are all the same – same ethnicity, same religion, same values, etc.
- **A thing:** culture is not a thing that you can see and touch, remove or disable.
- **Uniformly distributed among members of the group:** members of the same culture do not necessarily share the same values or have the same understanding of their norms and rituals.
- **Individuals possess only a single culture:** we all possess a number of cultures, same as we have multiple identities. It is an endless number of cross-cutting circles of groups and identities that we acquire through our life and mobility.
- **A custom (what you see is what you get):** often people reduce culture to rituals and behaviours. Culture goes deeper to values and meanings.
- **Timeless:** culture is not static and it does change overtime. Societies construct new behaviours, norms, and acquire new values as they mix with other cultures as they face new challenges over the time- “it is the way by which they [groups] explain and overcome their challenges” over time

Culture being the way of life that identifies a certain group of people, leads us to make mistakes when perceiving individuals identified with particular traits, thus manifesting in **stereotyping, labelling, discrimination, misperceptions**, etc. When an individual starts experiencing any of these, they tend to conceal or suppress some elements of their own identity in an attempt to ‘fit-in’.

## 3.2 Identity

If belonging is a basic human need, identity is “a compass by which we orientate ourselves.” It is “where we feel that we belong and where we are recognized and accepted as who we are.”<sup>11</sup> Identity are the concepts, beliefs, qualities and expressions that define a person. This self-perception is modelled in relation to others and in relation to our context in time. This means, in a lifetime, one individual can experience many identities across his/her life; some overlapping in time and age, some related to a specific context, or the group of people he/she interacts, and/or the institutions with which they are connected. Some identities last for one’s entire life, while others

can change, appear or disappear overtime. Ethnicity, race, sex, gender, age, language, nationality, education, social status, religion, spirituality, ideology, professions are some among many types of identities.

## Exercise 1

### Circles of My Multicultural Self<sup>12</sup>

**Time:** This activity requires 20–30 minutes.

**Purpose:** The Circles activity, or as some call it the “Identity Molecule”, engages participants in a process of identifying what they consider to be the most important dimensions of their own identity, their sub-identities. Stereotypes are examined as participants share stories about when they were proud to be part of a particular group (when it was a privilege) and when it was especially hurtful to be associated with a particular group (when it was a disadvantage).

**Preparation:** Distribute copies of the Circles handout (Appendix 1)

**Instructions:** Ask participants to pair up with somebody they do not know very well. Invite them to introduce each other, then follow these steps:

- 1 Ask participants to write their names in the centre circle. They should then fill in each satellite circle with a dimension of their identity they consider to be among the most important in defining themselves. Give them several examples of dimensions that might fit into the satellite circles: (e.g. female, athlete, Jewish, brother, educator, Asian American, middle class, etc.
2. In pairs, have participants share two stories with each other. First, they should share stories about when they felt especially proud to be associated with one of the identifiers they selected. Next, they should share a story about a time it was particularly painful to be associated with one of the identity dimensions they chose.
- 3 The third step will be for participants to share a stereotype they have heard about one dimension of their identity that fails to describe them accurately. Ask them to complete the sentence at the bottom of the handout by filling in the blanks: “I am (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_ but I am NOT (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_.” Provide your own example, such as “I am disabled person, but I am NOT helpless.” Instructions for steps 1, 2, and 3 should be given at once. Allow 8-10 minutes for participants to complete all three steps, but remind them with 2 minutes remaining that they must fill in the stereotype sentence.
- 4 Probe the group for reactions to each other’s stories. Ask whether anyone heard a story she or he would like to share with the group. (Make sure the person who originally told the story has granted permission to share it with the entire group.)
- 5 Advise participants that the next step will involve individuals standing up and reading their stereotype statement. You can either simply go around the room in some order or have people randomly stand up and read their statements.

Make sure that participants are respectful and listening actively for this step, as individuals are making themselves vulnerable by participating. Start by reading your own statement. This part of the activity can be extremely powerful if you introduce it energetically. It may take a few moments to start the flow of sharing; so allow for silent moments.

**Several questions can be used to process this activity:**

- 1 How do the dimensions of your identity that you chose as important, differ from the dimensions other people use to make judgments about you?
- 2 Did anybody hear somebody challenge a stereotype that you once bought into? If so, what?
- 3 How did it feel to be able to stand up and challenge your stereotype?
- 4 (There is usually some laughter when somebody shares common social stereotypes. As a facilitator, you may ask: I heard several moments of laughter, what was that about?)
- 5 Where do stereotypes come from?
- 6 How can we eliminate them?

(Additional Questions in Appendix 1)

**Facilitator Notes:** The key to this activity is the process of examining one's own identity and the stereotypes associated with that identity, then having one's own stereotypes challenged through others' stories and stereotype challenges. Encourage participants to think about the stereotypes they apply to people and to make a conscious effort to think more deeply about them, and eventually to move beyond them.

As with most activities, it can be especially effective if you participate while you facilitate. If you are willing to share your own experiences, participants are more likely to feel open to share their own.

It is crucial, especially for the final part of the activity when participants are sharing their stereotypes, to allow for silences. People will be hesitant to share initially, but once the ball starts rolling, the activity carries a lot of energy. Allow time at the end for participants to talk more about whatever stereotype they shared.

After everyone has shared their stereotype challenge, announce that anyone who would like to share another one can do so. Model by sharing another one about yourself.

Based on the exercise above, we can conclude several concepts about identities, or "allegiances" or "elements", as Amin Maalouf calls them in his book, "In the Name of Identity; Violence and the Need to Belong"<sup>13</sup> Here are some of Maalouf's conclusions, organized and added upon by Brodeur:

- 1 Each individual's identity is made up of several sub-identities,
- 2 These "allegiances" or sub-identities are not equally strong,

- 3 These sub-identities are found separately in many individuals, however, the combination is unique to each of us,
- 4 There is a certain hierarchy among these sub-identities in each individual, however, such hierarchy changes overtime,
- 5 The changes in the hierarchy also influence the change in behaviour,
- 6 The identities that a person often claims "is often based, in reverse, on that of his enemy",
- 7 The "mechanism" of identity is complex.<sup>14</sup>

Additionally, Brodeur's describes identities through a variety of angles:<sup>15</sup>

- 1 Identities are fluid, they intersect with implicit boundaries
- 2 Identities in general function similarly
- 3 Identities are real, and live through language, customs and behaviour
- 4 Identities are communal or relational, rather than individual
- 5 Identities have roots and history
- 6 Identities have vision, scenario thinking and worldview
- 7 Identities have hierarchies of importance
- 8 Identities have power implications

In our own perception of self, we give value to some identities more than others depending on the context, time and people who we relate to. In other words, we draw or push our identities to the front or the back, whether by our choice or under the pressure of others; there are power dynamics that occur in how the personal identity gets constantly constructed and reconstructed, as well as how others may impose on us certain identities more than others, sometimes beyond our own will.

"He drew a circle that shut me out - Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout,  
But love and I had the wit to win;  
We drew a circle that took him in!"  
Markham, 1915

### **The Power Dynamics of Identities:**<sup>16</sup>

Dialogue is a process of exploring each other identities, thus it is important to acquire skills and awareness of the power dynamics associated with various identity expression. Power dynamics are manifested in the dialogue process and shape the interaction. The following are few principles that can guide us further understand the power dynamics

- 1 Societies usually have a hierarchy of identities: this hierarchy differs from one society to another. Different societies put different values to these allegiances. While in some societies your education level gets you privileges, in others age does, while in others it can be through cast, political status, or socio-economic level.
- 2 In general, identities protect their interest, and often this is done through institutions: similar to any communal groups, identities tend to protect their interest through institutions, norms, rituals and values
- 3 Identities are fluid, have implicit boundaries, and many are networked: it is almost impossible to identify a boundary between two sub-identities within a person. It is hard to isolate one single identity that influences the attitude or behaviour of an individual
- 4 Identities can bring privileges in some context and not in others as these identities are part of a hierarchy and such a hierarchy changes from one society to another. In some



societies, being from a certain race or holding a certain profession can open many doors; while this same race or profession in other contexts, can be irrelevant or bring disadvantages

- 5 Some identities are subconscious and it is difficult to recognize which identity is influencing a certain attitude or behaviour. Additionally, since identities are how others identify us, we also might not be aware of how these identities are being attached to us or are relevant to us until they are communicated or experienced. Similar to culture, we cannot determine which actions of an individual are influenced most by which identity.
- 6 Identity similarities attract and identity differences tend to divide: identities can clash, however, we develop mechanisms as individuals to balance these clashes within us. However, these clashes tend to go beyond the individual to the interpersonal and to the intergroup. Communal values and a sense of belonging is often defined in relationship to those who are different, "the others". Therefore, groups with similar values, behaviours, or belief systems tend to come closer and detach themselves from those who differ.
- 7 Divisions often lead to exclusions, which in turn can lead to radicalisation and various forms of violence. Linked to and as a result of point #6, identity, as it has been defined above, is "where we feel that we belong and where we are recognised and accepted as who we are"; and since identities protect their interest through institutions, those who don't belong to the mainstream can easily be marginalized. A marginalized person is more vulnerable to radicalisation and/or violent extremism.

### **Suppressed Identities**

When individuals don't feel acknowledged, receive negative feedback or experience non-positive reactions to their own identities, the suppression of identities might happen. A suppressed identity is a source of frustration and deprivation. We developed stories and narratives to describe processes in which our identities are or were suppressed or recognized. Such stories, especially in the cases in which our identities are suppressed or not satisfied, can be utilized to justify violence against those who we think or perceive to be barriers preventing us from gaining recognition and being able to express our identity.

Often our own story explaining the emergence and development of these identities becomes the basis in which we evaluate our relationships (exclude and include people). This becomes an individual and single story we keep repeating to ourselves as a protective mechanism. Thus, when we have a single story that has been developed and built on negative images and mythological perceptions of those who are different from us, we can become easily subject to exercise prejudice and discrimination against them.

The single story or discourse does provide security and a sense of belonging to an inner group, however it also acts as a mechanism to exclude and discriminate against those who we believe are our enemies, strangers, or simply not like us.

Self-examining our own stories, narratives, and established identities can effectively be done through a dialogical process. The dialogue setting allows participants to learn more about each other's stories and narratives in such a way that new discoveries are made regarding the foundations and assumptions which each has adopted to support the validity and cohesion of his/her story.

## Exercise 2

### The Danger of a Single Story

**Time:** This activity requires 40 – 60 minutes.

**Purpose:** This activity is meant to help the participants reflect on the issue of stereotyping and labelling and how this often leads to discrimination. It also helps the participants recognize the importance of hearing the narrative of the other and try to understand the perceptions of others.

**Preparation:** Open the link to the video at YouTube or TED Talk website, “The Danger of a Single Story.”<sup>17</sup> Please keep in mind that the video is 19 minutes, 16 seconds.

**Instructions:** Show the video to the participants and follow it with a debrief about the talk and its content. The following are some of the questions you might ask:

- 1 What is your general reaction to the speech?
- 2 Did anyone experience a similar situation?
- 3 Did you ever feel stereotyped or judged based on your culture or identity?
- 4 How did you feel? What did you do? What would you do differently next time?
- 5 Did you ever stereotype or judge someone based on their culture or identity?
- 6 How did you feel? What did you do? What would you do differently next time?
- 7 What is Categorization? Stereotyping? Prejudice? Discrimination?
- 8 How we can break stereotypes?

The facilitator can lead a discussion to highlight the following lessons/insight:

- 1 pain and victimhood are the feeling that often result from any form of stereotyping or discrimination
- 2 With the correct and appropriate tools, it is possible to change and challenge stereotypes
- 3 All people can be perpetrators and victims of stereotypes.

For example, in justifying slavery in the American context, a narrative was developed about the purity of the races and a value judgement was assigned to each racial group. The single story of dividing the world into racial categories was developed and created at that time on the foundation that the lighter the skin, the more intelligent or more beautiful the person was. Even religious teachings were manipulated to justify such stories and its foundational thoughts.



Justifying slavery or any other type of discrimination against those who are different, succeed when there is less known about them. Human contact is a crucial means in which to learn about those who are different. Often through dialogue, the participants become capable of unpacking their own stories and critically examining the history of their own identities and their constructed perceptions. This deeper understanding of one's own and the other's identity constitutes the basis for building a new relationship based on commonalities and respect of differences.

Dialogue is an effective tool that helps us in developing more informed perceptions and correct the misperceptions. "Dialogue is not about correcting the other, but rather about correcting our own perception about the other."<sup>18</sup>

### 3.3 Worldview<sup>19</sup>

A worldview simply means how a person views the world. It is a simple word that includes all the conscious and unconscious elements that form how a person understand the reality of the world from his or her own perspective, whatever the limits of this perception might be for each individual. A worldview is thus the result of a person's integration of hundreds of elements, many of which are identities or sub-identities, including culture(s), which a person finds important in constructing their own personal identity.

When a dialogue is called an "interworldview dialogue", it means that the goal is to improve mutual understanding about each other's worldview, with everything that it includes of multiple identities and sub-identities. The rich complexity of all the parts that make up who a person is, have their place in a worldview. At times, a person may be fully conscious of many of those elements that constitute the most important aspects of his or her worldview; sometimes, the same person may not be aware of other elements that also influence their worldview. In fact, for each person, there are degrees of consciousness associated to each element that contribute to forming a worldview. Finally, worldviews are dynamic because of these unique combination of elements may change over time.

So why would it be useful to add this new concept of "interworldview dialogue" in addition to intercultural and interreligious dialogues, or intercivilizational dialogue? The reason is simple. When a person engages in what is called intercultural dialogue, the focus often remains on the various cultures that are represented in the participants, sometimes at the expense of other forms of identity. When a person engages in what is called interreligious dialogue (or interfaith dialogue), the focus often remains on the various religious identities that each participant brings to the dialogue table. But what happens when a person does not self-identify with any religious identity? A person may think of him or herself as atheist, agnostic, humanist, or not want to assign him or herself any such identity. This may be because a person is in a process of searching for what the meaning of life might be, in which case he or she does not want to be forced into any `identity box`. Or a person may not be interested in self-identifying through any such religious or non-religious identity boxes preferring not to self-identify with any of the above identity categories, leaving their worldview completely open and free of any assigned identity that relates to an ultimate meaning of life.

As these last two approaches are often found among many people in different parts of the world, it stands to reason that "interworldview dialogue" has also become a

necessary form of dialogue complementing intercultural and interreligious dialogues. Where both may unintentionally lead to feelings of exclusion, interworldview dialogue “allows for a more inclusive language in which all human beings can find their place.”<sup>20</sup>

### 3.4 Perceptions and Misperceptions

Our “software” as human beings, our cultures and identities, determine a significant part of the meanings we give to the world,<sup>21</sup> as well as helping us in constructing our perceptions and misperceptions of the other.

#### What is perception?

By perception we mean the way we view, interpret, understand and experience things and situations with our senses, as well as the meaning we put behind things or experiences. Individuals taking part in the same activity will have different and very specific experiences and impressions from each other. This individual way of collecting information we receive from our surroundings creates a perception. For example, what do you see in Figure 1<sup>22</sup> below? What do friends or colleagues see? The answers will vary, as some would see an old woman while others might see a young woman. It will take us a while to see both images, or someone will have to actually show us both. In the next section, we will explain the Causes of Partisan Perceptions, how and why our perceptions differ, and what are the mechanisms we apply to defend them.

Perceptions are captured by our senses and are interpreted through the lens of our past and present experiences. Also our different identities become lenses through which we view the world. Many times due to differences in perceiving some situations which may be very pleasant for some will not be so for others.



Though perceptions are subjective points of view captured through the lenses of individual experiences, they are real to the perceiver and typically understood to be true. Therefore, the ways we see the world and behave are shaped by the limited number of experiences we have had in life.

Perceptions as ‘lenses’ act as filters delimiting new information and phenomena based on an individual’s past experiences. Over time these filters can adjust or adapt to changes such as new experiences, which contradict previous ones. Some perceptions are kept because they are verified by a multitude of prior experiences and because they provide a sense of orientation to the world. Other perceptions may be discarded because they are no longer useful, have become out-dated, or because of new experiences or encounters.

### **Causes of Partisan Perceptions**<sup>23</sup>

Individuals tend to be more comfortable when their prior perceptions are confirmed; which means confirming experiences (information creates comfort), and nonconforming experiences (information creates discomfort). Leon Festinger in 1957 proposed the **Cognitive Dissonance Theory** which states “that a powerful motive to maintain cognitive consistency can give rise to irrational and sometimes maladaptive behaviour”, and that in situations of “conflicting attitudes, beliefs or behaviours, a feeling of discomfort arises that leads to an alteration in one of the attitudes, beliefs or behaviours to reduce the discomfort and restore balance”. In other words, “we have an inner drive to hold all our attitudes and beliefs in harmony and avoid disharmony (or dissonance)”.<sup>24</sup>

Listed below are some dynamics that contribute to the construction of our perceptions; they are also strategies that individuals employ, consciously or subconsciously, to avoid cognitive disharmony and/or to preserve cognitive balance:

#### **We are simply different**

Humans are different by nature. In fact, our universe is based on the principle of complementarity in diversity. Any attempt in our life to challenge this principle by imposing rules to prevent or prohibit diversity in our surroundings, causes great damage where both nature and human lose their balance. In fact, many of our environmental disasters are in part the result of policies that ignored the importance and need for biodiversity as a fundamental principle of nature.

#### **We experience and observe different data**

We live in different locations, we go to different schools, we have had different experiences and encounters, we may pass through similar places but at different times. We are therefore exposed to different types of information and personal experiences that contribute to our perceptions of our surroundings and the universe at whole. This can be as simple as passing through the same street at different times, one person might experience traffic and therefore build their judgement upon bad traffic. While the other person who happened to pass through the same street during a low peak traffic time, may not even consider the traffic.. This person may instead reflect a on the architecture of the buildings or on the street decorations.

#### **We are interested in different things**

Since we are different, we are interested in different things, thus we seek different paths to accomplish what we prefer or what we desire – as our abilities are different. Pursuing our own preferences is a normal and natural tendency and is a basic feature of the diversity in personalities, too. The same two individuals passing in the same street; the one interested in architecture would focus more on the surrounding buildings, while the one who is interested in the social aspect, will mainly notice and focus on the manners and behaviours of the people in the area.

#### **We collect evidence to support prior views**

Many of an individual's views are formed at an early age (0-6). The foundations for dealing with our surrounding and its challenges and stimulations are primarily set during this period. Other identity components are also developed later and in different stages of adolescence, but nevertheless early formation of perception is proven to be extremely powerful and influential in shaping a person's views. Once the person has formed a view

and established it (both cognitively and emotionally) the process of collecting data and information to support and sustain this view becomes an automatic habit.<sup>25</sup> If the view about the other person/culture/religion/gender is negative, then we train our senses to collect evidence that supports such negative views (same can apply with positive views) in order to preserve our cognitive balance.

A process which Social Psychologists have documented over many decades is Confirmation Bias, which is “the tendency to process information by looking for, or interpreting, information that is consistent with one’s existing beliefs.”<sup>26</sup>

This phenomenon can be seen in our example where a person who observes locals driving in traffic, might develop a judgement that drivers in that country do not respect traffic laws. As a result, the next time this person drives in the same country and sees anyone breaking traffic laws, their opinion will be confirmed (“you see, no one follows the rules in this country”). In reality, this person might ignore all others who are driving according to the rules, and for the most part, not notice that in his/her own country, there are people breaking the rules on a daily basis, perhaps in even larger numbers.

#### **We ignore or dismiss non-conforming data**

Ignoring non-conforming data is a defence mechanism that a person develops to maintain the comfort of having a view that applies to all situations - to preserve their cognitive balance. There is no need to change their views if the new data is dismissed because the messenger or the carrier of the data is unreliable or the message itself is vague, not clear, interpreted as false, or an exception etc. The tourist who observes the traffic and develops a negative judgement about the locals’ behaviour, not only dismisses the fact that the majority are driving according to the rules, but if confronted with studies and statistics that in his/her own country the situation is worse, this person would raise questions about the validity of the data, the integrity or professionalism of the researcher or publisher and so on.

#### **We selectively filter incoming data**

Selectively filtering data is another technique a person may use in order not to challenge his/her views. There are so many sources of data that we are exposed to every day; and we do have the power to choose among these sources. Therefore, we do select the sources that fit with our political, cultural and/or social views; which is a mechanism for filtering the data we want to expose ourselves for. For example, hundreds of social media sources offer ways to explain an on-going conflict and depending on our own views about this conflict and its parties, we filter the incoming data by selecting the sources. Often, the news outlet you follow is related to your political orientation or worldview. Therefore, we tend to view certain TV channels, read certain publications, and listen to certain presenters, etc., thus filtering the information we receive.

#### **We selectively remember, and selectively recall, what we want**

History is filled with examples of war and peace, competition and cooperation, violent and nonviolent struggles, hatred and compassion, etc. Depending on our view of a conflict and its dynamics we choose to remember certain events that support our prior views. That tourist observing the traffic in the visited country might dig a few years back into history to recall an accident or an incident that occurred as a cause of a traffic violation, just to confirm their current point of view, ignoring years and hundreds of positive encounters.

Research has shown how in the Bosnian War, one regime dug back into its history and cited an incident that occurred 600 years before the conflict (the battle of Kosovo) in order to mobilize one party against the other, ignoring hundreds of years of coexistence and harmony between different ethnicities and religious communities.<sup>27</sup>

In other words, there are many examples of cooperation and mutual learning within the historical relationship of two neighbouring groups or societies, and there are also examples of war and violence. In the interaction between members of these cultures, it is the individual's (also applies to the group) decision what to highlight and select from their collective memory. Recalling these memories selectively is another technique to resist changing prior views. Developing rationale for why the person or the group are only recalling certain memories is also part of the construction of the single story. It is what societies select to include or exclude from their history books. Therefore, that same tourist, writing about his/her experience in traffic in that country, will usually selectively remember traffic incidents that confirm and support their argument.

### **We revise our memories to fit our preferences**

Individuals and groups ignore certain parts of their history and revise their individual and collective memories in order to fit their current preferences. Thus, if a person wants to express love and sympathy towards a certain group, he or she revises prior memories of the relationships with the other to allow a preference of love to be expressed. For example, many societies have a collective memory towards minorities that is usually revised to suit the national preference at a specific time in history. Similarly, collective memories of many societies were revised to confirm the preference of equality between men and women in the 20th Century.

### **Our memories form the basis for new, confirming perceptions**

The current way we view our history and its associated memories constitute the basis for forming our individual and national aspirations for the future. In addition, these memories are essential in confirming existing negative or positive perceptions regarding others. If our

## **Dialogic Tools and Approaches**

### Tips for Mutual Cultural Understanding

- Listen
- Become aware of your assumptions
- Avoid your own existing labels (language)
- Suspend judgment and bias
- Discover the function; Ask why? What is the function?
- Empathy
- Ask yourself if this is a cultural or an individual behaviour?
- How does my society deal with this issue? Do we have something similar?
- What are the power consequences of the behaviour?

memories are selectively filtered to focus on violence, war or a negative depiction of those we have disputes with, then such memories provide evidence to confirm our misperceptions.

### 3.4 Contact Theory and Dialogue

Without gaining new skills and learning new information about the other it is difficult to change or challenge our misperceptions, which may lead to prejudice. Thus, the **Inter-Group Contact Theory** or **Contact Hypothesis** states, "that under appropriate conditions interpersonal contact is one of the most effective ways to reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members."<sup>28</sup>

The art of dialogue is based on the capacity of the facilitator and his/her agency to design a process and structure with the appropriate conditions to allow change.

Most modern dialogue and peacebuilding methods are based upon this theory where the change of perceptions and/or behaviours is the goal of dialogue processes. Dialogue allows us to focus on our own processes of forming our perceptions and to rethink and reconsider our negative assumptions.

Since 1954, much work has been conducted based on Contact Theory and directed towards changing relationships by peacebuilding advocates, social scientists, and others. As a result, the further work based on the theory has developed further even to include defining different types of inter-group contact<sup>29</sup> as well as how best to create the appropriate conditions to develop a constructive dialogue, which we will be discussing later.

#### Johari Window

The Johari Window is a psychological tool that was first created by Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham in 1955. It is a useful tool for training and facilitation mainly used to increase the individual's perception of themselves and of others on them by emphasizing their "soft skills" such as behaviour, empathy, intergroup and interpersonal development. The model is based on two key points: (1) Trust is gained through the revealing of information about yourself to others (2) Learning more about yourself through others' feedback of you. As described in further detail in the diagram of the Johari Window below, each quadrant represents the information of the individual - that is, their feelings and motivation, and whether these are or are not known to him/herself and the others around him/her.<sup>30</sup>

	Known to Self (What I see in myself)	Unknown to Self (What I don't see in myself)
Known to others (what you see in me)	<b>The Public Self</b> (part of ourselves that we are happy to share with others and discuss openly)	<b>The Blind Self</b> (the views that others have of us which may be different from those we have of ourselves)
Not known to Others (what you don't see in me)	<b>The Private (or hidden) Self</b> (parts of ourselves that are too private to share with others)	<b>The Undiscovered Self</b> (parts of ourselves which neither us or nor other people see)

## Suggested Reading

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***"You're an interesting species, an interesting mix. You're capable of such beautiful dreams, and such horrible nightmares. You feel so lost, so cut off, so alone, only you're not. See, in all our searching, the only thing we've found that makes the emptiness bearable, is each other."***

*Carl Sagan, 1985*



# Chapter 4

## Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding





## Chapter 4: Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding

Sources and Causes of Conflict / Conflict Management / 12 Elements of Social Peacebuilding/ Navigating Peacebuilding

For societies to be peaceful, they need to develop a culture of peace, which is a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behaviour and ways of life based on...“ respect of men and women equally, promotion of human rights and freedom in its diverse ways of expression, commitment to the peaceful resolution of conflict, providing the developmental and environmental needs of future generations, adopting principles of “freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding at all levels of society and among nations; and fostered by an enabling national and international environment conducive to peace;

*“Therefore, promoting the idea of peace is as important in a war environment as it is in our everyday life, to ensure those values get imprinted in our culture.”<sup>31</sup> Civil society needs to be fully engaged in fuller development of a culture of peace.<sup>32</sup> In pursuing such a society, we need to work on our attitudes towards others and towards conflict itself. In this chapter we will learn about the concept of peacebuilding, and most importantly, one of its transformative tools, dialogue.*

Before going into peacebuilding and dialogue, we need to learn about conflict, its causes and people’s behaviour towards conflict.

### 4.1 Sources and Causes of Conflict

#### What is Conflict?

Conflict is a relationship between two or more parties (individuals or groups) who have, or think they have, incompatible goals or may have compatible goals but different means, processes, approaches (Abu-Nimer, 1996).

It is a natural disagreement resulting from individuals or groups that differ in attitudes, beliefs, values or needs. It can also originate from past rivalries and personality differences. It is important to know that conflict does not mean violence, however, violence is a method or tool used in conflict.

#### Causes of Conflict

By evaluating a conflict according to the following five categories; relationship, data, interest, structural and value, we can begin to determine the causes of a conflict and design resolution strategies that will have a higher probability of success.

When asking people about the causes of conflict, they can provide you with a very long list of potential causes. The following list was developed during a training that was implemented by KAICIID with a group of scholars:

- Misconception and misperception
- Power struggle

- Competition for Resources
- Greed and the human ego
- Identity
- Incompatible goals
- Lack of dialogue
- Prejudice
- Competing interests
- Lack tolerance
- Stereotyping
- Injustice
- Lack of knowledge
- Historical burden (grievances)
- Exclusive theology

The above perceived causes can be divided into two categories of **Resources and Perceptions**

Resources	Perception
Power	Values
Money	Prejudice
Poverty	Ego
Time	Ignorance
Places	Identity
Interest	Grievances
	Human nature
	Theology of exclusion

It is important to note that perceptions are the way and the lenses we view and evaluate things in our environment; Perceptions are product of our surrounding or the environment in which we grow. While causes of conflict can either be related to actual distribution and availability of resources or to types of perceptions. Nevertheless, it is not possible to mechanically separate these causes when analysing conflict or even in the actual reality of the conflict. As we learned in Chapter 3, perceptions shape how we perceived resources, where places and objects mean different things to different people. In this, for example certain landforms and bodies of water are deemed more valuable to some than to others. In analysing conflict, it is always difficult to exclusively identify or determine if the causes are either about perception or resources.

There is a common belief that conflict is something negative, it is destructive and causes pain and grievance, which can be true in the case of violent conflict. However, in general our attitude toward conflict can be based on the assumption that conflict is a natural and an integral part of the human experience. Conflict can produce constructive/positive forms of change, especially if parties are ready to deal with their differences. Thus, peacebuilding and conflict resolution field is based on new set of assumptions regarding human attitudes towards conflict, some of these include:

### A New Approach to Conflict

- Conflict is not necessarily bad or a failure of an existing system
- Conflict can be a creative force that generates new alternative outcomes and solutions
- Conflict is a natural process that can have either constructive or destructive outcomes or both and it is a normal function of the human experience<sup>33</sup>
- Confronting conflict in ourselves and others can lead to new levels of self- discovery
- Managing conflict constructively can lead to enhanced mutual trust, improved teamwork, and greater levels of productivity
- Creativity can be an integral part of the process of managing conflict.

## 4.2 Conflict Management Styles and Tactics

Here are the five conflict management styles according to Thomas, K.W., and R.H. Kilmann:<sup>34</sup>

- 1 **Accommodation:** this is when you cooperate to a high-degree, and it may be at your own expense (lose-win scenario), and actually work against your own goals, objectives, and desired outcomes. This approach is effective when the other party has the greatest expertise or has a better solution. It can also be effective for preserving future relations with the other party

Accommodation:	"Whatever you want is OK with me"
Strategies:	Agree, Appear, Flatter
Often Appropriate when	Issue is not important to you, realising you may be wrong, taking "turns", something larger at stake
Often inappropriate when	You are likely to resent it, used habitually to gain acceptance

- 2 **Avoidance:** this is a "lose-lose" scenario, when you simply avoid the issue or sidestep it; this includes postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation. You are not helping the other party reach their goals, and you are not assertively pursuing your own. This works when the issue is trivial or when you have no chance of winning. It can also be effective when the issue would be very costly. It's also very effective when the atmosphere is emotionally charged and you need to create some space. Sometimes issues will resolve themselves, but "hope is not a strategy", and, in general, avoidance is not a good long term strategy for building sustainable constructive relationships.

Avoidance:	"Conflict? What Conflict?"
Strategies:	Flee, Deny, Ignore, Withdraw, Wish, Hope
Often Appropriate when	The issue is trivial, Time is short & a decision is not necessary, To arrange timing
Often inappropriate when	Negative feelings may linger, You care about the issues, Used habitually

3 **Competition:** this is the “win-lose” approach. You act in a very assertive way to achieve your goals, without seeking to cooperate with the other party, and it may be at the expense of the other party. This approach may be appropriate for emergencies when time is of the essence, or when you need quick, decisive action, and people are aware of and support the approach.

<b>Competition:</b>		<b>“My way or the Highway”</b>
<b>Strategies:</b>	Compete, Control, Outwit, Coerce, Fight	
<b>Often Appropriate when</b>	An emergency looms, Others don’t really care what happens, Acknowledged competition (i.e. debate)	
<b>Often inappropriate when</b>	Cooperation from others is important, Others’ self-respect is diminished needlessly	

4 **Compromise:** this is another “lose-lose” scenario where neither party really achieves what they want. This requires a moderate level of assertiveness and cooperation. It may be appropriate for scenarios where you need a temporary solution, or where both sides have equally important goals. The trap is to fall into compromising as an easy way out, when collaborating would produce a better solution.

<b>Compromise:</b>		<b>“Let’s split the difference”</b>
<b>Strategies:</b>	Bargain, Reduce expectation, A little something for everyone	
<b>Often Appropriate when</b>	Finding a solution is better than a stalemate, Cooperation is important but you have limited time resources	
<b>Often inappropriate when</b>	You can’t live with the consequences, Finding the most creative solution is essential	

5 **Collaboration:** this is where you partner or pair up with the other party to achieve both of your goals. This is how you break free of the “win-lose” paradigm and seek the “win-win.” This can be effective for complex scenarios where you need to find a novel solution. This can also mean re-framing the challenge to create more room for everybody’s ideas. The downside is that it requires a high-degree of trust and reaching a consensus can require a lot of time and effort to get everybody on board and to synthesize all the ideas.

<b>Collaboration:</b>		<b>“How can ‘we’ solve this problem?”</b>
<b>Strategies:</b>	Gather information, Look for alternatives, Dialogue, Welcome disagreement	
<b>Often Appropriate when</b>	The issues and relationship are both significant Cooperation is important, Reasonable hope to address all concerns	
<b>Often inappropriate when</b>	Time is short, The issues are unimportant	

By knowing your own default patterns, you improve your self-awareness and can pay attention to whether they are working for you and you can explore alternatives.



Most of us have a perspective or approach from which we generally approach conflict. We are not limited to a single approach and our own personal approach may change depending upon our mood, our setting, the relationship, and the specific conflict. That said, generally we have a preference. No style of approaching conflict is inherently good or bad, but each has moments in which its application will be successful and moments in which its application will be challenging.

### 4.3 From conflict to peacebuilding

A conflict-habituated system or society is when the conflict is integrated in the system and becomes the norm; it becomes a habit; it is integrated and part of the normal life to a degree that members of such society are not able to imagine their reality without the conflict. The conflict behaviours become part of the daily life of individuals in their institutions, society, and even cultural patterns. Peacebuilding aims at creating the tangible and intangible conditions to enable a conflict-habituated system to be transformed into a peace system. Peacebuilding processes are often aimed at creating change in the power relationships among the conflicting parties and transform it into a constructive and more sustainable one. Its processes "infuse hope and help the conflict parties construct a new vision for future relationship."<sup>35</sup>

## 4.4 Social Peacebuilding; 12 Elements for System Transformation<sup>36</sup>

For a conflict-habituated system to be transformed into a peace-system, it is essential to address the elements that cause and sustain the conflict within the system; additionally, stimulate or introduce elements, which can transform habitual negative patterns of conflict into peaceful ones. Therefore, such activities should address the four basic needs of identity, security, community and vitality and compose the twelve elements of social peacebuilding. These transcending elements include: hope, trust, nourishment, power, community, learning, healing, creativity, will, diversity, complexity and myth deconstruction". Peacebuilding activities, emphasize social relationships, they reveal the complexity of the situation, infuse hope and seek to build trust across the divisions. Lastly, they emphasize the possibility for innovative change by transforming the current ways in perceiving the problem and the other, into a constructive peaceful relationship.<sup>37</sup>

### 12 Elements for Social Peacebuilding

1	Hope	[Dialogue] gives hope to a situation that seems hopeless
2	Trust	[Dialogue] builds trust among people from different sides
3	Nourishment	[Dialogue] provides psychological sustenance
4	Power	The power of people has been seized by corrupt political leaders during a conflict; [Dialogue] restores power to individuals and civil society groups
5	Community	Regimes control people by disconnecting them during conflict; [Dialogue] connects people with each other
6	Learning	[Dialogue] provides space to humanize and learn from the other
7	Healing	Everyone is injured during conflict; [Dialogue] acknowledges the need for repair, rehab, and facilitates healing
8	Creativity	Training is a catalyst for the creative management of conflicts in a situation of deadlock
9	Will	People have lost will and have given up during conflict; [Dialogue] provides techniques that increase their ability to seek possibilities for change
10	Diversity	[Dialogue] exposes participants to diversity of opinions
11	Complexity	[Dialogue] removes the blinders of tunnel vision and shows a bigger picture instead of polarized view of reality
12	Demythologizing	In conflict, demonizing is an activity engrained in individuals so that they are not aware of their accepted myths; [Dialogue] challenges and replaces myths and deconstructs familiar ways of perceiving the other

The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, 1993<sup>38</sup>

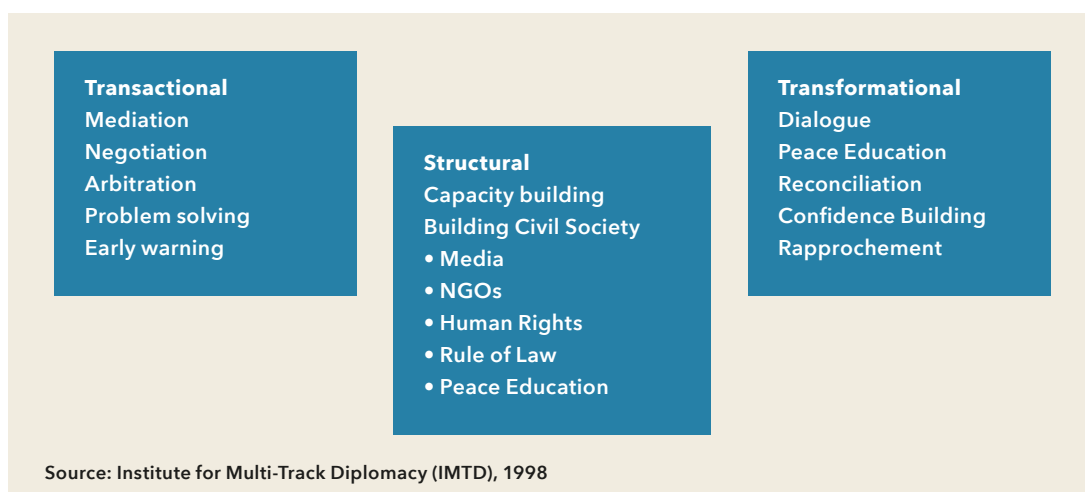
## Peacebuilding activities<sup>39</sup>

There are **three types of peacebuilding** approaches, all of which are necessary for the successful transformation to a peace system:

- 1 Political Peacebuilding --- agreements
- 2 Structural Peacebuilding --- activities
- 3 Social Peacebuilding --- relationships

These activities can be classified as:

- A **Transactional**: which are activities that lead to some kind of an agreement, a contract or a transaction that the parties agree to.
- B **Structural**: these activities target the structures that habituate the conflict and/or can sustain peace. Such activities mainly include capacity building for the different systems and institutions in the society (governmental and non-governmental).
- C **Transformational**: these activities mainly target people in the society and their relationships. It mainly aims at restoring relationships or transforms it from conflict to peace. Activities here aim at reconciliation and trust-building – dialogue is a major activity here.



## Definitions<sup>40</sup>

**Peacebuilding**: an umbrella term that relates to all actions that aim at bringing closure to a conflict, including actions that occur after a peace agreement is signed

**Conflict Management**: a term developed in the 1960s and 1970s, to refer to activities often involving a third party actor, which are intended to provide a temporary solutions to a conflict, especially to reduce tensions in the short-term.

**Conflict Resolution**: a term coined in the mid-1980s to define long-term solutions that address the root causes of conflict

**Conflict Transformation**: a term developed in mid 1990s to address individual, institutional, and structural aspect of conflict and incorporate a preventative element that focuses on building sustainable constructive relationships.

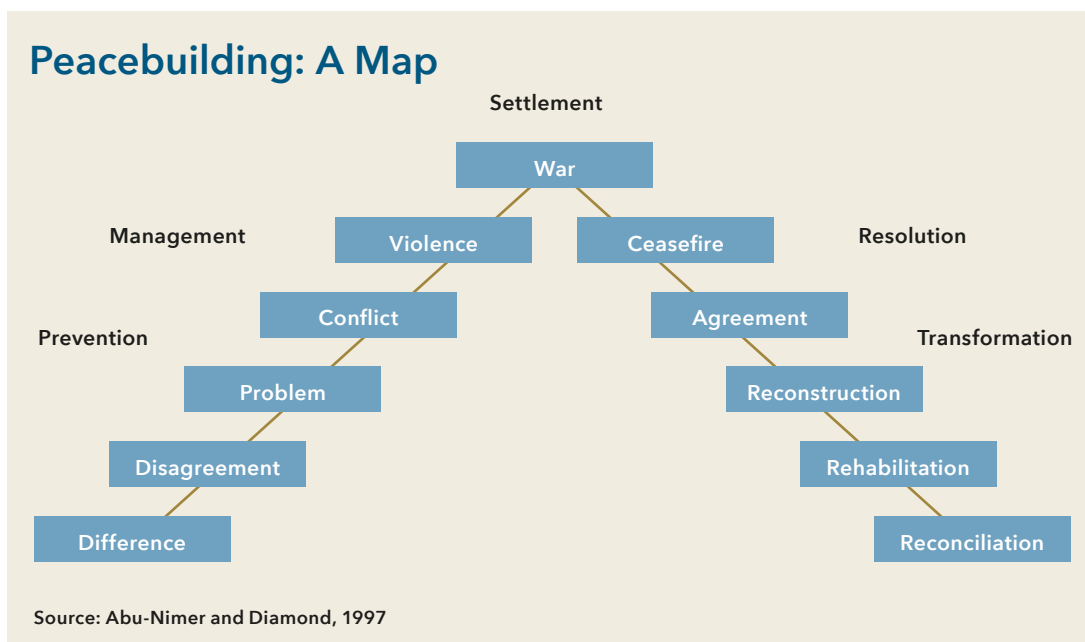
### 4.5 Navigating Peacebuilding - a Route Map

Peacebuilding activities can also be divided chronically in relationship to the course and dynamic of the conflict. Below is a map that explains the different stages of the conflict escalation and de-escalation.<sup>41</sup> According to this classification of conflict dynamics, we all have differences, whether physical or psychological or social. Such differences will often turn into disagreements as we encounter each other through sharing the same space or while pursuing our objectives. When resources are limited (space, time, etc.) and we need to make decisions, our disagreements evolve into a problem and then into a conflict. It is a conflict when at least one of the parties decides to take action for a settlement (until now it is not necessarily violent and therefore, conflict is not a bad thing so far). The challenge is when the conflict escalates to the use of violence (one or more of the parties decide to solve the conflict through the use of violence) - and violence might escalate into war (here the complexity of the violent conflict escalates). After the war (the top point between escalation and de-escalation of the conflict), whether by themselves or through the intervention of a third party, the disputers decide to cease-fire. The parties might endorse a cease-fire for different reasons: they are tired, the costs are high, they run out of resources, third parties pressure, or to start negotiation and resolve the conflict peacefully. However, ceasing fire does not mean that the conflict was solved. Therefore, through mediation, negotiation, arbitration, or other means of conflict resolution, the parties can reach an agreement.

It is important to mention that signing a peace agreement does not mean that peace is sustainable. There is a **negative peace** and there is a **positive peace**.<sup>42</sup>

**Negative Peace:** is simply the absence of war, "we don't fight, but we don't like each other and even we might not talk.

**Positive Peace:** is the active peace, it is restoring the relationship as peaceful as before the conflict with active positive relationships.





Often after war and the settlement of the conflict, the time comes for **reconstruction**, **rehabilitation**, and **reconciliation**. Reconstruction simply deals with rebuilding infrastructures and institutions that were damaged during the conflict. Rehabilitation deals with the human whether physical or psychological rehabilitation – dealing with trauma is also included.

Nevertheless, a conflict is not yet transformed into the positive peace until reconciliation is made (or at least started as it is a process). Reconciliation is not only restoring the relationship to the status it was before the conflict, it goes further into understanding and accepting differences and finding mutual mechanisms to accommodate such differences. As a result, *the parties will acknowledge that they do have differences and will develop a common understanding on how to deal with these differences.*

To conclude this section, differences are inherent, therefore we will always have disagreements on various levels. Disagreements become problems and problems escalate into conflicts. Conflicts are not evil, what can be evil is the way or the methods we employ to solve them, such as resorting to violence. However, we always have the choice to move directly from conflict to agreement through employing any of the peaceful conflict resolution methods. To this end, dialogue is an effective tool that can help us better understand our differences as well as our similarities in order to work together to prevent violent conflicts.

## Suggested Reading

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***“Raise your thoughts, not your fists”***

*Matshona Dhliwayo, 2017*

# Chapter 5

## Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue Theory and Practice



## Chapter 5: Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue - Theory and Practice

Dialogue as Peacebuilding / Dialogue in Practice / Principles of Dialogue / Applications of Dialogue / Patterns of IRD/ Patterns of Dialogue / Guidelines and Recommendations

Religious teachings have at times been exploited in different ways throughout history, in order to provoke discrimination and incite violence. Religion has also been used as a tool in the hands of politicians to mobilize support, especially in the case of war, or as an exclusionary and discriminatory doctrine. On the other hand, religions stand out as a source of many of the values that are directly linked with peacebuilding processes and conflict resolution, including justice, tolerance, patience, and compassion. Unfortunately, these sources have been marginalized by some politicians and intellectuals for a long period of time, as many researchers who specialize in international relations believe that religion should be kept away from the world of conflict and peacebuilding - this approach has changed in the past two decades.<sup>43</sup> Hence, the call for dialogue, especially interreligious and intercultural dialogue came about as a peaceful civilized method in getting to know the other and respect difference.

Some believe that interreligious and intercultural dialogue is an out-dated concept, perhaps as old as the religions themselves. However, as an organized and official process, it is a relatively recent phenomenon. This dialogue has gained greater momentum in recent decades as religions have returned to the forefront of politics and the media. Many believe that interreligious dialogue in its current state is "a by-product of the process of political, cultural and economic globalization."<sup>44</sup> Interreligious dialogue is an effective way to resolve conflict and build peace because it can engage people at the level of their deepest held beliefs, as religion is distinctive in character in forming identity.<sup>45</sup> For that reason, relationships between and with religious leaders in order to spread dialogue and its values and goals are a key factor in the dialogue itself and its success. Religious teachings and scriptural sources are also of extreme importance in overcoming the division and conflict in making an effective contribution to peacebuilding. Dialogue activists believe religious sources and religious leaders in particular can be called upon to achieve cooperation, and working to overcome divisions, within and between nations.

In this context, it is necessary to mention the diverse roles of religious leaders in peacebuilding. They might contribute to teaching and education or religious literacy, especially among their followers, and could promote and advocate a peaceful approach. They might also work within what is called religious diplomacy, where a religious figure engages with his/her counterparts from other religions or with policymakers. They might also contribute through participation and observation, or in fact-finding missions. They can also act as a host, mediator, or facilitator, as they can be witnesses to facts given that they often are trusted in their communities and are what we can call influencers.

Interreligious and intercultural dialogue is broad and has different levels and goals as the objectives of dialogue vary. There are dialogues that seek mutual understanding and deeper knowledge, while others seek shared values. Additionally, there are dialogues

that seek common positions vis-à-vis a particular issue that may or may not be religious, while other forms of dialogue are searching for doctrinal commonalities or differences. There are also dialogues with general or specific political purposes.

Dialogue can also vary in scope and geographical breadth between the local, regional and international, and in the makeup of religions present. As such, the dialogue may be limited to the so-called adherents of the Abrahamic religions of Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. It may include other adherents such as Hindus, Buddhists, and others, including those who do not affiliate or identify with a religion. It can take place among different sects and denominations of one religion (which we refer to as Intra-religious dialogue), or bilaterally between one religion and another, or between people of several different religions and beliefs simultaneously.

## 5.1 The Concept of Dialogue as a Peacebuilding Process

Peacebuilding means finding tangible and intangible circumstances to enable an embedded conflict to become peace.

In addition to the three basic approaches to the success of the process of transforming a conflict regime into a peace regime. Peace activities are divided into three packages according to the means utilized:

**A Transactions and/or exchanges**, which includes negotiations, mediation, arbitration, problem solving, and early warning.

All are part of a process or group of processes aimed at reaching an agreement over the subject matter of the dispute or problem, and oftentimes they ignore the relationships between individuals, groups and their sustainability.

**B Capacity building and civil society building** includes the media, civil society and human rights, rule of law, and peace education organizations.

All are part of the development and enabling of these institutions to bypass the conflict stage and its causes and to support a peaceful environment.

**C Dialogue activities** include confidence building, cooperation and understanding, coexistence and building relations of friendship and reconciliation.

We note here that these activities are mostly focused on relationships and the means to transform them into a relationship of cooperating and common ground.

The definitions of the concept of dialogue have varied according to its specific objectives and style, but most activists agree that when dialogue is used as a means to build peace, it refers to safe communication between individuals or groups. In this context it is aimed at better understanding regarding views, knowledge, and perceptions of the subject matter with the ultimate goal of reaching what David Bohm called “coherence of meaning”.<sup>46</sup>

Dialogue deals with personal and preconceived notions and prejudices by focusing on questions, listening, the suspension of judgment, and the search for commonalities based

on respect and acceptance of the other. The mission of dialogue is to clarify and overcome misunderstanding, and therefore the focus is on listening to the other and taking into account and recognizing the point of view of the other. This is done through focusing the dialogue on similarities and differences in order to extend bridges of communication between people and to move from a state of intolerance or passive tolerance to positions of deep understanding and respect for the other.<sup>47</sup> This is done through a work methodology prepared by the dialogue facilitator (Chapter 6) that would help foster a secure environment for dialogue and support equal and fair participation of all parties.

## 5.2 Dialogue in Practice

Whether transactional, structural, or transformational, as defined in the previous chapter, it is important to emphasize how the peacebuilding approach is a holistic one, creating the tangible and intangible conditions to enable a conflict-habituated system<sup>48</sup> to become a peace system.

We need to address the political, the structural, and the social frameworks. Dialogue is a transformational method that deals with individual and collective transformation with the aim of a social relational change. Dialogue is the right tool for addressing the social and the relational aspect of a conflict.

As we defined in Chapter 2, dialogue is a conversation with a common subject between two or more people. The main purpose is for each person to learn from the other. It is not advocacy, but rather an inquiry. Dialogue is not a debate to win or lose, nor a negotiation to reach an agreement, it is an opportunity for learning and self-reflection, with the aim of developing a better understanding and awareness of self-assumptions and those of others.

There are several models that are based on the **Inter-group Contact Hypothesis** (Ch.3) that are applicable to dialogue. The following model explains the five phases of a "Face to Face Meeting of the Other":<sup>49</sup>

- **PHASE ONE: knowing each other** - Knowing yourself and opening yourself to others. Be willing to listen to other people's identity and point of view.
- **PHASE TWO: discovering our biases**, fears and taboos. Acknowledge the issues, points or topics where you find a different perception, perspective or understanding. Seek for more information, ask questions to find out the sources of each other way of thinking.
- **PHASE THREE: outlining commonalities and agreements.** Identify the common purpose. Distance yourself from biases and talk about the goals each person has to determine those that are common to all. Find a common purpose.
- **PHASE FOUR: what can we do together?** Starting from common purpose, what's next? How can we reach the common goal? What steps are needed? Are other people involved? How can we share this common purpose with the rest?
- **PHASE FIVE: maintaining our dialogue relationship.** We have reached a place where we can work together. Our support of a common cause. We have agreed in joint actions. How do we keep the dialogue active? How can we engage others?



## 5.3 The Principles of Dialogue

One can conclude from the earlier dialogue model and the definitions of the concept, there are several essential elements for successful dialogue - we call them the principles of dialogue, which are based upon the 7 principles of dialogue introduced in 1993 by the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy (IMTD). For a dialogue to be successful and effective, IMTD introduced seven basic principles that must be present and/or taken into consideration.<sup>50</sup> The following is an adaptation of these principles into “The 10 Principles of Dialogue”. Some are responsibilities of the participants, while other are essential for the organizers, including the facilitator.

### Ten Principles of Dialogue<sup>51</sup>

- Establishing the safe space
- To agree that the main purpose of the dialogue is learning
- Use of appropriate communication skills
- Set the proper ground rules
- Take risk, express feelings and confront perceptions (honesty)
- The relationship comes first
- Gradually address the hard questions and gradually depart from them
- Do not quit or avoid the difficult issues
- Once participating in the dialogue, expect to be changed
- Bring the change to others

#### Establishing a safe space

A safe space means an environment that stimulates the participants in the dialogue to express their feelings, their ideas, and even their negative perceptions of the other - to allow their stereotypes to surface comfortably and safely. The safe space, or as some call it the safe environment, includes, but is not limited to, a physical space with all its components and its implications (even including respect for different customs and religious, cultural and gender needs, external pressures, such as media and security agencies). The safe space means an inclusive environment, where everyone (or group) is treated equally, despite the power asymmetry - an environment where time and space are shared fairly among all participants without any type of discrimination. To establish the safe environment, it is the responsibility of the participants, as much as it is the job of the facilitator (and the organizers).

#### To agree that the main purpose of the dialogue is learning

The participants should approach the dialogue with the intention and attitude of learning about the others and their perceptions of the topic. This attitude towards learning is essential for the success of the dialogue, it counters the negotiator or the debater approach; approaching dialogue with the intention of proving oneself right and the other is wrong will hinder the opportunity of learning about the individual other or establishing positive relationships.

### **Use of appropriate communication skills**

Listening and talking with respect, and how to deliver basic ideas or questions are all very important and essential skills for building a safe environment that can enable a constructive dialogue. Therefore, the participants should agree on some common ground and communication rules for the dialogue (next principle).

### **Set the proper ground rules**

It is important to establish a set of communication and ground rules together with the participants, which will help in facilitating the dialogue and support the safe environment in a constructive atmosphere. The group should take ownership over such rules, therefore, the rules should be brainstormed and developed with the participants. In the next section we provide a sample of such ground rules.

### **Take risks, express feelings and confront perceptions (honesty)**

Dialogue also aims to build confidence and provide a safe environment that helps and encourages participants to talk openly and transparently, but through the use of the appropriate communication skills. However, we do have the responsibility as participants, to be willing to open our hearts, to participate and express our minds, as well as to absorb the thoughts and feelings of the others. Since we agreed that "the purpose is to learn," we better take what appears to be an insult, with an open heart and mind, as it is mostly comes with good intention and/or it might be built upon a misunderstanding or lack of information – by the end of the day, it is a matter of perception.

### **The relationship comes first**

Dialogue is a transformative peacebuilding process, it is based on building relationships and trust between different personalities to overcome misunderstandings and differences. Therefore, we should not put the problem in the middle and the other as our rival, but rather the problem is our common rival and the other party is our partner in solving the problem – it is a matter of attitude. Nevertheless, it is the task of the facilitators, as well as the participants, to put building the relationship at the centre of the dialogue. Investing in teambuilding activities, activities that develop respect and better understanding, are vital in achieving such goals.

### **Gradually address the hard questions and gradually depart from them**

Since investing in the relationship is vital for the success of the dialogue, we need to gradually approach the problematic topic. The more we invest in building the relationship, the easier it will become to address the hard questions. Addressing the hard questions often makes the participants emotional, therefore we should also depart from these hard topics gradually.

### **Do not quit or avoid the difficult issues**

The dialogue cannot remain superficial, and we should not give up when the first challenge arises. We must therefore try to challenge ourselves and trust the spirit of the community participating in the dialogue. It is natural for the dialogue to go through some difficult stages, but this is evidence that we have started to share what is inside us and we have started to feel confident in the community that was developed. Therefore, when we are engaged, we express our points of contention to get to know and realize and understand them, not in order to prove that we are right, or that the other party is wrong, but rather to learn from them. It is important to address such difficult issues,

so we understand the meaning and the importance of these issues for us and for our partners in the dialogue. Quitting in the middle of the hard topics can create more damage than healing, therefore we need to address them once they are opened and gradually create a better understanding in regard to our disagreements.

### **Expect to be changed**

Once participating in the dialogue, expect to be changed. As dialogue addresses perceptions and misperceptions, it provides us with the opportunity to walk in the shoes of those who differ from us – it provides us with a new perception. Therefore, we should not be hard-lined about our opinion and must be ready to change our point of view and stereotypes about the other, without being afraid of such changes. As we hope that the dialogue will yield a sustainable transformative relationship, we should expect that we will be transformed. What will be transformed is not our values or our principles, but rather how we perceive the other and the issues being discussed.

### **Bring the change to others**

In other words, take action. Now that you have a new perspective of the topic and the other party, try to think together about how to bring this new perspective to your community and others. Dialogue, without having such pressure, should be sustained and followed by action. It is important not to create extra pressure on the participants to act together (it depends on the context of the conflict or the situation), however, it is always important to think how we can bring such experiences to others.

## **5.4 Different Applications for Dialogue**

Dialogue can be applied as a tool for conflict resolution or prevention in any inter- or intra-group relations. It is important to note that the dialogue is named according to the lens or the identity by which the participants are identified with in the dialogue. However, the content of the dialogue is not necessarily about such identity.

**Inter-group dialogue:** is the dialogue that occurs among participants coming from different backgrounds (whether different identities, cultures, religions, genders or generations)

**Intra-group dialogue:** occurs when participants come from the same shared identity group.

The following are examples of the different dialogues that can be organized:

**Intercultural Dialogue:** when the participants come from different cultural backgrounds and gather to talk from their explicitly stated cultural identity lenses to create a better understanding of certain challenges (if the dialogue occurs among people who have identified with the same culture for the purpose of the dialogue, then we can call it intra-cultural dialogue).

**Interreligious Dialogue:** when the participants come from different religious backgrounds and gather to talk from their various explicitly stated religious identity lenses to create a better understanding of certain challenges (if the dialogue occurs among people who identify with the same religion, then we can call it intra-religious dialogue). Interreligious



## Ground Rules for Dialogue

For the dialogue to be effective and capable of providing the aforementioned safe environment, we propose the availability of some rules that govern the dialogue (it should be noted that these rules may change depending on the context and the needs of the group, and we even encourage developing them through a brainstorming session with the group before they are adopted. Here, the participants should take ownership of the common ground rules. Examples of these rules might include, but are not limited to:

**Confidentiality:** respecting individuals' privacy within the group, so that the participants may reach a level of confidence and comfort in order to share their opinions and speak their minds (allow what is hidden to surface). They will often share personal and private stories; therefore, they must feel secure that these views and sensitive stories will not leave the group or be used against those sharing them. Some groups might agree to adaptations of confidentiality, as in the Chatham House Rule, where "participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed."<sup>1</sup>

**Respect differences:** in terms of intellectual, ideological, religious and even physical and cultural differences. This fosters respect for sincere participation and transparency.

**No interruption:** we emphasize communication skills and active listening as key factors in the success of dialogue.

**Fairness in time and place:** no one individual or particular group should dominate the conversation. The role of facilitator is to distribute and organize time and space.

**Talking through personal experience and avoiding generalization:** often the use of words such as "we" or "you" (plural) comes into play. Let us remember that dialogue is fundamentally a transformative activity, and therefore greater space should be allocated for the individual experience. Participants should express their personal opinion rather than generalizing opinions. The facilitator might give the space for "general knowledge" in case the group feels that it is needed; however, such time should be recognized and should not dominate a large space in the dialogue programme.

Dialogue does not need to focus on religious or theological similarities or differences but can instead focus on issues of common interest or concern. (See comparison of Theological Dialogue and Dialogue of Life models, page. 44.)

**Intergenerational Dialogue:** when the participants are from different generations (age groups) and gather to talk from their various explicitly stated generational identity lenses to create a better understanding of certain challenges (if the dialogue occurs among people who identify with the same generation, then we can call it intra-generational dialogue).

Since there are many types of identity groups, dialogue can be applied among and within any of these groups, including for example “women’s” or “men’s” groups. As stated above, the dialogue can be named according to the lens or the identity by which the participants are identified, however, the content of the dialogue may not necessarily be about such identity.

### **Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Peacebuilding**

What generally distinguishes dialogue from the other means of resolving conflict is that it falls within the framework of conflict transformation, which transforms the conflict from a competitive relationship into a cooperative one by focusing on the common relationship and its sustainability. Interreligious and intercultural conflict in particular depends on peace-building operations, which often are based on religious concepts and values.

The concept of reconciliation, for example, is a major topic in interreligious dialogue that depends on several measures, such as “acknowledgement, remorse, compassion and forgiveness, which are all essentially religious rather than secular concepts.” Therefore, “reliance on religious sources as a basis for dialogue gives participants the opportunity to lean on their deepest beliefs and fears – as religion is the deepest motivating force being human action, and our religious principles, positions, sensitivities and prejudices affect to a large extent the way we deal with current issues.”<sup>52</sup>

The introduction of religion in the dialogue process allows participants to focus on one of the deepest factors in their existence, and to recognize the commonalities between their faith and the faith of the other party. Oftentimes, the followers of different religions have found, even in times of violence and conflict, that they have a lot more in common than with those who share the same ethnic, cultural and national background. Even though interreligious dialogue provides a basis and framework to work for peace between the followers of different religions, many politicians and non-governmental organizations have ignored its importance or marginalized it.

Researchers have shown that the main difference between Interreligious dialogue and other dialogues based on identity is that this dialogue has become a spiritual exercise in itself.<sup>53</sup> The spiritual aspect becomes the motivation for taking part in such processes. The religious values become the driver for participants to take action. Some interlocutors are capable of skipping the stage of understanding the dispute and move to the stage of solidarity with other people of faith, even if they are adherents of another religion. And herein lies the secret of interreligious dialogue as a transformative means to resolve disputes focused on the human relationship.

For many individuals, interreligious dialogue has become an extension of religious expression. The deep spiritual commitment and devotion of certain participants in interfaith dialogue have allowed them to transcend the positional and interest based discussions which often characterize other forms of dialogue. **Active participants in interreligious dialogue distinguish themselves in that their motive for such dialogue becomes a motivation based on their religious identity and their deeper understanding of it. Therefore, they are more enthusiastic for dialogue than interlocutors working in a secular atmosphere.**

Before delving into patterns of interreligious and intercultural dialogue models, it is necessary to clarify that there are three positions or tendencies that directly affect the behaviours within interreligious dialogue groups:

**1. The Exclusion Tendency** – The participant believes that only his/her belief is true and all other beliefs are wrong or misleading and deal with their adherents on this basis. In many cases, the tendency stems from the wish to guide others to “the truth”, out of the belief that his/her religion is correct. It is worth mentioning that those who may espouse this exclusionary tendency may accept interreligious dialogue, but mostly for the purpose of advocating their own religion and gaining supporters (proselytization). Although this exclusivism exists in most fundamentalist sects in all religions, this trend varies, and is not absolute. It is considered a way to define and defend social and personal identity amid differing political circumstances. Therefore, we find many commonalities between groups.

**2. Syncretism** – This is the antithesis of exclusivism, i.e. an attempt at rapprochement between religions and their unification into one new religion. The majority of Interreligious Dialogue scholars and activists agree that the unification between similar religions is not a goal of the dialogue between them and “the differences between religions should not be denied for the sake of agreement, and that dialogue is not a movement toward consensus or transformation, but rather to build relations,” Leonard Swidler, the father of modern interreligious dialogue stresses. Further he says that “there is no place to talk about consensus or compromise here...and there is no room for such a situation in real dialogue.”<sup>54</sup> Rather, the goal is to reinforce human commonalities among them.

**3. Pluralism** – Pluralism is highly influential and popular in Western societies and “ranges from mere religious diversity down to the policy of non-interference in the religious affairs of other people.” Dr. Abu Nimer explains pluralism as: “a person’s endeavour to overcome [an] exclusionary tendency towards the other religion by emphasizing the original value of all religions. However, a person who believes in pluralism does not go as far as a person [under a Consensual Trend, and] does not attempt to embrace more than one doctrine as his/her new religion. The pluralist model emphasizes the similarities among those engaged in interfaith dialogue as a conversational approach that emphasizes: (If I am okay, then you are okay), where the emphasis is heavily focused on the commonalities...”

Pluralists go beyond just listening to the other’s doctrine and take into account the other’s faith and its importance, and there is no attempt to invite others and persuade them that their own doctrine is better than all the other doctrines. Therefore, pluralism focuses on ethical concepts between religions. Pluralists are even able to deal with and engage in discussions about religious differences and compare them, while still being able to control their own prejudices.<sup>55</sup>

Pluralism has its critics. And if the exclusionists are accused of placing excessive emphasis on the importance of their own belief, the advocates of pluralism are accused of superficiality and lack of depth when it comes to any ideology – the exclusionists accuse pluralistic interlocutors of not representing fully the religion to which they belong and giving a “less authentic” version of their belief system.

## 5.5 Dialogue Models in terms of Process and Content

*A model of harmony and a model of conflict and differences*

Dialogue can be classified in terms of course and content to a two-pole spectrum. There is the Harmony Model and there is Conflict / Differences Model. The first is oriented towards religious commonalities and similarities, avoiding a discussion of political

matters, and focusing on common religious practices and rituals, as well as building personal and social relations, which are considered a priority for this kind of, approach.<sup>56</sup> This dialogue is based on the understanding that if participants focus on commonalities, they will reach a stage of cohesion through forging of a common inclusive identity that will contribute to overcoming the conflict.

The Conflict and Differences Model, on the other hand, sees in ideological and religious differences an importance that is no less significant than the similarities. Therefore, differences should be discussed and addressed with transparency and clarity. It is believed that this approach will lead to a clearer and deeper understanding, and to a dialogue based more on openness and transparency. Believers in the importance of this approach also believe that a deeper understanding of these differences and to how to deal with them would limit the possibility of manipulation of religious beliefs in fomenting violence and hatred among followers of different religions:

Harmony Model	Conflict and Differences Model
Non-political	Political
Educational	Practical
Ritualistic	Critical, Confrontational
Individualistic Spiritual	Inclusive
Focus on Similarities	Confronting and Appreciating Differences

### Theological Dialogue Model (Theology) and the Dialogue of Life Model

In general most Dialogue does not directly deal with theology and doctrinal issues. Such dialogue should it take place is often limited in most cases to specialists: intellectuals, scholars and researchers of religion. In most cases, religious leaders engage theologically on the topic of dialogue in the context of educating and raising the awareness of the audience about the importance of dialogue in general and from a religious informed point of view. The aim of Theological Dialogue is never to proselytising or convert others, which is prohibited by principles of dialogue, but rather to compare different explanations and interpretations and try to clarify the different views held among participants. Religious leaders typically request that the *Theological Dialogue Model* be limited to those who have knowledge and explanatory power of religion. The result is that these dialogues are usually confined to religious elites and exclude the public.

The **Dialogue of Life Model** dominates the majority of dialogue activities, as it touches on issues of everyday life. It is an effective model where everyone involved is considered an expert in the affairs of his/her own daily life.<sup>57</sup> Although religious morals and religious identity is what motivates the participants to attend, this kind of dialogue usually avoids delving into contentious ideological and religious issues. The emphasis is rather on co-existence and common values, and issues that are related to the participants' daily lives. The strength of this model lies in the fact that Even though participants are chosen according to their religious background, their religious identity in these settings is downplayed and becomes secondary factor in the conversation – and in general, the dialogue aims to enhance and strengthen the human connection between the participants. The strength

of Dialogue of Life lies in the fact that it deals with daily life issues close to the reality of the participants, which could enable them to see practical and tangible results of the dialogue.

Dialogue of Life	Theological Dialogue
<p>Life Topics (Family and Education)</p> <p>Economic Development</p> <p>Racial Discrimination and Biases</p> <p>Popular activities and events aimed to learn and get to know the other</p>	<p>Clarifying the sources and norms, terminology of different religious traditions, i.e. scriptures, holy books, teachings etc.</p> <p>Clarifying the similarities and differences among participants</p> <p>Understanding the different theological perspectives that inform ethics, practices and beliefs of others</p>

From the foregoing, the models of dialogue activities in terms of course and content can be designed according to the target group, as outlined in the following table:

Dialogue Content and Course	Theology Dialogue	Life Dialogue
The Harmony Model	Identifying similarities among religions, e.g. similarities among the Abrahamic religions	Focusing on social issues of common interest, e.g. Civic Education, Common Citizenship the Environment, etc
Conflict and Differences Model	Comparing differences among religions, e.g. differences among the Abrahamic religions	Focusing on points of tension and possibly conflict, e.g. addressing stereotypes and bias, or hate speech

There are of course programmes that are exceptions and use both Theology and Life Dialogue models such as “Scriptural Reasoning”, which may use religious texts in dialogue on contemporary themes (See Case Study 1<sup>58</sup>).

### **The Culture of Respecting Differences**

Diversity is one of the most important values that humanity must learn and recognize at an early age, and we have to learn all the dimensions of this value. Difference, as we pointed out, exists everywhere; at home, school, the environment, in urban areas and in society in general. To cope with this difference, we have to adopt dialogue as a process and negotiate in order to reach the best possible manifestation concerning all contentious issues.

### **Diversity and Religion**

Interreligious and intercultural dialogue are a means to enable coexistence, cooperation and common cultural and human understanding. For this purpose, we have to work to include diversity as part of religious understanding, and to allow our diversity of worldviews to enrich us, rather than to divide us.

We should cooperate, engage with each other, and approach our differences with curiosity and recognise for anywhere there are differences, there are even more similarities. It is important to work on expanding the umbrella of dialogue and overcome political, cultural and religious frameworks and spread the culture of dialogue throughout society.

## Case Study 1

### Scriptural Reasoning (SR)

Reading, listening to and reflecting on religious scripture is something many do naturally within their own worshipping communities. Participants in SR are not asked to leave that behind; rather, people of different faiths read, compare and reflect on their scriptures side-by-side.

SR is not about seeking agreement but focuses instead on gaining better understanding about the possible interpretations that inform the perspectives of others. In SR, the main skill is to learn to navigate differences and to disagree in informed and constructive ways. The result is often a deeper understanding of others' and one's own scriptures, as well as the development of strong bonds across faith communities. SR is now practised globally, including in places affected by religion-related tensions and conflict.

### How does it Work?

- Participants identify a narrative or theme, perhaps a concern or issue arising from their community or their context.
- Each faith community selects a short passage from their scripture relating to that theme.
- Participants meet in small groups and one at a time, each passage of scripture is read out loud to the rest of the group. Others may never have come across it before so they give an 'introduction', explaining a little of its context in the scripture and its importance in the faith tradition

Convened by a facilitator, participants then discuss the passages one at a time—they may begin by asking questions to help them understand it better, or share a reflection or something that particularly strikes them as they hear it. In this way, an open and interactive discussion begins and the participants are able to reflect together on the possible meanings of their texts.

(For more information visit [www.scripturalreasoning.org](http://www.scripturalreasoning.org))

## General Advice and Guidelines for Dialogue

- Look at differences as a source of wealth and richness, and not as something that weakens or undermines peace.
- No one should claim that his/her opinion is the only truth, for each person has his/her opinion or perception of what is right.
- Staying calm during a dialogue and avoiding fanaticism and intolerance, for intolerance turns dialogue into debate, making it more difficult for participants to find commonalities.

- Let us deepen our training and understanding of active listening skills, let us be more willing to be listeners than speakers. Dialogue is a place to learn and empathise.
- Do not fight any opinion or idea, but rather discuss objectively, for you may have to defend this view in the future.
- Respect for different cultures or opinions does not necessarily mean being convinced of them; rather, it is an acknowledgment of the existence of differences and respect for the other.
- Maintaining an objective discussion by not fighting for a single, personal opinion, for you may have to defend a view that does not belong to you in the future,
- The other also has to be viewed without discrimination in terms of gender, religion, nationality, social background or political orientations or any other reason.

## Suggested Reading

- Abu-Nimer et al. *Unity in Diversity: Interfaith Dialogue in the Middle East*, USIP, 2007.
- Swidler, Leonard. *Dialogue for Interreligious Understanding*. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2014
- Swidler, Leonard. *Triologue: Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Dialogue*. Twenty-Third Publications, 2007.

***“No peace among the nations, without peace among the religions.  
No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions.  
No dialogue between the religions without investigation of the  
foundation of the religions.”***

*Hans Küng, 1997*



# Chapter 6

## Dialogue - Design and Facilitation





## Chapter 6: Dialogue - Design and Facilitation

Dialogue Design / The Facilitator and Facilitation / Process and Structure / Stepping out of the comfort zone / Safe Space

### 6.1 Concepts of Dialogue Design

Although it is largely similar to general project planning and design, dialogue has its own particularity and emphasis. In this section, we introduce a general framework for dialogue design, with more emphasis on the elements of context and facilitation. The following framework, introduces the general elements of dialogue design:<sup>59</sup>

<b>Context</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	
	<b>Participants and Participation</b>	<b>Facilitator(s)</b>
	<b>Process/Structure</b>	
	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Physical Space</b>

#### Purpose

The dialogue should have clarity in regards to its purpose and is important to have in mind what we would like to achieve, before the conversation starts. This will give the tone to the conversation and helps to identify how to combine the rest of elements. What is the purpose of the dialogue? What do we want to achieve? What questions do we aim to answer? What are the expectations of the participants? In general, the dialogues' purpose falls within one or more of the three following categories:

- Generating awareness
- Problem-solving
- Building relationships

Within these categories, the purpose of dialogue can vary from sharing knowledge, finding innovative solutions, developing a shared vision, capacity building, participant or leadership development, dealing with conflict, building a strategy or action planning, or for decision making, among other purposes.

#### Participants and participation

Based on the purpose of the dialogue, we decide on who is to be invited to the dialogue. Who needs to be involved, and how? In other words, who are the participants and what kind of participation or involvement can we expect from them? In identifying the participants, we also ask the following questions: What do we hope to do and achieve with the participants? What will each of them be bringing, and what will they be hoping to gain? How do we best involve and engage them? We have to also ask ourselves: who is not here? While it is natural for participants to be hesitant or even resistant to engage in dialogue, nonetheless it is essential that they be willing to take part on a planned dialogue process. Participants need to be informed and aware.

### **Time**

Each dialogue topic might need a different amount of time to be addressed. A time frame needs to be defined for any Dialogue session, keeping in mind the topic, the number of people who would be involved and the place where it is going to be held.

### **Environment or physical space**

The dialogue process starts even before the conversation itself – the physical space becomes part of the experience. The space helps people to feel welcomed, comfortable and has a direct effect on the mood and emotions that might arise during the process.

### **Facilitator(s)**

An essential element or actor in the dialogue is the facilitator.

## **6.2 The Facilitator and Facilitation**

### **Who is the facilitator and what is their role in dialogue?**

If we imagine any dialogue process as a journey, the dialogue facilitator is the guide. No one can walk the path for another person, but a guide can make the journey meaningful and enjoyable, despite the challenges and rocky areas on the trail. The guide does not direct. The word “facilitate” means to make something easy, to make a process easy. In other words, the facilitator plans and manages the group to ensure that the purpose and the objectives of the group are met effectively. Effective here means being time conscious, supporting inclusive participation and allowing for full ownership by the group.

Facilitators should be impartial. As everyone has his/her own interests or biases, successful facilitators are aware of their reality and they develop high skills, neutralizing them. They put personal beliefs and opinions aside and focus on the dialogue process – the group’s interest and objectives.

The dialogue process is the responsibility of the facilitator, it should be designed in a way that suits the group and the objectives to be reached in the most successful and effective way.

In short, facilitators are individuals who are acceptable to the group, stand at the same distance from all, they lead the group without taking control. They work hard to provide a safe environment for all the participants so they will take the lead and ownership.

### **Exercise 3**

Let one of the participants lie on a big sheet of paper, draw their silhouette, and ask the other participants to write on the silhouette the skills, attitude and values a facilitator should have.

Here are some of the important skills a facilitator should have:

- **Strong listening skills:** Active listening is the most important skill a facilitator should have. A facilitator is someone who practices “inquiry” rather than “advocacy”. In other words, a facilitator is there to help the participants to listen to each other and share – surface their concerns. Listening not only to the words, but to the feelings and emotions.
- **Personal awareness:** It is important for the facilitator not only to be aware of his/her own biases and perceptions, but also how he/she is perceived. The participants look at the facilitator as a person with a culture, identity, and a religion; all of these become significant for the participants, whatever the facilitator will try to neutralize of his/her background.
- **Authenticity:** The facilitator should be authentic, should walk the talk and be natural about what he/she believes. That does not mean sharing his/her opinion on the subject matter, but rather believing in the process and the potential of the process.
- **Asking good questions:** After listening, asking questions is the art that all facilitators need to master. A facilitator is someone who should lead the group towards its objective, without directing it, and while assuring that the group has full ownership of the process; asking good questions can help in achieving the latter.
- **A holistic approach:** A successful facilitator is someone who is mindful of the needs of the entire group and who is holistic in his/her approach. Facilitation requires giving attention and listening to the words, the feelings, and the different dynamics. A facilitator observes the individual, group, subgroup dynamics and responds accordingly.

However, there are some tensions that a facilitator or a dialogue designer should be aware of. When selecting a facilitator, or when a facilitator designs his/her sessions, decisions must be taken to balance the following factors:

- **Content Knowledge vs. Process Knowledge**

In every dialogue, there is the process (how we get there?) and the content (what are we talking about? Or where do we want to go?). In different contexts and with different purposes, the facilitator might need to have a certain level of understanding and knowledge about the topic at hand. In other circumstances, the facilitator needs to have more skills and experience in the process of the dialogue and how to manage the group. In some cases, it is a blessing that the facilitator does not have much knowledge about the topic, because some would argue, the less he/she knows about the topic, the more impartial and natural he/she will be toward the discussions and the outcomes.

The following table explains what each type of facilitators will focus on:

Process Facilitator	Content Facilitator
The programme agenda and activities	The topic or the subject at hand
The methods and tools being used	What are the issues being discussed?
The ground rules	What type of conclusions and decisions being made?
The group dynamics and relationships	What are the agenda items?
The environment of the dialogue	What are the objectives?
The time and the destination	Focus on what we want to achieve?
Focus on how to get there?	

- **Width versus Depth**

Another tension is how many topics we want to cover (width) versus how deep we want to go into each topic (depth). Do we want to survey all the challenges and issues versus how much time do we want to spend on each issue? We often have only a limited time, and since participants come to dialogue with different needs and interests, the facilitators should be aware of such tensions.

- **Directive and Structured versus Going with the flow**

Another tension is how much the facilitator needs to be directive, or structure the dialogue, versus how much the dialogue should be fluid and he/she is prepared to “go with the flow”? It mainly depends on the objective of the dialogue first, followed by the participants and the context. Other factors include: time, urgency, the size of the group, its complexity, and the expected outcome.

- **No Psychological Expertise versus Strong Psychological Expertise**

How much the facilitator needs to have the skills and the experience in dealing with psychological aspects and traumas? Here again we are guided with the purpose and objectives, participants and context.

- **Team Worker versus Solo Worker**

How much to be independent or a team worker? In some dialogues, especially where there are two adversarial groups, it is important to have two facilitators, each identifying with each of the groups - identifying with one group does not mean becoming advocate for that group. The main idea is to create a safe environment for all the participants.

All the above tensions are governed by purpose and context; and the latter has the upper hand when it comes to process. In the next sections we will explain more about the context element.

### **Summary of the role of the facilitator**

- Develop a safe and inclusive environment that encourages participation
- Set a positive and constructive tone for the dialogue
- Build trust among the group and in the process
- Remain impartial and objective towards the issues and the people (suspend judgment),
- Keep the group focused
- Ask good questions
- Keep track of time
- Develop the process and provide methods and procedures that can help the group achieve the expected outcomes and work better together
- Encourage equal participation by everyone
- Inform and remind the participants about the process and the objectives
- Ensure that ideas, information, and outcomes are documented and summarized
- Help those involved in the dialogue to go through the different dialogue phases
- Implement and encourage the use of ground rules among the participants in order for them to overcome their identity biases
- Keep the group focused and inspired by the purpose of understanding.

The Dialogue Facilitator needs to put aside his/her own biases; serve the purpose, the process and the people involved who trusted him/her in the first place and make

appropriate use of his/her personal skills to achieve the objectives (Key listening and responding skills).

### **Characteristics of good facilitation**

**Guide and represent the process** - As a facilitator you will contribute so that participants feel validated, confident and trustful about the process and outcomes to come.

Remember participants will develop a sense of ownership of the process and outcomes based on how they feel. Identifying and acknowledging their feelings enables them to transcend initial formalities towards personal openness and meaningful dialogue. This includes developing the ground rules or the guidelines for the interaction with the group; making sure that these guidelines are clear and followed.

**Be present** - Be aware of your own feelings, ideas, attitudes and possible judgments. It is important to put aside your own agendas so you can dedicate your attention to your participants involvement and to benefit the purpose of the process. Listening is a key skill here.

**Be aware of the purpose** - Get to know the origin of the conflict, get informed about the background of the group and the context. This will help you lead the group through the dialogue phases so that the difficult and real issues can be disclosed for the sake of the group. Most importantly, you should be aware of why you are conducting this dialogue and why those participants are taking role in it. What are their needs and expectations vis-à-vis the organizer's needs and expectations?

**Imagine the process** - Have a plan, imagine the steps and different phases of the process, be clear about the questions or techniques you might use and make sure you can explain them in simple easy steps for other people to understand. Keep flexible, though having a general plan is helpful, the development of the process and how the group evolves to a dialogue state will tell you when to take the next step or how to adjust the use of techniques, tools or process.

**Be conscious of time** - One way to build trust among the group is good time management. Dialogue processes may at times require more than one session to have an impact on participants. Summarise and recap in order for the group to have the big picture. Inform participants how much time they have for the session and for their own participation and continuously reinforce the fact that the facilitator is paying attention to them.

**Be able to read the group (evaluative)** - As a facilitator you have to be holistic and able to read the group's dynamics. Encourage constructive behaviour and discourage negative ones. However, be careful about killing creativity or suppressing emotions, let the group go through the hard places.

**Use Silence Wisely** - Silence is one of the most powerful tools at the disposal of the facilitators, if used wisely. Sometimes, it is better to not intervene, which can help in building the group's tension and assist it to evolve more naturally. It is also helpful in cooling things down, especially after an emotional exchange. Silence is a great moment for reflection; the key question is how much silence we should give as facilitators, this is merely contextual and cultural.

**Summarise and Draw Conclusions** – Participants come with different agendas, conversations may go in many directions. A good facilitator can keep track of any conversation and bring it back to topic or to the purpose of the Dialogue. Other skills might be useful here and in managing the dialogue in general, include Reframing, Paraphrasing, and Mirroring.

**Ask for Feedback** – Always ask for feedback and keep checking with the group. Feedback about the process, the content, the organization, and feelings are always helpful for your engagement with a group or your learning as a facilitator. A skilled facilitator always takes the holistic approach.

A skilled facilitator is one who is able to view the dialogue not from his/her own perspective but rather from the participants' point of view. In this, they can understand the perception of the other, which is why Empathy is an essential skill for any facilitator.

### **Some skills related to Dialogue Facilitation**

Many skills are related to good Dialogue facilitation, but it narrows down to being empathic: developing the “ability to understand an issue from the perspective of the speaker. If a facilitator is able to express empathy for group members, a sense of connectedness develops which allows each participant to feel valued, validated and safe to interact.”<sup>60</sup> Therefore, participants will engage bridging lines of division for understanding rather than merely seeking to advance individual positions.

## **Facilitation Tips**

- **Use of eye contact** – Is a way to express openness, project your engagement and show that you are paying attention to the one speaking. Also you can use eye contact to encourage others to participate, you can give a signal when time is up and/or are opening up the space for new reactions from the group. Avoid staring to prevent people from feeling scrutinised rather than listened to.
- **Use of body language** – Body language tells a lot about your facilitation style, has an impact on the participants and on the space where you are having the session. Your posture projects openness, confidence, trust and can help the group move from a state of being defensive to being more relaxed. Showing your interest in the person talking, making them feel validated, and empathising with them can also be projected through body language.
- **Use of active listening** – Be aware of mood, words, emotions, body language and reactions of participants to make the best use of your skills as facilitator for the sake of the group.
- **Be culturally (identity) sensitive** – the facilitator needs to be aware that any skill or technique is useful in some cultural contexts and not so much in others. Get informed about the cultural customs that may be at play during the dialogue process.
- **Use inquiry questions** – use open-ended questions that cannot be answered with a simple word or short statements to encourage opinion sharing.

- **Use cognitive statements** – Use descriptive statements to help the process of discussion and sharing. Give examples or paraphrase to clarify and check if people understand.
- **Use discretion** – Be aware of time, what’s happening in the process and how the participants are engaged. Inform them about time, give them the opportunity to decide if you will go over the first agreed time or stop. Give more time when needed to make a point clear. Use closed questions when you need to send the message to move on. Take short breaks if needed.
- **Use reflection of feelings** – Identify any recurring feelings the participants express, and acknowledge the existence of it in order to build trust and bond with participants. This helps the process to become more open as time progresses.

### Facilitation Challenges

Since facilitators work with diverse groups of people from different backgrounds, it is likely that they face different types of challenges. The following is a basic list of the challenges that the facilitators might face with the group:

- **Quiet groups:** whether it is one participant or the whole group, it is the role of the facilitator to encourage participation. However, some individuals are shy, others are suspicious about the whole process. A good facilitator makes sure everyone feels safe to participate. Nevertheless, small silences that often occur after asking a question are not a bad thing. This silence can be an opportunity for reflecting on the question.
- **Groups that talk too much:** Encourage participation, but you don’t want one or a few participants to dictate the dialogue time and content.
- **Groups with conflict, traumatized:** Be aware and acknowledge the context and the background of the participants. Traumatized participants and groups coming from current heated conflicts can create a serious challenge to the process.
- **Very polite, ‘politically correct groups’:** This happens mostly because they are not ready to share or they don’t trust the process yet. They are worried that they will be judged or hurt others. You need to invest in building trust and encouraging the participants to allow their feelings and perceptions to surface.
- **Disengaged groups:** This can happen either because they are not interested or are distracted. Try to identify their interests or the distractions.
- **Groups with power asymmetry:** It is the facilitator’s duty to establish equality in the group. Power dynamics can harm and affect the openness.
- **Groups with cultural and religious dynamics:** Good facilitators are aware of the cultural and religious diversity and backgrounds, including the relations across these groups.
- **Context:** Whether conflictual or peaceful, context plays an essential role in dialogue and the facilitator should be aware and up-to-date with the current situation and issues.

## 6.3 Dialogue Process and Structure

Any dialogue activity has a general underlying flow designed by the facilitator and the organizers. This flow aims at achieving the objectives of the dialogue, however, it is designed

to make the journey smooth and effective. In other words, if dialogue is a journey, the purpose is the destination, the participants are the passengers (participation is about their role in the journey), and the facilitator is the guide who will make sure that everyone will arrive safe.

The process and structure of a dialogue is the answer to the question: how we will get there? Do we go straight to the destination? Or do we need to select a different route that might be longer but safer? In dialogue, we want everyone to arrive, therefore, we need to select the route that prepares everyone to arrive. There are many ways and routes that can be taken. Sometimes we need to divert from the topic so we can invest more in the relationship. Sometimes we need to provoke or create frustration. In all the different techniques there is one goal: arriving safely to the destination.

### Methodology

Now that we have a destination, we know our passengers, their needs and what we need from them. With our guide on board, we know what route we have to take. It is now time to select the vehicle and any other tools needed in the journey. The facilitator, governed by the context, should set a methodology that suites the participants, and leads to the purpose. In other words, there are three elements that complement a successful dialogue and make a learning opportunity effective. The first two inform the facilitator in selecting a successful methodology:

- The purpose or the goal to be achieved (the learning objectives)
- The target group (the participants)
- The methodology and the tools used (the medium used)

A facilitator should evaluate each tool by asking these two questions: does this tool lead to the purpose? And does it suit the target group? In selecting any tool or method, the facilitator should ask him/herself, will there be any cultural or religious reservations by the participants? Does it serve the objective or it might distract the participants from the theme? Is it necessary and why? Do we have the resources? And finally, do we have the adequate time for processing and debrief?

In general, the following are **important tips** for the facilitator when it comes to tools and methodologies:<sup>61</sup>

- Build your plan around the topics or concepts; do not build your plan around the activities. In other words, it is true that there are some tools that are nice and enjoyable, but our main guidance is the purpose and the target group. All tools and methodologies are means to achieve the goal, not vice versa.
- The key for intergroup dialogue is dialogue; do not fill the time with activities that you cannot process.
- Processing and debriefing are as important as the activity itself, if not even more important.
- Think about how the activity will affect the different groups: psychologically, culturally, religiously, and so on,
- Whenever appropriate, model by participating in activities, especially when they are about story-sharing or personal narratives.
- Simulations can be effective, engaging and fun, but they should be balanced with activities drawn from actual lived experiences of the participants,
- Films can provide excellent illustrations of concepts, leading to rich dialogue; however, avoid long films that take up too much dialogue time.



**WARNING:** Do not be a tool dependent facilitator. There are some tools that are enjoyable and we like them, but our main guide is the purpose and the target group. All tools and methodologies are a means to achieve the goal, not vice versa.

### Physical Space

The physical space is as important as any of the other elements of the design. Because dialogue is about a safe environment, the physical space becomes quite significant. Does it identify with one group over the other? Where is it located? In selecting the physical space, we have to ask ourselves the following questions:<sup>62</sup>

- Does the space allow for true interaction and participation?
- Is the space a good size for the number of participants?
- Will they feel comfortable?
- Will the space make us feel relaxed? Yet awake and alert?
- Should the room be setup with tables and chairs? Should it be in Circle Format? Theatre Format? Box?
- Will it be better to meet where there is access to nature? Should it be in Public or Private?
- What Logistics should we be thinking of? What food to serve?
- Are there any distractions for participants?
- What might the place signify?

All the above, leads us to the next and most important element, which is **Context**.

### Creating a Safe Space

A safe space can describe a physical space where people feel there is no risk, they are sheltered and at ease. Yes, our house would be a safe space, but this expression also describes a state of mind and mood where people feel comfortable, trusting and willing to open themselves up.

When defining our own identities throughout life, people adopt daily routines, cultural traditions, personal paradigms or perceptions about people, situations, contexts and the world in general. The situations we are familiar with become part of our COMFORT ZONE.

When interacting with new people, ideas or situations, this, becomes in itself, a learning experience. However, when ideas, people or situations are different to what we are used to, we might start feeling outside of our element and not at ease. This means people are leaving the comfort zone and getting into a STRETCHING ZONE, where preconceived ideas are shaped and widened. Mood can be affected by moving into this zone, but people are still willing to participate.

It can happen that a particular situation is far too different and makes people feel extremely uncomfortable, or the situation is opposite to our principles and values. This brings people into the PANIC ZONE, where trust is gone, willingness to participate stops and attitudes becomes defensive or offensive.

In the next sections, we elaborate more on the concept of a Safe Space or a Safe Environment, why it is important and how it can be achieved.

## Context

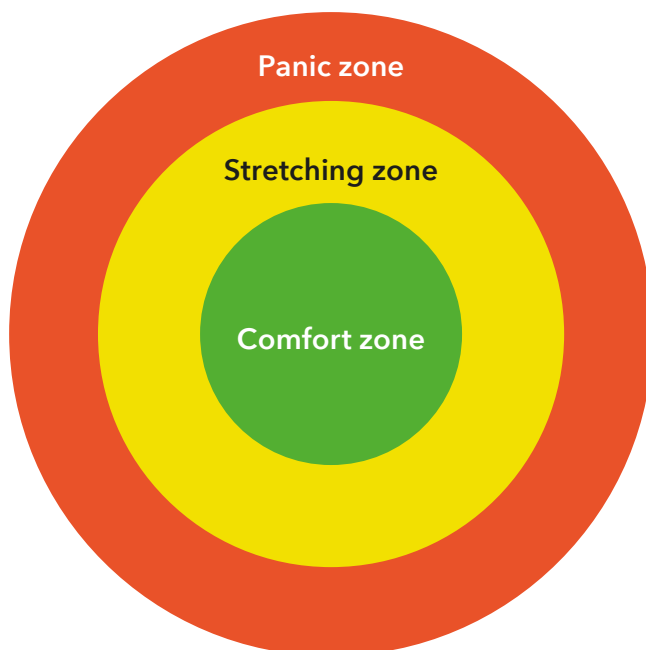
Context is what should inform us as dialogue designers or facilitators at all times. Everything we do should be grounded within the context. We should ask ourselves the following questions about context early in the design stage:

- How is the general atmosphere?
- Is it a Low or High Complexity situation?
- Is it in a Conflict or Peaceful Situation?
- What about the participants? How are they as individuals or as a group?
- Are they homogenous, from two opposing groups, or diverse?
- Are they peers or is there a hierarchy?
- Is the group small or large? What about power dynamics?
- Religious, Cultural, Ethnic, Gender diversity?

To summarise the design section, when planning dialogue, one should take all the above aspects into consideration: the purpose; the participants and their roles; who are the facilitators; and what is the underlining process and methodology; how is the physical space; and all is informed or governed by the context that is surrounding the dialogue and the participants.

## 6.4 Stepping out of the comfort zone

For real dialogue to happen, the participants have to step out of their comfort zone and trust that the group will hold them and respect their thoughts and perceptions.<sup>63</sup> As in the Learning Zone Model that was developed by Tom Senninger, individuals are advised to step out of their comfort zone, to what is called the “stretch” or the learning zone, without stepping too far into what is a totally strange area for them, or what is called the “panic zone”.<sup>64</sup>



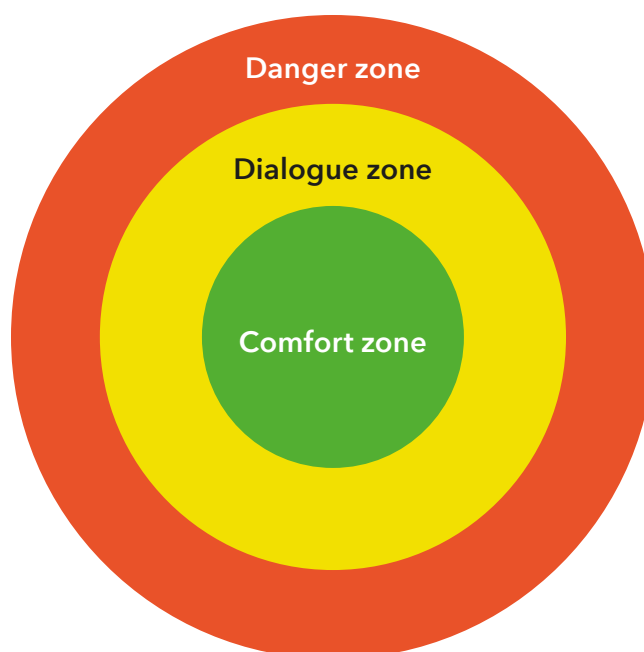
The **comfort zone**, is described as the area where the individual is not only feeling safe, but everything looks familiar - there is no risk. At the other end, the **panic zone** is where

the person steps into an unfamiliar place, with no familiarity at all, no one to trust, and the person feels unsafe to even move a centimetre. It is believed that there is no learning in the comfort zone, as there is nothing new. The same goes for the panic zone, since the person is threatened by the situation – they become defensive, offensive, or might even shut down. However, in the **stretching or learning zone**, the individual feels challenged, but has trust in the system or the company that makes him/her take further steps in this new area. In this zone people take risks but not

Excessive ones. As Neale Donald Walsh said, “Life begins at the end of your comfort zone”.

### Zone Model and Dialogue

The zone model fits the dialogue process perfectly. If during the dialogue, participants stay in their comfort zone, there will hardly be any dialogue. Since interaction in this zone is shallow, people are too polite or dishonest to express their feelings or address the hard issues – As one could say “playing it safe”; therefore, we call it the “**safety**” or “**comfort zone**”. On the other hand, if the participants are pushed too quickly to address the hard issues, or they come with strong grievances and immediately start a confrontation, they will be pushed to their panic zone, the “**danger zone**”. In this zone there is no dialogue; interaction will either turn into debate or offensive and defensive arguments – in some cases it might turn violent. In short, there is no dialogue in the “comfort zone”, nor is there in the “danger zone”.



Dialogue happens in the stretching or learning zone – which we will call “**the dialogue zone**”. One might therefore say ‘Dialogue begins at the end of the comfort zone.’

## Exercise 6: Dialogue Zone

### Defining the participants' comfort, stretch and danger zones

It is important to recognize and help the participants in identifying their COMFORT, DIALOGUE (Stretch) and DANGER zones. Understanding the different participants' zones will help the facilitators and the group to prioritize themes and topics to be addressed. It is very important to know that each participant has his/her own zones and boundaries regarding different topics. These boundaries are defined by the individual's background, culture and personal experience – what can be a stretch for one participant might be a Danger Zone for another.

### Question: what elements contribute to defining the individual's safety, stretch and danger zones?

To make the group and the participants aware of the different zones, divide the room (it can be an outdoor space) into three overlapping circles and ask the participants to stand in the zone they identify with in regard to a set of different topics that you will read out loud.

As a facilitator, prepare a list of topics or questions and ask the participants to move freely across the zones in regard to these topics – start with some light topics and gradually move onto harder ones.

For example: ask the participants how comfortable they will be in trying new food? You will notice that the majority will be in their "comfort" or "stretch" zones. Try something like, talking about religion, gender relationships, politics, racial relationships...etc. You will notice that more participants will move to the stretch zone and/or the danger zone. At this point, ask those in the danger zone: why is this topic dangerous for you or brings about panic? What can we do in order to bring you to the stretch zone? Same when you notice that everyone is in the safety or comfort zone. Ask them: what can we change in this topic or what can we add to this topic that will make you more challenged?

This exercise will not only help you in defining the zones, but it will also function as a kick-off for a dialogue on a certain topic.

### Question: how can we help the participants go beyond their comfort zones?

The answer will bring us back to the concept we introduced earlier, the "safe environment". It is important to understand that the "safety zone" or "comfort zone" is not the same as the "safe environment" or the "safe space" that we described earlier. The "safe space" or the "safe environment" is actually what helps (encourages) the participants to step out of their comfort zones to the dialogue zone. The safer the environment, the more the participants will feel encouraged to address the harder issues, and their stretch zones will become larger. Yes, these zones are expandable, what can be a stretch zone now, will turn into a comfort zone once addressed without judgement or challenges. Same for the danger

zone, what might be a danger zone topic at the beginning of the dialogue, might become a stretch once trust is built and the environment feels safer.

To help the participants step out of their comfort zone:

- Invest in building trust among them, building the community.
- Humour and fun are very effective in helping people to step out of their comfort zone.
- Encourage people to take risks, however make sure that the group is ready to hold them.
- Use provocative questions/pictures/movies/simulations/role play, etc. all will push the participants out of their safety zones. It is important to do this gently and sensitively.

## Exercise 7: How to build a safe environment?

Brainstorm with the participants on how to build a safe space that is inclusive for all. In building the safe environment, it is important consider all of these elements:

- Physical: is it physically secure and safe; examples?
- Emotional: is it of any emotional significance to the participants; examples?
- Spiritual: does it accommodate the spiritual dimension for the participants; examples?
- Cultural: does it suit the participants culturally, in regard to gender, generational and other cultural dimensions; examples?

### Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is a methodology and process that focuses on identifying the best of what is already there in a system, and finding ways to grow and support that, thus engaging 'possibility thinking' instead of 'deficit thinking'. The Appreciative Inquiry work can be used in shorter- or longer-term interventions. It includes specific methods for stakeholder interviewing, conference designs and community organizing. It is particularly powerful in situations where people are focusing too much on deficiencies and need to wake up to their strengths and potential (<http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu>).

## Planned or Unplanned Dialogue

Dialogue can occur as a planned experience or as a result of an individual intentionally applying the principles of dialogue in any given circumstance seeking better understanding.

### Dialogue as a planned activity

- A dialogue process is requested
- A purpose is defined and communicated
- A place and time is defined for each session
- A facilitator is assigned to run the dialogue session.
- Specific people are notified about the dialogue activity and invited to participate
- All participants are committed to the process
- The people involved are aware about the purpose,
- Specific methodology is defined in advance.
- Follow up is planned

### Applying dialogue principles in any situation

- Dialogue principles are applied
- Intention of dialogue is applied and communicated. Defining purpose might occur.
- Place and time is defined due to the activity needs, rather than dialogue.
- One of those present assumes the facilitator role.
- Dialogue process is carried out with the ones present.
- Not all participants will be committed to the process.
- People involved are not aware about the purpose, but could reach consensus.
- Methodology is applied during the session.
- Follow up might be defined as a next step.

Needless to say the results of a Planned Dialogue Session might vary from an Unplanned Dialogue opportunity, especially when sensitive topics are discussed. If the topic is very sensitive and the dialogue opportunity arises in any given situation, a follow up should be planned whenever the participants are willing to do so in order to promote understanding. As we are in the process of incorporating the skills and principles into our practice, for a proper Dialogue to occur we need to prepare the optimal conditions.

## Tips for a Successful Dialogue Session

Any dialogue can last one or more sessions. In general, the facilitator must come prepared for any Dialogue session being mindful of the following points:

### BEFORE THE SESSION

- Learn and prepare yourself for the facilitation session
- Days ahead of the session, visit and get familiar with the space and check for: temperature, furniture, lightning, tools to use (board, markers, etc.)
- Check the surroundings of the venue. Is it quiet and allocated for your use only? Is there a time to end the session?
- Prepare the space for the session with chairs in a circle
- Get a list of participants
- Try to learn about the participants backgrounds and relationships (group dynamics)
- Prepare nametags with relevant information. (Name, country, organization they represent, etc.).

### AT THE BEGINNING OF THE SESSION

- Welcome the participants, introduce yourself and to each other
- Get their expectations. Ask what they are most excited about for this process, what makes them anxious. They should answer briefly (1 to 1-1/2 minutes)

- Share the purpose
- Give space for questions and answers
- Create a Safe Space and set or elicit ground rules together with the participants
- Share the Principles of Dialogue
- Inform participants how much time they have for each intervention (1 to 1-1/2 minutes)
- Describe the process to the group.

#### DURING THE SESSION

- Prepare and share clear starting questions
- Give time for people to reflect in silence about what they would like to share with the group
- Make sure all participants voice their perspectives
- Use open/closed questions with discretion
- Keep people connected with the purpose
- Implement and manage the dialogue's basic rules throughout the session
- Be aware of participant's behaviour, reactions and support them to take an active part in the process
- Close the session with a recap and tell participants what will happen next
- Check if expectations have been met
- Close the session inviting participants to express their feelings about the experience.

#### FOLLOWING THE SESSION

- Follow up what has been agreed
- Keep the participants informed about future sessions and outcomes
- Reflect and get prepared for next session.

### Suggested Reading

- Bojer et al., *Mapping Dialogue: Essential Tools for Social Change*, (2008)

***"Peace comes from being able to contribute the best that we have, and all that we are, toward creating a world that supports everyone. But it is also securing the space for others to contribute the best that they have and all that they are."***

*Hafsat Abiola, 2000*

# Conclusion

## Appendices

### Annexes





## CONCLUSION

This *KIFP Interreligious Dialogue Resource Guide* contains basic and general introductory guidelines. In fact, no guide can comprehensively cover all aspects of IRD. Effective practitioners of dialogue are able to utilize these guidelines and adjust them according to the context and group needs.

For the purpose of KAICIID Fellows, we hope that the guide summarizes essential theoretical and practical knowledge about Interreligious Dialogue and social cohesion. Additionally, the guide offers basic introduction to issues of Identity and perceptions that are crucial to understand when facilitating or designing Interreligious Dialogue.

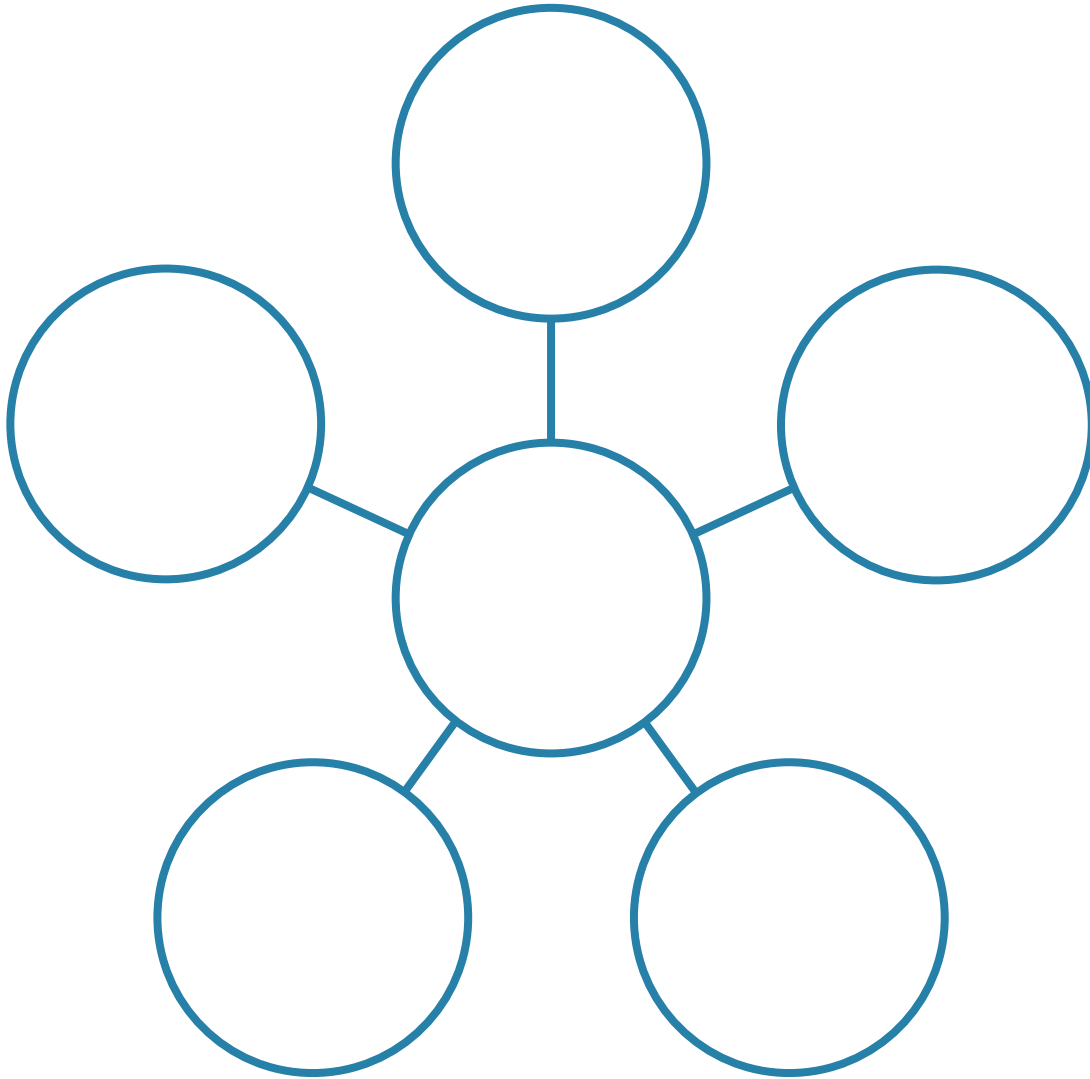
The theoretical and practical information provided here aims to complement the unique expertise and experience that each Fellow has. We hope that by applying these principles and guidelines in their respective communities and societies, Fellows are able to institutionalize the practice of IRD in their communities.

KAICIID is committed to the continuing learning and development of Fellows in their crucial work with new learning tools and products in the future. As a first edition, it is likely this product will benefit from future revisions and updates in future editions. Fellows are encouraged to continue their learning in the field of IRD and to provide feedback on this guide and of other potential resources required to support their work in advancing a culture of dialogue throughout the world.

## APPENDIX 1

### Exercise 1 - Circles of My Multicultural Self

Handout



"I am (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_ but I am NOT (a/an) \_\_\_\_\_."

**Additional Questions**

- How did it feel to do this activity?
- What was easy? What was challenging?
- What groups/ categories did people pick?
- What similarities and differences emerged?
- Did you identify any environments where one identity was more salient than another?
- What kinds of factors affect the relative salience of a particular identity?
- Where do you think some of your students you work with would pick? Why?
- How do students show that they might be struggling with issues presented by this exercise?
- What invisible identities (inside/outside identities) became visible as a result of this exercise? Any thoughts about this?
- How/why are these categories helpful or not helpful in describing you or others?
- Which of these identities are socially constructed? Personally constructed? Other constructions?
- If you picked a blank category, what identity were you thinking of and why?

## APPENDIX 2

### Dialogic tools and approaches

#### Dialogue Circles

There are many variations on Circle dialogue practices, but generally they are based on a recognition that sitting in a dialogue circle helps to level power structures, distribute leadership and responsibility, and support listening, questioning and sharing. Sometimes a talking piece is used – an object passed around the circle or back and forth between participants to help with the flow of the dialogue and organize it, which can be very helpful specially to invite more silent voices to speak. The circle is very powerful in creating the safe space as it puts everyone on the same level without hierarchy or sides.<sup>65</sup>

#### World Café

The World Café is a methodology that allows large groups of people to have in-depth dialogues about certain questions and network the emerging ideas thereof. There are three main steps when implement the World Café method, which are as follows: (1) Creating a special environment by which the room is set up like a café with small tables, ideally each offering space for four participants; (2) The host welcomes the participants and gives a brief overview of the introduction to the World Café process; (3) After a first round of dialogue on a certain topic, participants are asked to move to new tables and make linkages between the conversations, while one table host stays behind at each table to represent the previous conversation.<sup>66</sup> Each round includes a specific question, which may or may not be used for the next round, depending on whether participants would like to build more on that topic or not. At the end, participants are invited to share their thoughts and opinions they had discussed in the smaller groups with the larger group, the results of can then be reflected in various ways, usually through graphic recording. The World Café's success depends on the facilitators providing a welcoming and safe and hospitable environment, as well as his/her facilitation skills of asking the correct questions through a spirit of inquiry and actively listening to participants' answers. Overall, World Café can be seen as a strong dialogue tool especially helpful to engage large groups of people, open up possibilities, equalize power structures, and identify emerging patterns among ideas outspoken.<sup>67</sup>

#### Fishbowl Technique

Fishbowl is a very useful and creative facilitation method that allows groups to engage in a deeper dialogue. It is useful when you want to make sure that everyone is participating, going deeper into a topic, dividing a larger group, or airing out a heated conversation. In a Fishbowl, there are two circles; an inner active circle (they can participate in the dialogue) and an outer circle for listeners (they just listen, cannot talk unless they are allowed to switch seats with a member in the inner circle). Fishbowl can be used in several variations. The classical one, is where the facilitator closes the dialogue to the inner circle or leaves few chairs to be switched with the members of the outer group. Other variations can include switching between the entire groups (the outer group switch seats with the inner group).<sup>68</sup>

This variation is very effective with polarized groups or when having inter-group dialogues. For example, in an inter-generational dialogue, having an inner circle for the young Scouts while the elders are seated in the outer circle listening (or vice versa). In

this variation, the groups take turn, however, it is better to conclude with a mixed group.

### **Open Space**

Open Space is a simple and easy to apply process that allows a group to create its own agenda and enable them to self-organize around topics they are passionate about and willing to take responsibility for. It helps a group move forward quickly when passion and engagement are present. In Open Space meetings, participants are able to manage their own agenda while working around one topic that is of strategic importance. While it doesn't necessarily guarantee dialogue, it usually does lead to highly creative conversations because of the emphasis of people taking responsibility for their own learning and ideas.<sup>69</sup>

### **Dynamic Facilitation**

Dynamic Facilitation is a facilitation technique whereby the facilitator follows the natural dynamic flow of the conversation, rather than trying to direct it. It is aimed at facilitating a co-creative process, also known as "choice-creating" by allowing each participant's contribution to the group to be valued and respected, thereby evoking a more creative perspective. A key feature of the approach is the use of four flipcharts for problems, solutions, concerns and data that are gathered. The facilitator uses these four areas to guide the group in creating a common picture of their situation and receive participants' proposals for change. This is a highly creative process that requires an active facilitator and a pre-existing group energy.<sup>70</sup>

### **Deep Democracy**

Deep Democracy is rooted in process-orientated psychology, and is based on the idea that a system is unhealthy if roles are 'stuck', and if minority voices are not being expressed. Unlike "classical" democracy, which focuses on the majority rule, deep democracy tries to encompass all voices, positions, and opinions of the whole group, keeping in mind that if conflicts are being suppressed under the surface, it is difficult for the system to grow. The role of the facilitator in this case is to help in making roles in the system more fluid and transparent, in order to help the system become more aware of itself and its wisdom. Because this role is very challenging, it is generally important to have a trained Deep Democracy facilitator. Deep Democracy includes methods for decision-making, awareness-raising and conflict resolution. It can help release energy in situations where difficult things are being unspoken and blocking the possibility of a system moving forward.<sup>71</sup>

### **Dialogue Interviewing**

Dialogue interview is used to start a generative dialogue that allows the interviewee to engage in a reflective conversation that is not based on a set of fixed questions but rather takes the form of a dialogue in which the interviewer's questions follow the energy and content of the interviewee's story.

The dialogue interview is not purely about data collection, but also about building a relationship between the interviewer (the intervener) and the interviewee, and about generating motivation and insight for a collective project. It is particularly Useful to prepare for projects, workshops, and capacity building programs, especially at the beginning of an intervention as a way of designing in a context capacity development in practice.<sup>72</sup>

### **Future Search**

Future Search is a structured process designed task-focused meeting designed to bring stakeholders to look at the past and present of a given theme, and design the future based on it. Regardless of the theme, Future Search works on gathering larger groups of individuals from different backgrounds and cultures which meet for a period of several days in order to discuss matters that touch upon similar expertise. The process moves from story-telling about the past through mapping current trends, stakeholder groups owning their actions, developing ideal future scenarios, identifying common ground and planning actions. The historic perspective, the emphasis on stories, and the use of visuals in Future Search are particularly helpful in working with local communities that have a common history and need to move towards a common future.<sup>73</sup>

Several handbooks are available which give much more detailed suggestions on the strengths and limitations of each of the tools mentioned here as well as many others

## ANNEX

### Site visits as a Pedagogical Experience

*“This was a good pedagogical experience. It was IRD in action and real life experience”*

*KIFP 2015 Fellow*

*“It gave a clear picture of how other people connect with their inner beliefs”*

*KIFP 2016 Fellow*

#### Introduction

Religious site visits can take learning to the next level. In one day, a well-structured and well-planned tour can introduce learners to more religious and cultural people, perspectives and sacred sites than they have encountered in their entire life. Such an experience is unique field learning opportunity, however leaving the confines of the classroom site visits can also be unpredictable. This section aims to give the reader some helpful insights and tips based on experience on how manage site-visits well and mitigate risks so that learners can reap important benefits.<sup>74</sup>

#### Site Visits - Benefits

- Stimulating, Experiential, Learner-centred, Practical and Hands-on
- Moves beyond textbook and classroom learning introducing aspects of lived religion, ceremony, culture, and worship
- Provides the opportunity for communities to offer hospitality and to cultivate relationships within a community
- Creates a strong and lasting impression (could be positive or negative) that can both destabilize and help correct false stereotypes and/or assumptions
- Easy to adapt and replicate - In many cases can be repeated over time and adapted for other learning groups: teachers, students, social workers, religious leaders in training, etc.
- Many people appreciate learning in this way.

Leaving the confines of the classroom brings unpredictability and an element of risk to site-visits. Unexpected surprises are bound to happen in the field and it is important to be aware of the some risks of site visit tours.

#### Site Visits - Risks

- Much time, work, energy and resources go into planning, organising logistics and implementing site visit tours
- A negative first impression or bad experience can have a lasting impact, possibly reinforcing negative or creating new stereotypes or biases toward a community
- Can be unpredictable - traffic delays, bad weather, and unforeseen complications, including negative reactions of visitors and hosts
- May be too challenging for some learners (i.e. Rapid move from Comfort Zone to Panic Zone)
- Learning group is not prepared: some people may move from Comfort Zone to Panic Zone very quickly.



## IN PRACTICE

**Important Tip: In case something has gone wrong during a site visit tour, during the debriefing session, to acknowledge that something has not gone according to plan and to allow the group to discuss what happened.**

If you believe an experience has created a false or exaggerated negative impression of a community, it is important to point this out and to allow learners the space share their thoughts and feelings on what happened. Dialogue facilitation skills are essential for such a debriefing session. In many cases the group may collectively be able to reach a shared perspective on the matter and perhaps the experience may contribute to the learning process. In other cases this may not be possible. However, if negative experiences of learners are neglected or ignored, trust is likely to be lost and the authority of the leader diminished, possibly having done more harm than good to the learner's development.

The learning experience resulting site visit is always partial and incomplete. A visit to a religious house of worship can never represent the depth and breadth of diversity within a particular faith tradition. A site-visit provides a helpful but limited glimpse of one expression of a living religion in a particular context. A visit to one Church, cannot tell the whole story of Christianity throughout the world just as a visit to one Mosque cannot give a complete picture of Islam as it is lived and practiced in different cultures, different settings, and with different expressions of beliefs. This can be said for all religious traditions throughout the world.

### **Qualified Encounter**<sup>75</sup>

In order to create a learning experience appropriate to meet the needs of the learning group, it is important to plan and structure the site-visits specifically according to their needs. Qualified Encounter means that the group leader will attempt to facilitate an encounter that "qualifies" by conferring the desired benefits for learners in an authentic way. It should also be understood that for learners to benefit from the experience is that it is clear that it is only a partial experience, a glimpse, of the broader religious diversity represented within the tradition, the society and in the larger world. The learning experience therefore qualifies as authentic, but is still limited, and cannot therefore be deemed comprehensive. Learners should leave the site visit encounter capable of incorporating their learning experience into a larger body of knowledge;

For a site-visit tour to become a qualified encounter it must qualify in the following ways:

- The experience should be guided by a **qualified** leader or authority, lay or ordained, adherent, preferably a member of the community who holds the respect, authority and knowledge of the community and who can accurately and respectfully communicate the perspectives of the community to the learning group;
- While expressions of religious diversity encountered are partial they are authentic in their own right and therefore qualify if they accurately reflect important aspects of the larger expression of the religion within the society. Integrating the experience into a broader-learning context is very important here;
- The Encounter qualifies, if it directly supports or reinforces the intended learning goals of the group.

### Preparation of site-visit

- Relationship Building – It is important to take time to reach out and build trust with the communities you intend to visit. The more advance time you have for this the better
- Qualified Guide – The group leader should make sure each site-visit is led by a guide who has both knowledge of the community as well as experience of transferring knowledge to a diversity of learners
- Prepare the Community for the Visit – The site representative should prepare the community for the visit. A community not ready to receive visitors may create an awkward or inhospitable environment. Even the leader of the community should be requested to discuss the visit with others from the community.

### Creating a Learning Agenda

- Focus – What are we here to learn? The site visit should be structured accordingly. Site visits to learn about religion and peacebuilding may involve different sites than a group studying religion and migration in a city, or a group that is learning how chant and song are used in religion
- Learning Goals – Should be specific and focused on meeting the needs of the learner
- Frame for Observation and Data-Collection – Depending on focus of the group, learners may require a framework processing all of the incoming information they are receiving. To do this it may be helpful to provide a form with specific questions for learners to answer. The form will help to frame the observations of the learning group according to the learning goals for the group.

### Important questions for group leaders to consider:

- Do the members of your learning group have the maturity and self-confidence to participate constructively? (How will you assess this?)
- How much time is available and how much diversity can/should you encounter in the learning period?
- Will visits to minority and indigenous sites be included? (If so, why or why not?)
- How will the perspective(s) of women from these communities be included?
- What tensions, issues, stereotypes should be addressed through the encounter?
- Will observing worship or attending a ritual or service be part of the tour? If so, it should be discussed with the learning group and the host communities.

Try to prepare the group as much as possible for they should expect during the visit and the expected etiquette.

### Preparation of the Group

It is important to prepare your group for the visit beforehand to let learners know that they are stepping into a space that is sacred to others. Respect for the customs, norms and guidelines for visitors should be expected for visitors. Please make sure to request these in advance.

### Etiquette: Behaviour During Site Visit<sup>76</sup>

Make sure group members are prepared to agree to:

- Remove shoes (when asked)
- Wear certain clothes. Clothing as a general rule should be modest with legs and shoulders covered for all participants. In some cases women and men
- Shut off mobile phones and other electronic devices.

- Be careful with feet, pointing feet toward others or deities.
- Speak quietly
- Not take pictures without permission (especially of sacred art)
- Follow guidelines regarding interaction between men and women (i.e. shaking hands, entering into certain spaces together.)

**Debrief following the site visit:**

- To gather reactions and feedback of the group and to answer questions
- To assess learning of the group
- To allow students to reflect and share their experiences

Conclude the debriefing session by circulating a questionnaire or survey to capture feedback

**Other Ideas for Self-Assessment**

**Written Reflections/Reports**

A free-write written reflection is also great way to allow students to document their experiences, feelings, observations, and to possibly raise new questions that may have emerged during the visits.

**Concept Maps**

Have group members create concept maps linking their visit experience to broader concepts, themes, and theories they have learned. This is great way to show that learners are integrating their prior learning with their field experience.

## End Notes

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