

Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism Through Community Resilience

Training Module 5: Bridging Partnerships with Faith-Based Actors and Institutions in Preventing and/or Countering Violent Extremism and Supporting Community Resilience

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Module 5 of the Preventing and Addressing Violent Extremism (PAVE) project on bridging partnerships with faith-based actors and institutions in preventing and/or countering violent extremism and supporting community resilience in your context. In this module, we are examining the PAVE research findings on interactions between state and religious institutions in the Western Balkans and MENA regions and why it is critical to support and

partner with faith-based actors and institutions to prevent and counter violent extremism. This module will also examine technical tools that faith actors and their community partners can utilize to address violent extremism and bolster community resilience, including the role of nonviolent communication and intra and interfaith dialogue.

Amount of Time Anticipated for Training: 6.5 hours

SESSIONS

Session 1: The Important Role of Faith Actors and Faith-based Institutions in P/CVE Work

Session 2: Building Community Resilience Through Depolarization

Session 3: Utilizing Nonviolent Communication Skills to P/CVE

Session 4: Using Intra and Interfaith Dialogue to P/CVE



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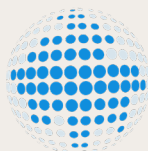
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Facilitator Guidance and Training Overview



How to use this document:

This training booklet serves as a tool that provides an experienced facilitator with a menu of options on how to bridge partnerships with faith actors and institutions in preventing or countering violent extremism and supporting community resilience. Each group facilitator can use a format that corresponds to their respective contexts and needs regarding conversations tailored to the unique country or regional-based findings of the project. It is the responsibility of the group facilitator to determine ahead of time how exactly the training will be designed and delivered, including adapting for various inclusive stakeholder groups and audiences. Conducting a baseline study on the needs of particular groups and/or local communities on the various focuses of this training is recommended before conducting this training to ensure delivery success. Learning objectives are laid out at the beginning of each section. Finally, ensure as facilitator that you use a ‘do no harm’ (https://www.alnap.org/system/files/content/resource/files/main/donoharm_pe07_synthesis.pdf) approach to not cause further damage and suffering to those you are serving. Think carefully about how you approach and talk about sensitive topics in order to protect yourself as a local facilitator.

Preparing for the training and setting up the room:

In preparing for the training, ensure to research and come up with your own national, regional or local resources to complement the various section topics. You are encouraged to create your own powerpoint or other supplemental materials to help in delivering the training. Develop and implement a budget for costs of your training to ensure you have the necessary resources for implementation, including for example, costs for food or beverages, meeting and activity supplies, or local travel stipends for inclusive participation.

In setting up the room, the best meeting design format is to set up a circle of chairs to ensure participatory behavior by the group. If you are using flip charts for breakout activities for example, ensure that these are behind the circle to ensure that everyone can see and speak to one another. You may want to have refreshments available.

Starting the training:

Lay the ground rules for the training and offer a space to capture questions that you can circle back to during the training. Request participants to follow the Chatham House Rule (<https://www.chathamhouse.org/about-us/chatham-house-rule>), to facilitate trust-building and ensure a safe space for sharing among participants. Let participants know the goal and objectives of the training and that the training space is not affiliated with any religious or political agenda.

SESSION 1: The Important Role of Faith Actors and Faith-based Institutions in P/CVE Work

Objective

In this first session, our objective will be to explore and understand the important role of faith actors and institutions in preventing and countering violent extremism.

Expected Results

The expected results of this first session will be that participants have an introductory understanding of the role of faith leaders in preventing and countering violent extremism and why it is critical to partner together to address violent extremism. Participants will have an opportunity to start opening up and reflecting on impacts that they have seen within their own contexts by faith actors and institutions.

Amount of Time Anticipated for Session 1: 1.5 hours

Agenda

PG. 5 – What is the Role of Faith Actors in P/CVE and Supporting Community Resilience?

PG. 9 – Why Should Faith Leaders Participate Within These Efforts?

PG. 10– How Have and Should Faith Actors Participate Within These Efforts?

PG. 12 – What Were the PAVE Findings Related to the Role of Faith Actors and Institutions Within P/CVE?

What is the Role of Faith Actors in P/CVE and Supporting Community Resilience?



Faith Members of the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. Photo Source: Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. "Strategy for the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers 2020-2025." <https://www.peacemakersnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Five-Year-Strategy-of-the-Network-for-Religious-and-Traditional-Peacemakers.pdf>.

Faith actors and faith-based institutions play a critical role within P/CVE efforts, as they possess a moral authority for the communities in which they serve and can also be a connecting factor with extremist groups in being able to help enhance conflict resolution. The past few decades have seen increasing recognition of the significant role religious actors play in peace and in conflict. **In a world where over 80 percent of the population are associated with religious communities,** the religious peacebuilding field has evolved to consider ways in which people of faith can, should, and do have an impact on conflict, as both preventers and instigators. Violent extremism affects the whole of society, including religious communities and these religious communities are often targeted by extremist groups. While violent extremists frequently instrumentalize religion to perpetuate their agenda or objectives, including other actors looking to benefit from these types of rhetoric, the same approach can also be adopted to counter their negative misrepresentation of religion to radicalize

individuals and groups into embracing these radical and extremist views.

But what makes an actor 'religious?'

- Institutional legitimacy;
- Their actions;
- Their values and worldview; and
- Recognition by their community.



Importantly, this training module uses the terms ‘faith or religious actors’ because religious leaders are often assumed to be older men with formal religious titles, which then excludes women and youth of faith. All of these groups and individuals, whether they hold official titles or not, can be highly engaged and involved in their religious communities.

With there being various forms of extremism, religious extremism can present a distinct worldview or framework in which helps people to make sense of reality or that structures their political and social life, as well as shape an individual or groups’ collective identity, in that it provides a narrative that structures roles within a group. Vulnerability factors and drivers towards violent extremism and groups propagating for extremist groups or ideologies utilize local grievances and divisions within and between local communities and societies to promote violence, hateful narratives and exclusive identities. Most PAVE focus countries are dealing with a post-conflict legacy or vast societal crisis, political instability and, therefore, are addressing division lines between social groups organizing around religious identities. Violent extremists have relied on religious justifications for violence, based on selected texts and interpretations of their respective religions, and can be found in all faith traditions.

However, it is critical to point out that there is little evidence that religion or ideology is a main motivator for violent extremism. Those who are recruited into militant groups or radicalized to extremist violence are typically not motivated by religion, but rather view religion as way to address their grievances and deliver the promise of adventure, belonging or becoming a hero. This is not to suggest that religion and ideology are not a factor, particularly after an individual has become radicalized or “indoctrinated.” Rather, it is recognizing that it is typically a small part of the violent extremism and thus CVE story.

Another way of thinking about the role of religion and religious actors in violent extremism, and one that helps get beyond exclusively quantitative debates about “how much” religion contributes to one or another instance, is to focus on the specific role or function religion can play in particular cases:

- **As a source of collective identity and solidarity,** religion can aid in mobilization. This can be a particularly effective tool when violent extremist groups are trying to recruit alienated or disaffected young people in settings where they have been blocked from successfully embracing other forms of identity (such as citizenship, ethno-national affiliations, or professional status). For example, extremist recruiters in Europe will often focus on young second- and third-generation Muslims to exploit their sense of being trapped between disjunct national identities (such as British and Pakistani) by offering a new, primarily religious, framework for belonging and collective action.
- **As a narrative that helps organize and give meaning** to disparate sources of disaffection and grievance, religion may help violent extremist movements to frame world events and political developments in ways that resonate with an individual’s personal life experience. Shiv Sena, a far-right Indian political party ideologically based in the Hindutva, or Hindu nationalist, movement is one example in which a religious framework has been employed to rally around and sometimes literally fight for political causes, including, in this case, a “purer” India for Hindus.

- As a **justification or “moral warrant,”** religion can legitimize extremist acts, including violence. In some cases, nonreligious factors may have brought an individual or group of individuals to a point where they are willing to contemplate the use of violence, but need an additional impetus to convince them to engage in behavior they might otherwise regard as unlawful or unethical. For example, an individual may have suffered mistreatment or violence at the hands of the state but refrained from seeking revenge until provided with a theological basis for engaging in behavior that they perceive as transcending prevailing law.
- As a way to **imbue a higher or eternal purpose,** religion can intensify and raise the stakes of a conflict. To emphasize the importance of action, violent extremist groups may instrumentalize religious narratives to transform a conflict arising from conventional political factors into something that needs to be understood as having grand and transhistorical — perhaps even eschatological — significance. For example, some Israeli settler groups that have used violence justify it in terms of territorial claims they regard as based in scripture.

Check out this video from the Al Amana Centre and listen to Rev. Douglas Leonard on what faith leaders can do to tackle violent extremism: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayFAAGtff4>.



Photo Source: Odyssey Impact. “Rev. Douglas Leonard on ISIS, Religious Violence and What Faith Leaders Can do.” 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayFAAGtff4>.

Sharing Exercise



Suggested Time:
20 minutes

Materials:

- Post-it notes/sticky paper OR small pieces of paper and tape or sticky tack
- Writing utensils
- A wall or board on which to stick the notes

Start the Activity:

- Participants are provided with a question or prompt for which they need to generate ideas.
- Give each participant a few Post-Its and give them 1-2 minutes to write out 1 idea or answer per Post-It. They can give multiple answers for each question, or just one answer per question.
- While participants are writing, divide the wall or board into two sections for the two questions.
- When participants have finished, they should walk to the front of the room and add the Post-Its to the board or wall in the correct section.
- Once all the participants have posted their responses on the boards, encourage participants to get up, walk around, and read all the responses and then return to their seats.
- Once seated, ask participants what they thought about their responses. Have them raise their hands and offer their opinions, questions, insights or comments. To get the conversation started, questions you might want to ask the group include:
 - Did any of the answers surprise you? Why?
 - What was your favorite response? Why?
 - What was your least favorite response? Why?

Prompts:

1. What roles have you seen faith actors play within your community? Have they been helpful?
2. What experiences have you had where faith actors played an important role in preventing or countering violent extremism?

Why Should Faith Leaders Participate Within These Efforts?



Photo Source: The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers

With so many individuals from around the world associating themselves with faith communities, faith actors are in an important position to be able to provide a place of guidance in times of crisis for many, as social conveners and mobilizers. Therefore, it is important to engage all actors, including faith actors with relevant knowledge and resources for prevention.

But why is engaging faith actors in P/CVE so critical?

- 1. Faith actors are trusted messengers** and are embedded within their communities and can sometimes reach people that authorities cannot.
- 2. Faith actors and institutions support people during times of crisis and offer services for families.**
- 3. Faith actors have the critical knowledge and perspectives of the local context** that add value and can provide practical and innovative solutions

4. Faith actors and institutions can build bridges between various stakeholders of the community, including authorities, to help facilitate dialogue, collaboration and partnership.

5. Working in partnership with faith actors and institutions sends a strong message and advances common goals.

In fact, Former United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, realized that the role of religious actors and institutions was under-utilized during his leadership, which is why he called for a mechanism to further engage religious and traditional actors in many issues, including countering violent extremism; a basis for why the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers (<https://www.peacemakersnetwork.org>) was formed.

For more information on the Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers, check out this introductory video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8c637x5yaxw>.

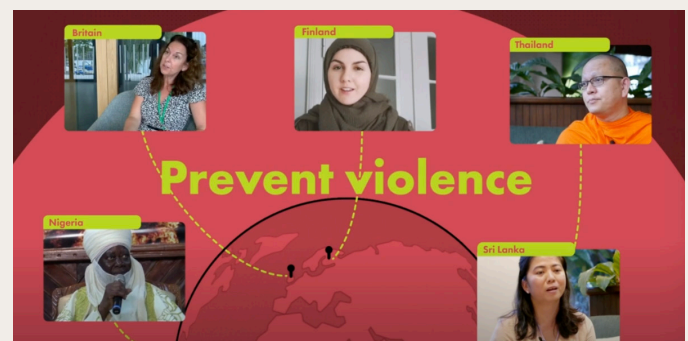


Photo Source: The Network for Religious and Traditional Peacemakers. "Introduction to the Peacemakers Network." 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8c637x5yaxw>.

How Have and Should Faith Actors Participate Within These Efforts?

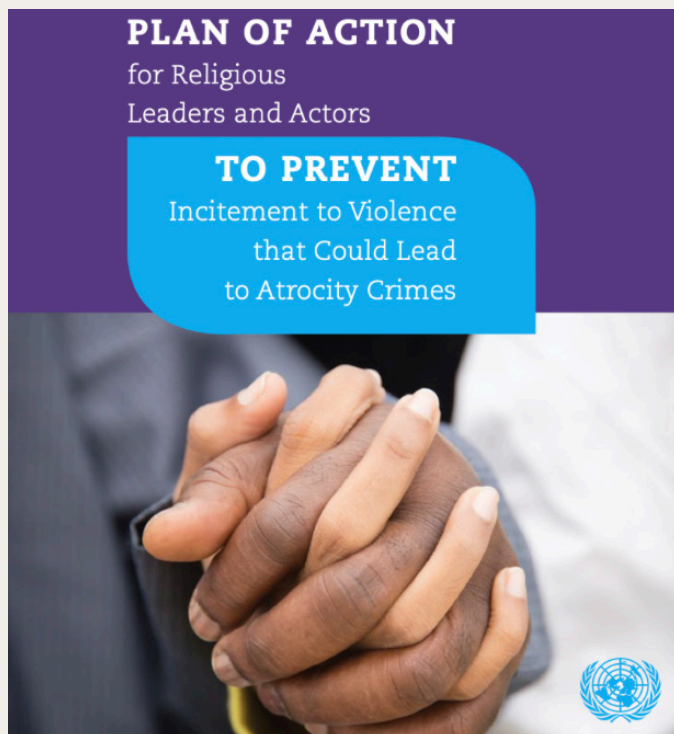


Photo Source: UN Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. "Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes." https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/Plan_of_Action_Religious_Prevent_Incite.pdf.

Faith actors have and will continue to play an important role within P/CVE efforts. For example, the Rabat Plan of Action recommends that religious leaders refrain from using messages of intolerance or expressions which may incite violence, hostility or discrimination and also notes that faith actors have a crucial role to play in speaking out firmly and promptly against intolerance, discriminatory stereotyping and instances of hate speech. The UN Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes, also further focuses on the critical role that faith actors play in preventing violence and atrocity crimes.

Faith actors also utilize many different unique tools and techniques within P/CVE efforts, a few of which you will learn about later on within this training module.

Here are a few examples:

- Faith actors continue to **work in collaboration** with policymakers, security authorities – including prisons, and civil society within P/CVE efforts.
- Faith actors create systems to **support and uplift spiritual and cultural life**, including through sports, music, and art.
- Faith actors **offer to help individuals or groups with reconciliation**.
- Faith actors can play a clear resilience role by being at the forefront of non-violent protests and publicly **rejecting the use of violence by their own followers**.
- Faith actors **can provide critical support in promoting alternative or counter-narratives to help stifle radicalization**.
- Faith actors can utilize interfaith dialogue, or offer constructive, cooperative and positive exchanges **between people of different faiths or religious traditions and/or spiritual or humanistic beliefs**. It can happen both at an interpersonal and institutional level and from local to international levels.

Numerous efforts, including policy papers and policy-oriented symposia, have over the past few years acknowledged that the faith-based sector should be involved at all levels in efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism. Internationally, policymakers are targeting portions of their P/CVE strategy to directly work with religious partners, convening gatherings with various stakeholders to better understand whom to engage and how. On a national level, governments are considering the role of religion in various components of violent extremism and, in varying degrees and levels of effectiveness, recognizing that the faith-based sector can have positive roles in P/CVE efforts, especially on a local level. But for policymakers and government and security actors to work effectively with religious actors, they must engage carefully and appreciate their unique, sometimes complex roles within their communities.

P/CVE policy, internationally and domestically, has tended to instrumentalize faith actors—if they are referenced in a positive, collaborative way at all. For example, a government initiative may seek moderate religious leaders to offer counter-narratives to violent interpretations of religious scripture, often offering to support the religious leader or organization in various ways, including financially or through skills-based training.

Instrumentalizing faith actors is counterproductive at best, and dangerous (even potentially life threatening) at worst in not being seen as neutral or trusted by their communities, given the complex positionality of many faith actors in their communities and societies. Political and financial linkages can further threaten a faith actor’s position and role within his or her community. Another harmful example is when security officials call on faith leaders to provide surveillance and report any signs of radicalization among their community members, as has been happening around the world. When faith leaders comply, however, they risk again, being perceived as agents of the government and as no longer credible in their community. Engagement with faith actors must be done carefully, respectfully, and inclusively, and include a recognition that the same approach cannot be effective in every setting.

For more information on religious engagement in countering violent extremism, watch this panel video held at the United States Institute of Peace:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R83CGIglTns>.



Photo Source: USIP. “Faith and Fragile States First Panel: Religious Engagement in Countering Violent Extremism.” 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R83CGIglTns>.

What Were the PAVE Findings Related to the Role of Faith Actors and Institutions Within P/CVE?



During the PAVE project, it was also commonly noted across all focus groups and survey responses that faith actors have significant influence over their local communities and thus can contribute to both resilience and vulnerability factors to P/CVE-related efforts. However, **there remains a lack of understanding as to the exact role faith actors might play in these efforts.** Below are factors of vulnerability identified by the PAVE project related to faith actors and institutions.



Photo Source: PAVE. “Second Stakeholder Committee Meeting held in Lebanon.” December 17, 2021. <https://www.pave-project.eu/news/second-pave-stakeholder-committee-meeting-held-in-beirut>.

Findings Around Vulnerability

- **Faith actors** – organizations, clergy, and leaders – **play a role in upholding group identities** that oftentimes are defined in hostility to an opposite ‘Other’. Religion is often not seen as an inherent problem, but rather it is the way in which **religious resources are instrumentalized for political purposes** which is perceived to be the driving force behind violent extremism. Political actors use and exploit religious sentiments, frameworks, and images in order to mobilize support for their political programs.
- **Intrafaith and interfaith dialogue is not prioritized** among religious communities.
- Religions cut across state borders. **Religious identities are fundamentally transnational identities** that create ties between co-religionists of different faith traditions. These can, and have been, exploited to serve the purposes of those propagating religious extremism.
- **Many formal religious institutions operate dysfunctionally** and informal religious institutions are competing for legitimacy.
- There is a **lack of representation of women in the decision-making processes within formal religious institutions.** In religious institutions, women are involved in affairs that concern primarily women.
- The **relationship between the economy of the state and religious institutions.**
- **Lack of funds** for P/CVE programming efforts.

While there are shortcomings in engaging faith actors and institutions, the PAVE project found many factors of resilience in engaging them as equally important partners. Below are actors of resilience identified by the PAVE project related to faith actors and institutions.

Findings Around Resilience

- **The promotion of core values** by faith actors, including their commitments of peace, dignity, and respect and being able to **reach out to a wide constituency**. For example, one community in Lebanon, whose faith leader promoted peace and dignity by allowing Syrian refugees to be buried in their town, unlike other communities.
- **The leadership factor of faith leaders on any issue is a resilience factor.**
- **Social bonding within communities and social rapprochement between communities play a key role in building community resilience.** For example, in Serbia religious communities traditionally show tolerance and respect for each other and often adopt a common position towards the state. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Interreligious Council is another example of this.
- **Faith actors who openly condemn acts of violence and intolerance.** In Serbia, religious leaders increased community resilience by pushing back against attempts of radicalization, condemning openly intolerance and acts of violence.
- **The ability of informal grassroots religious institutions to mediate between armed groups and the government to de-escalate violence.** For example, in the town of Arsal, the Association of Muslim Scholars took a lead in dialogue between the Lebanese Army and violent extremist groups.
- **The role faith actors play in unauthorizing or delegitimizing armed groups or armed group leaders.** For example, the Iraqi Chaldean Patriarch Louis Raphael I Sako publicly dissociated the church from the PMF's Babylon Brigade.
- In Tunisia, the unification of Islamic knowledge creation in a respected and recognized institution, such as al-Zaytouna University, was noted as an element of resilience against violent extremism, as it **illustrates how a serious academic institution can have legitimacy in the religious community.**
- **Unfortunately, religious actors and communities have not contributed to factors of resilience in all contexts.** In Lebanon, the religious institutions have to some extent served as a constraining factor when inter-religious ties have been strained.



Finally, the PAVE project also directly engaged faith actors and institutions to have a deeper understanding on what current challenges they are specifically facing within their P/CVE efforts. Below are the identified challenges.

Identified Challenges

- The lack of trust and trust-building opportunities between different ethno-religious groups to help form an inclusive national identity.
- Being able to foster environments or situations where people do not feel isolated or morally superior, notably in the MENA region.
- The challenge of neutrality in working with the government, international organizations or other civil society groups who receive government or international funding.
- The challenge of impartiality from faith actors not separating their personal political beliefs from their spiritual work, fueling further mistrust in the community.
- Being able to move beyond dialogue to demonstrate other methods of addressing feelings of defeatism and injustice.
- The lack of education, capacity-building and resources for faith actors around P/CVE efforts, notably in regard to conducting interfaith initiatives and dialogues at the local level.
- Being siloed from the uneven approach to faith-based P/CVE efforts by other stakeholders. For example, governments focusing more on Islamic-based radicalization than Orthodox-based radicalization.
- Security challenges which create polarized divides within communities.
- The high levels of patriarchal norms found within faith institutions. Some faith actors do not want to work with and engage women and young women in their communities around reconciliation and peacebuilding.

For more information on PAVE findings, see “Interactions between State and Religious Institutions in the Balkans and MENA region: Synthesis Report.” (https://pave-project.eu/publications/PAVE_870769_D4.3_publication_layout.pdf)

Reflection Exercise

Suggested Time:
40 minutes

Discussion Questions for the Group:

1. Do any of the findings regarding vulnerability resonate with you? Why or why not?
2. Do any of the findings regarding resilience resonate with you? Why or why not?
3. Do any of the findings regarding identified challenges resonate with you? Why or why not?
4. Do you think anything was missing in these categories?

Additional Resources for Session 1



- Al-Baalbaky, Rudayna, Faiza Ayed, Juline Beaujouan, Zouheir Ben Jannet, Sadok Damak, Hmida Ennaifer, Josep García Coll, Samiha Hamdi, Marie Kortam, Hassan Laaguir, Amjed Rasheed, Fethi Rekik, Javier Ruipérez Canales, Mohammed Sharqawi, and Maher Zoghalmi. "Working Paper 4: Interactions between States and Religious Institutions in the MENA Region." PAVE Consortium. March, 2022. https://pave-project.eu/publications/PAVE_870769_D4.2_publication_layout.pdf.
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- Pastuovic, Maja Halilovic, Goran Tepšić, Nemanja Džuverović, Sead Turcalo, Jelena Brkić-Šmigoc, Mirza Smajić, Veldin Kadić, Muamer Hirkić and Gillian Wylie. "Working paper 3: Interactions between States and Religious Institutions in the Balkans." PAVE Consortium. March, 2022. https://pave-project.eu/publications/PAVE_870769_D4.1_publication_layout.pdf.
- RAN. "Conclusion Paper: P/CVE Work with Religious Communities and Faith-Based Organizations." November 18, 2021. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/whats-new/publications/ran-western-balkans-pcve-work-religious-communities-and-faith-based-organisations-skopje-21-22_sl.
- UN OSAPG. "Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes." https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/Plan_of_Action_Religious_Prevent_Incite.pdf.

SESSION 2: Building Community Resilience Through Depolarization

Objective

In this second session, our objective will be to build an understanding on what polarization is, how it impacts local communities and what strategies local actors can use to identify, diagnose and address polarization, discourse and division.

Expected Results

The expected results of this second session will be that participants will understand how to address polarization to build social cohesion and resilience.

Amount of Time Anticipated for Session 2: 1.5 hours

Agenda

PG. 17 – What is Polarization?

PG. 20 – How Does Polarization Impact Local Communities?

PG. 23– Strategies to Depolarize Local Discourse and Build Social Cohesion

PG. 23 – BRaVE Indicator Toolkit

PG. 28 – Performing Local Audits

PG. 30 – The Role of Local and Regional Authorities in Addressing Polarization

What is Polarization?

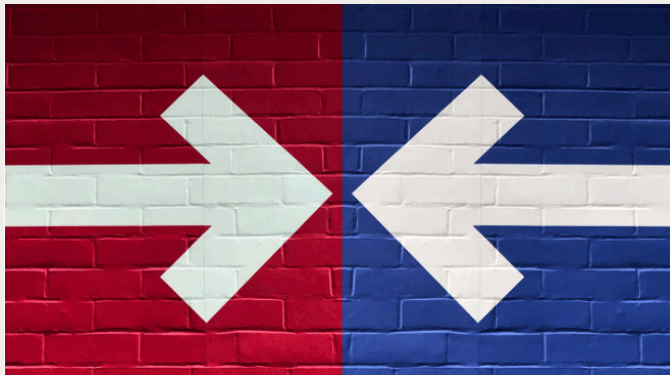


Photo Source: Chesterfield, Alex and Kate Coombs. “To Fight Polarization, Ask, “How Does that Policy Work?” November 25, 2019. Behavioral Scientist. <https://behavioralscientist.org/to-fight-polarization-ask-how-does-that-policy-work/>.

Polarization is defined as, **“a growing fragmentation of society into antagonistic collectives perceived as opponents in existential questions over a common future.”** Polarization involves a process of sharpening differences between groups in society that can result in and from increased tensions. These tensions can result from social, political and economic influences. In highly divided and fragmented societies, groups or individuals that perceive themselves as marginalized or their identity as being threatened are more susceptible to being attracted by negative narratives about the ‘other’ group spread by polarizing actors, so-called ‘pushers’ of polarization. These polarizing narratives amplify differences, fuel hostility between groups and deny the existence of any unified group or shared narratives. Hostility towards other groups, ‘us-and-them’ thinking and the neglect of a common ground or shared values within society are features that are common to both the phenomena of polarization and of radicalization towards violent extremism.

The broader concept of polarization was initially developed to refer to and understand the unequal distribution of income – or **socio-economic polarization**. From a socio-economic perspective, this was seen as ‘the widening of the gap between specific groups of people in terms of their economic or social circumstances and opportunities.’ Polarization is, in a socio-economic context, initially used to understand growing income inequality – the widening gap between rich and poor – or occupation– the expansion of jobs at the top and bottom of hierarchies – within economically advanced countries, and the subsequent impact this had on the middle classes. However, socio-economic polarization has since been expanded to include not just widening economic disparity but to include a variety of social and racial inequalities, and the impact this has on cohesion.

Political polarization is one of the most established and discussed indicators of party systems, with a canon of research becoming established on the polarization of parties or voting patterns. This has become increasingly relevant with the rise of right-wing populist parties and the fracturing of more orthodox political practices and landscapes in the last decade. The polarization of voters has been shown to create governmental instability, legislative deadlock, and the rise of political extremism. Such political polarization can be seen in the extent to which the platforms of competing parties are opposed, the level of party ideological homogeneity and the level of dislike expressed towards other parties. Indicators of political polarization on a national level have also been identified, including the number of extremist parties, their ideological focus and the percentage of their vote-share. Such a political focus on polarization represents the ideological hostility within a multi-party system, and the extent to which this becomes reflected in voting patterns and behavior. The marginalization

of certain groups and the lack of representation or participation of all citizens in the democratic process can also be driving factors of polarization.

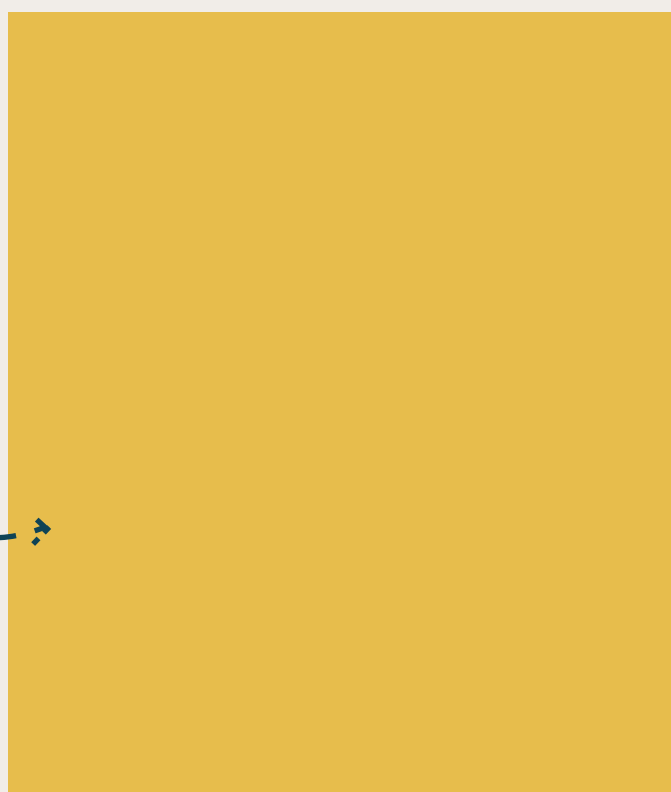
This has led to new discussions on the societal dangers of polarization and its role in enabling violence. Concerns have been raised over the rise of the far right – particularly the media-savvy ‘Alt-Right’ and ‘Alt-Light’ movements – as to the nature and credibility of the threat they post to democratic norms, structures and consensus-building. Such polarization has laid bare the fault lines of contemporary societies – between conservative and progressive, old and young, urban and rural areas, and those who have and haven’t been able to access higher levels of education. Such articulations of polarization – the exacerbation of political, social and cultural cleavages and inequalities – have created a context in which formations of so-called ‘violent extremism’ can and have begun to co-exist.

Socio-economic and political forms of polarization have, in recent years, been intertwined with the language of the long ‘War on Terror’, **in what is a securitizing of the understanding of polarization.**

The creation of socio-economic real or perceived inequality, the impact this has had on community interaction and the growth of far right and exclusionary political parties are increasingly seen as not only fracturing societal norms but creating a security threat that legitimizes articulations of violence. Discussions on polarization, when linked to concepts of terrorism, exhibit a similar use of language which suggests that – through ‘violent extremism’ and ‘radicalization’ – polarization can lead to an existential threat to the continuation of open, democratic societies.



Write
down any
thoughts!



Discussing Polarization Exercise



Discussion Questions:

1. Explain the ways that you see polarization affects your life?

2. To what extent do you feel your community, or your country is divided - either politically, economically or socially? Why do you think this is?

3. Do you think these types of polarization can be changed? Explain your reasons why or why not.

How Does Polarization Impact Local Communities?



Many communities across the globe have become increasingly polarized in recent years due to new trends in **identity and cultural politics, financial crises and political instability, the weaponization of crises by malicious political actors and the rise of irregular forms of media and social media**. As a result, local communities are impacted in multifaceted ways.

New trends of polarization around identity and cultural politics have been bringing forward feelings of exclusion and hostility. Articulations of identity that failed to transcend narrow, national or regional conceptualizations are understood as conducive to polarization, with such identities exclusionary by design, hostile to alternative cultural or faith communities, and framed as in direct competition with, and threatened by, coexistence with other identities. Feelings of hostility towards outgroups are also bound up with feelings of perceived injustices, victimhood and humiliation – powerful narratives of polarization and means of maintaining attachment to extremist groups.

One of the central issues surrounding the rise of the far-right is the rise of an **exclusionary identity**. These present national identity as bound up with race or racial characteristics, as well as exceptionalizing certain traits or beliefs as being particularly or exclusively linked to certain nationalities (and not to others). This may delegitimize the existence of opposing opinions and minority communities, creating an inherent hostility against those seen as challenging national or majority supremacy. As a result, this leads to discrimination, whether actual or perceived. The result fosters grievances of inequality around education and socio-economic status. This type of polarization **further sows community division and legitimizes racism**. Historical factors

account for national historical and political trends, particularly how minority communities and political groups have been framed and treated by majority and governing groups. Politically disenfranchised individuals and groups often feel powerless and resentful of their lack of agency in remediating social disadvantage. In such situations, group violence becomes a more attractive means of redressing perceived inequalities. **The laws protecting minority groups also impact levels of polarization**, as states with limited or less consistently enforced hate crime and minority rights legislation are more likely to legitimize racism and community division.

Exclusion based on identity thus also leads to the **physical and spiritual segregation of family and community structures**, including faith structures, through being segregated from the 'demonizing of the other.' **Individuals become less empathetic of others and more stressed** from the rise in violence and hate speech, which has a further impact on individual and community physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. **Individuals also feel a pressure to conform within their groups**. Polarization does not just manifest as intergroup conflict but changes the dynamics within groups, as people feel more pressure to conform in their beliefs and actions, **which makes internal dissent and diversity less likely**.

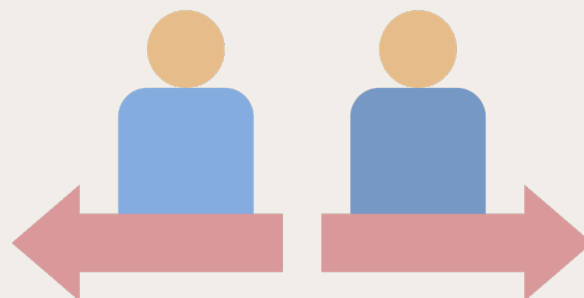
For example, in Central and Eastern Europe lingering articulations of national-socialist Anti-Semitism have been revived within localized grassroots movements, as seen in neo-Nazi marches and the recent violent attack at a synagogue in Halle. However, there has also been a rise in more covert forms of Antisemitism, as right-wing politicians in Hungary and Poland give credence to conspiracies and campaigns. Such racism has also sometimes

seen populist right parties attempting to appeal directly to Jewish voters, playing the card of concern about Islamist violence or attempting to shape a new enemy of the Muslim migrant as representing an existential threat to the nation. In regions of Europe where the extreme right has often targeted ethnic minorities (Jews, Roma, etc.), Xenophobia can develop in the absence of minority populations as illiberal governments engage in revisionist policies. As such, populist governmental parties build their politics on the strategy of polarization, creating or recasting new enemies to maintain their power. Meanwhile, traditional, established parties have co-opted elements of far-right policies or rhetoric in attempts to out-flank populism, often ultimately acting to legitimize and enforce polarization.

Trends around financial crises and political instability, as well as the weaponization of crises by malicious political actors have also created a more antagonistic political culture. This antagonistic political culture creates **a culture of accepted deception, and gridlock of progress on legislation**, including for funding which further impacts the economy. This type of polarization even makes it hard for political actors to problem solve on issues that all sides agree on. As a result, **citizens lose trust in these key institutions**.

Finally, the rise of irregular forms of media and social media have further contributed to the rise of increased polarization all over the world. **Polarization is cited as the coming together of hate speech and fake news**, as well as other dystopian narratives, combined with prejudices and stereotypes. For example, the use sensationalism within the news. In the European public sphere, there is an **increasing focus on 'crises' and their news coverage whilst social media sites disrupt traditional channels of news distribution**. This

has led to the identification of 'trigger events', moments within the news cycle that are catalyzed by social media to recirculate alarmist or outright false news, creating misinformation or filter bubbles that reinforce polarization.



In recent years, social media networks have also played an important role in the development of far-reaching and consequential events, such as the assault on the U.S. Capitol in Washington in January 2021. It has been shown that algorithms developed by technological platforms to personalize the information we receive via navigation data have **become instruments to control the flow of information and exert an increasing influence on public opinion and on the distribution of information. The risk of removing information that contradicts a user's points of view, causing their de facto isolation in their own ideological bubble, is known as the 'echo chamber' phenomenon or 'bubble' filter**. This isolation polarizes society and drastically reduces the opposition to and confrontation of ideas as an exercise in critical thinking. Social isolation has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and in some cases created the perfect breeding ground for polarized narratives, mindsets and behaviors. When individuals, groups or communities do not perceive themselves as fairly represented in the institutions responsible for COVID-related decision-making, social cohesion is undermined, and polarization reinforced.

A Young Imam in Morocco Video Exercise

Instructions:

- Watch the video (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StMWYkepds4>) and reflect upon the reflection questions.

Reflection Questions:

1. The priest defined fundamentalism and radicalism as “the exclusion or the elimination of the other.” In what ways does exclusion contribute to violence and violent extremism? What might be some concrete examples of exclusion in your area that may create vulnerability to violent extremism?

2. After watching the video, how do you see religious leaders as sources of community resilience?

3. The young conservative imam in the video decided to intervene in the case against the man who threatened him, choosing instead to talk to him and try to convince him to turn away from violent extremism. What can be the role of religious leaders in disengagement and/or deradicalization activities? Do you think that the man was more or less receptive to the imam because he was conservative, rather than practicing another form of Islam? What about if he was a Christian priest instead? Why? What does this tell you about choosing the most credible religious actors in a situation like this?

Strategies to Depolarize Local Discourse and Build Social Cohesion: BRaVE Indicator Toolkit



Polarisation indicators

Set of indicators that can be applied in specific policy areas

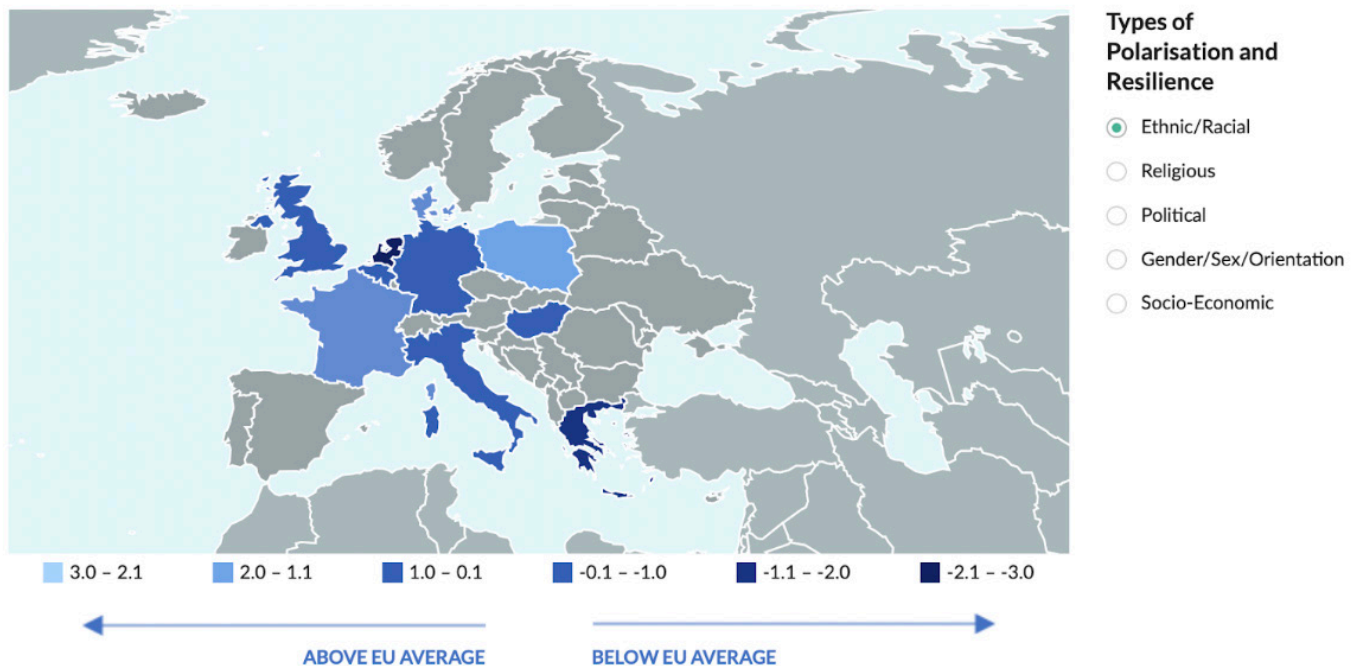


Photo Source: European University Institute. "Polarisation Indicators." BRaVE Project. <http://brave-h2020.eu/toolkit>.

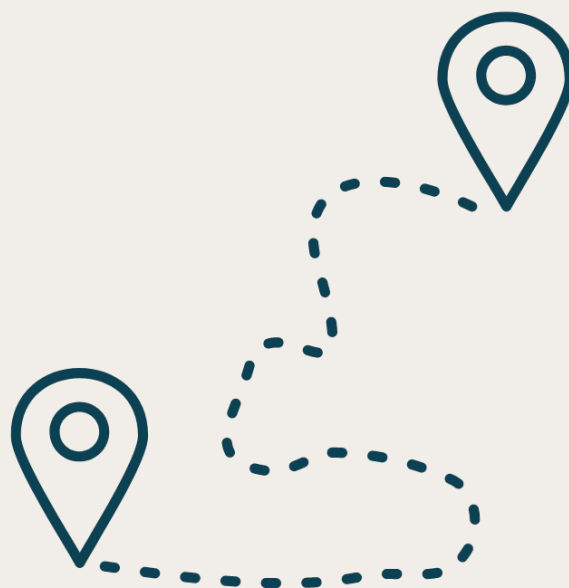
In order to tackle polarization and build social cohesion, it is crucial to first identify what factors are causing polarization within your community. Social cohesion refers to the presence of social bonds: it holds society together through trust, reciprocity and solidarity. A society might have some form of polarization and at the same time a degree of social cohesion. For example, there might be a strongly polarized and divided political landscape, with political groups neglecting to share common ground, within an overall cohesive society and a general consensus on the norms and values of the democratic system. One project which seeks to examine factors of social cohesion and resilience, that can be used to further analyze other contexts, is the European Union BRaVE project.

The 'Building Resilience against Violent Extremism and Polarization' (BRaVE) (<http://brave-h2020.eu>) project aims to **systematize existing knowledge and assess the impact of policies and practices in preventing extreme ideologies and polarization in European societies**. Based on the project's research and analysis, the project developed a **set of polarization indicators** focused the role of three sets of factors in providing fertile ground for extremism and polarization to grow, or conversely in helping to build resilient and cohesive communities: **historical and cultural factors; real and perceived socio-economic inequalities; and media discourses, particularly social media communication bubbles**.

The BRaVE toolkit allows one to gain a view of ethnic/racial, religious, socio-economic, political, and gender, sex and sexuality-based polarization and resilience factors across ten European Union countries: Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, and the United Kingdom. The toolkit consists of two sets of indicators: indicators of polarization and indicators of resilience. Polarization indicators are mirrored by a set of corresponding moderation indicators, for example, the polarization indicator set ‘Lack of Belonging’, which contains measures of individuals’ low/no sense of attachment to their local community and country, is mirrored by the moderating indicator set ‘Sense of Belonging’, which contains measures of individuals’ heightened sense of attachment to their country or community. Likewise, resilience indicators are mirrored by a set of corresponding non-resilience indicators.

The toolkit is designed for a wide range of users: researchers, policymakers, NGOs, and other community-based actors. For this reason, the indicators are general in nature. Essentially, the toolkit is aimed at anyone who is interested in gaining an overview of the current state of different types of polarization and resilience across the European Union. Scores are not meant as an indication of country X performing better or worse than country Y in terms of polarization or resilience. Rather, they are intended to recognize individuals’ fears around those they consider to be different from themselves. Recognizing and understanding the nature of these fears is the first step towards opening up a conversation on such issues and building connections between individuals and the state and/or their communities.

The toolkit resulted in a set of 100 initial indicators. Indicators were then divided into the four key conceptual categories featured in the BRaVE project framework: **Socio-Economic** (indicators relating to financial and welfare factors of polarization); **Historical** (indicators relating to state factors and historic conflicts and politics); **Cultural** (indicators relating to identity and cultural practices); and **Communication-Based** (indicators relating to offline and online content and interaction). The process of synthesizing the initial 100 indicators resulted in the development of 20 unique indicators, which were then arranged according to a further level of conceptual categorization within the BRaVE project: that of macro, meso and micro levels of classification. Here, **macro** refers to state level indicators, **meso** to community level indicators, and **micro** to individual or familial level indicators.



The table below presents the 20 refined indicators produced from the initial set of 100, which make up the BRaVE Polarization Indicators.

BRaVE Polarization Indicators

CATEGORY	MACRO	MESO	MICRO
Socio-Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State Welfare • Segregation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minority Recruitment • Diversity Programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Assets
Historical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Far-Right Political Influence • Laws Protecting Minorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Representation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Voting Behaviors
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Transnational Identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Cultural Mixing • Ignorance of Minority Culture • Restrictions on Minority Symbols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Perceptions of Self and Other
Communication-Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exclusionary Production Practices • Hate Speech Legislation • Polarizing Media Content 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polarizing Communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective Communications

Source: McNeil-Willson, Richard, Vivian Gerrard, Francesca Scrinzi, and Anna Triandafyllidou. "Polarisation, Violent Extremism and Resilience in Europe today: An analytical framework." BRaVE Project. December, 2019. http://brave-h2020.eu/repository/D2.1_BRaVE_concept_paper_final_10Dec2019.pdf.

There was also a correlation of factors of ‘violent extremism’ in relation to polarization that was identified. The BRaVE project identified factors cited as helping to create extreme political violence: a conducive environment; opportunity for violence; the cultivation of violent discourses; and the development of mobilizing networks. See diagram below.



Source: McNeil-Willson, Richard, Vivian Gerrand, Francesca Scrinzi, and Anna Triandafyllidou. “Polarisation, Violent Extremism and Resilience in Europe today: An analytical framework.” BRaVE Project. December, 2019. http://brave-h2020.eu/repository/D2.1_BRaVE_concept_paper_final_10Dec2019.pdf.

Akin to the factors associated with polarization and violent extremism, the BRAVE project also provides corresponding intersectional resilience factors at macro, meso and micro levels. The table below provides a framework for conceptualizing factors that may build pro-social resilience to the adversities, including violent extremism, caused by polarization.

BRAVE Resilience Indicators

CATEGORY	MACRO	MESO	MICRO
Socio-Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality of Opportunity • Social Cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality of Opportunity • Sufficient Resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agency
Historical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Inclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive Political Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Engagement / Support
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex and Flexible Cultural Identity (bridging) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Support / Collective Identity (bonding) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of Belonging
Communication-Based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive Environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic Media Reporting • Pro-Social Messaging • Trusted Accurate Information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online Resilience • Positive Cultural Image

Identifying and utilizing information about these factors of polarization and resilience together can form the foundation of supportive means by which communities can slow or reverse societal polarization and localized violence.

Source: McNeil-Willson, Richard, Vivian Gerrard, Francesca Scrinzi, and Anna Triandafyllidou. "Polarisation, Violent Extremism and Resilience in Europe today: An analytical framework." BRAVE Project. December, 2019. http://brave-h2020.eu/repository/D2.1_BRAVE_concept_paper_final_10Dec2019.pdf.

Strategies to Depolarize Local Discourse and Build Social Cohesion: Performing Local Audits



Photo Source: European Forum for Urban Security. "BRIDGE - Understanding and Addressing Polarization at the Local Level." June, 2021. https://issuu.com/efus/docs/publication_bridge_en_pages.

Building on the factors identified through the BRAVE project, you can go a step further and utilize these examples to help analyze depolarization factors and build social cohesion through diagnosing polarization with local audits. This was done through the 'Building Resilience to Reduce Polarization and Growing Extremism' (BRIDGE) project (<https://efus.eu/uncategorized/bridge-building-resilience-to-reduce-polarisation-and-growing-extremism/>). The objectives of the BRIDGE project were to: **raise awareness among local actors and strengthen their capacity to reduce individual and collective vulnerability to radicalization while at the same time mitigating the phenomenon of polarization.** This EU Commission funded project consisted of

thirteen local and regional European authorities from seven countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, and Spain.

A strategic approach to urban security, which should also include the objective of preventing polarization, builds on up-to-date knowledge of the local reality. The implementation of local actions to mitigate and prevent polarization and thus improve individual and collective security requires a clear and precise understanding of potential risk factors and actors, tensions and fragmentations in the specific context of each city. The best way to establish such an assessment is **by conducting a local audit, meaning a systematic analysis of the phenomenon of polarization in a local context and at a given time.** Indeed, an audit is a snapshot of a situation and thus needs to be regularly updated. It helps to identify priorities as well as assets and resources for preventive measures and enables local and regional authorities to develop concrete strategies to tackle the identified challenges. A local polarization audit will usually involve the analysis of the city's or region's demographic and socio-economic characteristics, as well as the identification of risk factors and actors that can contribute to increased tensions and polarization. The effectiveness of existing programs and activities aimed at strengthening social cohesion at the local level, including services such as health, housing, welfare and education, should be investigated, as well as the institutional and political environment, in order to build on opportunities and innovative practices. It is also crucial to identify opportunities to increase citizen participation and to involve civil society and local stakeholders in the elaboration of a comprehensive prevention strategy.

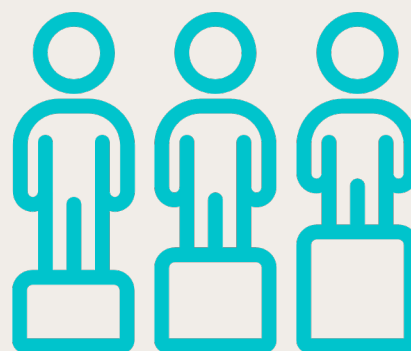
Here are a few overall factor areas that should be analyzed based on demographics, social structures, political and social participation, and protection:

- **Social equality** (i.e. income and distribution of wealth, education and employment match/mismatch, age groups, long-term inhabitants versus newcomers), including health inequalities and their social determinants.
- **Employment rates**, with a special emphasis on links with gender, age, ethnicity and level of education.
- **Social diversity and multiculturalism.**
- **Changing demographic factors and elements** (i.e. income distribution/employment in a certain neighborhood, the arrival of new immigrant groups, the level of social integration of different ethnic and religious groups).
- **Equal access to public services** (childcare, schooling, public transport).
- **Equal access to social activities** (sports clubs, cultural associations).
- **Security and social/health issues**, including victimization, insecurity and violent discrimination.
- **The level and form of participation in local decision-making processes** (in the local neighborhood and at the municipal level, formally and/or informally).
- **The level of inequalities regarding access to local private and public social support and mental health services**, as well as support structures. **The informal and formal structures of local communities and neighborhoods that address social and political concerns**, such as local crime prevention councils, and these structures'

communication and coordination capacities that can help foster social bonds, mediate conflicts and support vulnerable people.

- **The preparedness of public institutions to elicit, engage, address and respond to local concerns and conflicts.**
- **The already active or potential resource people who are seen as legitimate mediators across social groups.**

A mixed-methods approach is recommended for auditing polarization to enable municipalities to capture a snapshot of polarization from many angles, for example using both qualitative methods (focus groups and interviews) and quantitative methods (analysis of existing data, dissemination of questionnaires). Mixing of these methods creates a broader and deeper picture of polarization based on empirical evidence. In order for such mixed methods to produce valid data, their execution should also be led or supported by experienced expert partners or 'bridge-builders.' **Bridge builders are those who try to reach out and arbitrate between the opposing groups, who might by acknowledging their antagonism, involuntarily reinforce polarizing dynamics.**



The Role of Local and Regional Authorities in Addressing Polarization



Many local and regional authorities are lacking deep and detailed knowledge on the processes of polarization. As we have seen, polarization is a complex, multifaceted and rapidly evolving phenomenon. Research on polarization and policy strategies to address it are being developed at an equally high pace, yet they remain in an early stage. While the drivers of polarization can be located at the local, national or international level, the effects often play out locally, potentially fueling tensions, conflicts and violent behaviors within municipalities.

Local and regional authorities are key stakeholders who can address polarization due to their extensive competencies and relevant resources in preventing violence and fostering social cohesion. Their crime prevention and urban security structures are best placed to diagnose and monitor phenomena of polarization and tensions at the local and regional level. In order to depict a full picture of potential risks and tensions, local and regional authorities should include all groups and communities as well as relevant stakeholders in assessment processes and in the elaboration of strategies and concrete activities to prevent or mitigate polarization. By raising awareness about the phenomenon of polarization, training stakeholders, empowering local actors and associating citizens in these efforts, local and regional authorities can strengthen their communities' resilience to potential risk factors and actors. The continuous monitoring of polarizing dynamics and trends should be integrated into comprehensive urban security approaches and become a cornerstone of prevention policies at the local and regional level. A comprehensive approach allows local and regional authorities to foster a cohesive and resilient society that provides security for all.

Prevention and resilience building constitute local authorities' key assignments in the realm of integrated approaches to urban security. Various local actors and fields can be mobilized and can contribute to building resilience and help prevent polarization, **such as youth centers, social and mental health centers, family counseling, sports clubs and religious communities.** Prevention activities should foster tolerance and highlight the importance of social, cultural and religious diversity as a basic axiom of a peaceful and democratic society. Strengthening resilience encompasses encouraging individuals to reflect upon and empathize with different experiences, perspectives and viewpoints. Enabling dialogue and citizen participation, as well as ensuring that municipalities and other local institutions represent the diversity of the local population they serve, is fundamental to preserve social cohesion and prevent polarization.

Most importantly for this module, local and regional authorities should constitute partnerships of local policymakers, faith actors and civil society. To highlight an example of policymaker and religious institutional collaboration as an example from the PAVE project, faith-based organizations were invited to assist in drafting and implementing the Kosovo Strategy on the Prevention of Violent Extremism. In other instances, in the Western Balkans, imams and other faith leaders have engaged in additional activities to prevent violent extremism, such as working with correctional services.

Strengths and Challenges Discussion



Discussion Questions:

1. What are the strengths of policymakers in responding to polarization?

2. What are some of the challenges policymakers may face in responding to polarization?

3. What are the strengths of faith actors in responding to polarization?

Strengths and Challenges Discussion Questions continued:

4. What are some of the challenges faith may face in responding to polarization?

5. What are the strengths of civil society actors in responding to polarization?

6. What are some of the challenges of civil society actors in responding to polarization?

Strengths and Challenges Discussion Questions continued:

7. What do policymakers, faith actors and civil society actors gain from working together to address polarization that they couldn't on their own?

8. What are reasons why different stakeholder groups might not want to collaborate or partner to address polarization?

Additional Resources for Session 2



Digital Technology and Extremist Use

- European University Institute. “Polarisation Indicators.” BRaVE Project. <http://brave-h2020.eu/toolkit>.
- European Forum for Urban Security. “BRIDGE - Understanding and Addressing Polarization at the Local Level.” June, 2021. https://issuu.com/efus/docs/publication_bridge_en_pages.
- Jilani, Zaid and Jeremy Adam Smith. “What is the True Cost of Polarization in America?” Greater Good Magazine. March 4, 2019. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/what_is_the_true_cost_of_polarization_in_america.
- McNeil-Willson, Richard, Vivian Gerrand, Francesca Scrinzi, and Anna Triandafyllidou. “Polarisation, Violent Extremism and Resilience in Europe today: An analytical framework.” BRaVE Project. December, 2019. http://brave-h2020.eu/repository/D2.1_BRaVE_concept_paper_final_10Dec2019.pdf.
- Schlafani, Robin and Richard McNeil-Willson. “The Role of Cultural and Historical Factors in Polarization and Violent Extremism.” BRaVE Project. May, 2020. http://brave-h2020.eu/repository/D6.1_Discussion_Paper_May_2020.pdf.
- Taylor, Paul J. and Sheryl Prentice. “Project Report: Toolkit of Cross-National Polarisation Indicators.” <http://brave-h2020.eu/repository/BRaVE%20Summary%20Report%20on%20Deliverable%204.3.pdf>.
- Vidra, Zsuzsanna and Michael Zeller. “The Role of Socio-Economic Inequalities in Polarisation and Violent Extremism.” BRaVE Project. May, 2020. http://brave-h2020.eu/repository/D7.1_Discussion_Paper_May_2020.pdf.

SESSION 3: Utilizing Nonviolent Communication Skills to P/CVE

Objective

In this third session, our objective will be to learn about and build deeper understanding on what the concept of nonviolent communication is about.

Expected Results

The expected results of this second session will be that participants will build an understanding and knowledge on how to utilize and apply nonviolent communications as skill and tool within their communities within P/CVE efforts.

Amount of Time Anticipated for Session 3:

1 hour

Agenda

PG. 36 – What is Nonviolent Communication?

PG. 37 – What Are the Fundamental Concepts and Assumptions of Nonviolent Communication?

PG. 41 – How Can I Utilize Nonviolent Communication in My P/CVE Work? The Importance of Language

PG. 44 – How Can I Utilize Nonviolent Communication in My P/CVE Work? The Importance of Communication

PG. 45– What Attitudes Should I Embody to Implement Nonviolent Communication?

PG. 46 – At What Levels Should I Be Applying Nonviolent Communication?

What is Nonviolent Communication?



Source: The Center for Nonviolent Communication. "What is Nonviolent Communication?" <https://www.cnvc.org/learn-nvc/what-is-nvc>.

Nonviolent communication is based on the principle of ahimsa – the natural state of compassion when no violence is present in the heart.

Nonviolent communication is a consciousness that manifests as a way of being in the world. **The purpose of nonviolent communication is to serve life and to create the quality of connection in which everyone's needs can be met through compassionate giving.** Through nonviolent communication we are able to hear our own deeper needs and those of others through an emphasis on deep listening.

Nonviolent Communication is the integration of four things:

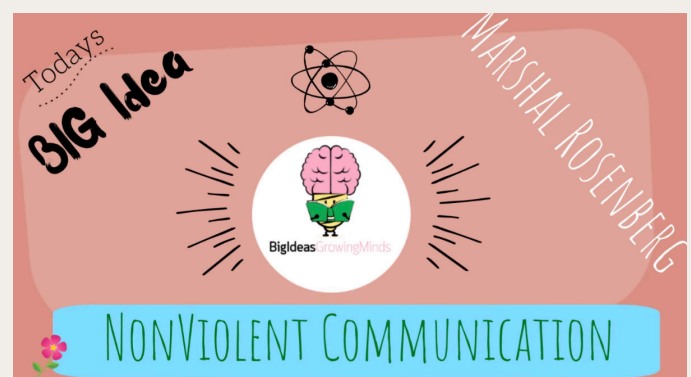
- 1. Consciousness:** A set of principles that support living a life of compassion, collaboration, courage, and authenticity.
- 2. Language:** Understanding how words contribute to connection or distance.
- 3. Communication:** Knowing how to ask for what you want, how to hear others even in disagreement, and how to move forward towards solutions that work for all.
- 4. Means of influence:** Sharing "power with others" rather than using "power over others".

All human beings have the same needs and feelings, but there are different strategies to meet those needs and feelings. First, you must start with your observation and then connect that to how you are feeling. Our feelings inform us of our needs and if they are being met or unmet, as well as the strategic actions that we should try to take to meet those needs, including our requests. For you to make a request of someone, you have to be okay with their answer or response, otherwise you have just made a demand. You have to be willing to rethink your approach to expressing your feelings to ensure you are communicating nonviolently.

Through **empathetically listening and honestly expressing our feelings, needs, observations and requests**, individuals can engage in nonviolent communication.

Watch this video to help break down the concept of nonviolent communication further:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sjA90hvnQ0&t=2s>.



Source: Rosenberg, Marshall. "Nonviolent communication: A Language of Life." October 10, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sjA90hvnQ0&t=2s>.

What Are the Fundamental Concepts and Assumptions of Nonviolent Communication?



Below are some fundamental concepts and assumptions of nonviolent communication. These concepts support the integration of consciousness.

■ **Universal Human Needs:** The concept of needs is the cornerstone of nonviolent communication. A need is defined as the energy in living organisms that compels them to seek fulfillment and to thrive. Examples of needs include water, air, freedom and meaning. We hold needs as universal. Thus, expressing our needs and acknowledging the needs of others enables us to connect at a deep place of the human experience and create common ground.

We believe that all our actions --*anything anyone ever does*-- are attempts to meet our needs. With this realization in mind, we are able to understand others' actions however baffling. We can transform judgment into empathic understanding. In a safe environment, free of judgment and blame, it is easier to find solutions that can meet everyone's needs.

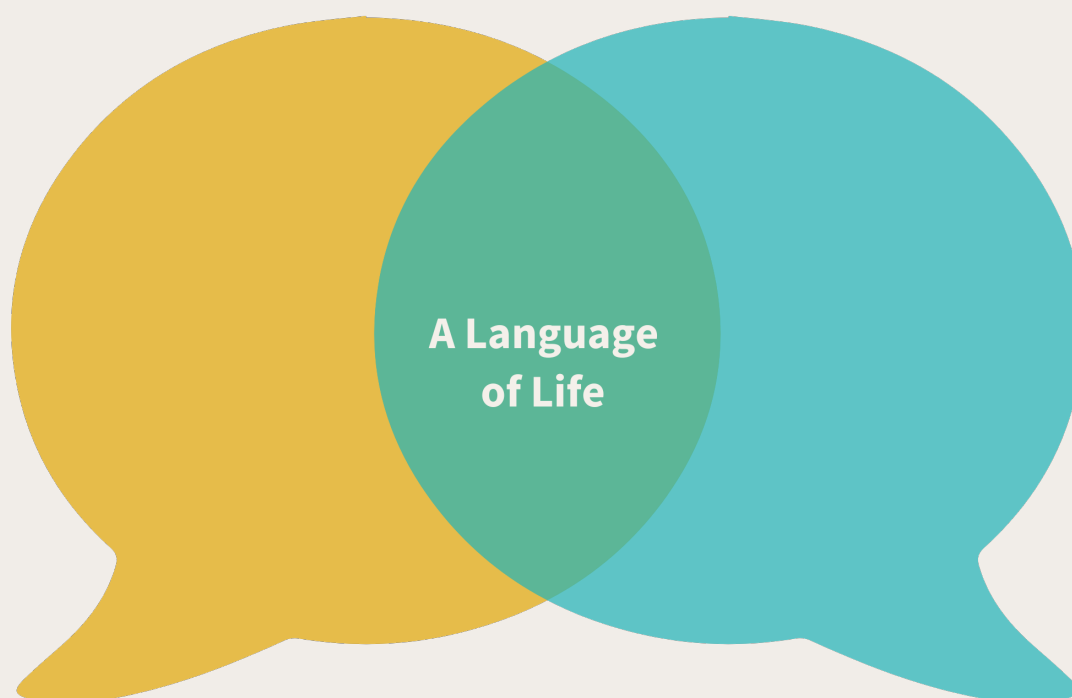
■ **Connection First:** When conflict arises, we seek empathic connection first and then solutions. We define connection as the moment in which two people experience what is alive in each other simultaneously. We trust that in the space of heart connection, we have access to a well of creativity where we can think of options that can meet everyone's needs. In the context of connection we can resolve disagreements peacefully.

■ **The Need for Contribution:** We believe that contributing to the wellbeing of others is one of the most powerful forces of human motivation. At times, we disconnect from our need for contribution because of the way we have been conditioned to think -- that when our needs are not met it is the other person's fault. When this happens, we want to punish the other person, not contribute to him or her. To restore our need for contribution we can ask someone to listen to us with empathy or engage in self-empathy to help us reconnect with our compassionate nature.

■ **Interdependence:** We believe that human beings are interdependent, as opposed to independent. We need one another to live and to thrive. We believe that what affects one affects all. If a child is starving, we are all affected if we are aware of our deep feelings and the human need for the wellbeing of all. We need others to build the houses we live in, grow the fruit and vegetables we eat, and sew the clothes we wear. We need carpenters, doctors, janitors and teachers. Our environmental, health and economic systems affect the global community in visible and invisible but important ways.



- **Value Judgments:** Nonviolent communication invites us to judge actions and situations by determining whether or not they are in harmony with our values as opposed to making moralistic judgments. For instance, rather than saying, “Violence is wrong,” we would say, “I value the resolution of conflicts through safe and peaceful means.” Nonviolent Communication posits that moralistic judgments –thoughts of criticism and blame– are at the root of violence. Judging people as ‘bad’ or ‘wrong’ leads to anger, and anger often leads to violence. Furthermore, when we judge someone as bad or wrong, we feel justified in acting with violence because we tell ourselves that the person *deserves it*. For instance, we may think “Terrorist deserve to die.”
- **The Protective Use of Force:** When someone acts in a way that compromises safety, we use force as a means of protection, but never as punishment. We do not cause suffering so that a person learns a lesson. To bring back social order when it has been broken, nonviolent communication proposes education and restoration as opposed to retribution.
- **Universal Wisdom:** Nonviolent communication is consonant with the highest principles of the great world religions.



Source: The Center for Nonviolent Communication. “Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life.” 2015. <https://www.cnvc.org/training/resource/book-chapter-1>.

No Enemies, No Demands Exercise



To Prep:

- Read the exchange between an individual named Judy and a non-violent communication trainer Arnina. Instead of arguing with Judy, instead of trying to take apart her position, insisting on the morality of her views, or trying to convince her to change her mind, Arnina simply reflected back to Judy her understanding of Judy's deeper feelings and needs.

Judy: People forget who we are, and our history. Our people go back thousands of years. We were chosen by God and given this land. How can they forget this?

Arnina: So you are feeling devastated, because you would really like to know that the deep meaning of 'settle in this land' is understood and preserved?

Judy: Others think we are blind and obstinate, while we are holding on to the most precious symbol of our existence.

Arnina: Are you in pain because you so much want to find a way to dissolve the separation between you and others in your community, because for you we are all one people?

Judy: Yes, yes, yes... Thank you for saying this. This is what's most crucial here for me. This terrible wall between us and ... you. Yes, you said it, we are all one. And I am desperate when I think, again and again, how deep the gap between all of us is, how we only see the external, and judge it, while the important things lie deep inside, for all of us. Don't we all want to keep living, and here? And how do they think this is going to happen, if we give up on this historical land?

Arnina: Are you really scared, because your hope for the continued existence of your people is threatened by the mere idea of losing this land?

Question for Participant:

1. What tactics are Arnina utilizing within nonviolent communication? How can you use these within your work?

Post Discussion:

When Arnina was confident that Judy was fully heard, she stopped, looked at Judy for a long while, then asked gently: “Would you be willing to hear what's going on for me now, and how I see all this?” Judy nodded silently. Arnina then told Judy how much she shared the deep wish of seeing Israelis living and thriving, and bringing gifts to the world. Then she added: “I want you also to hear just how frightened I am when I see the price we are paying for this. I am wondering if you could conceive of the thought that, if we all really united in our wish, and not against each other, we might find other means of keeping this legacy, while at the same time saving so many lives?” It was in response to this question that Judy expressed her tentative willingness to consider leaving the land she had so tenaciously held on to for so long. It was the experience of being fully heard which made the transformation possible.

The practice of applying empathy in the service of social activism is based on a combination of practical considerations and deep spiritual values. On the practical level, **listening with empathy to those with whose positions we disagree increases the chances that they will want to listen to us.** Until Judy’s needs were acknowledged, she would not have been able to hear and consider Arnina’s request. Once Judy’s experiences were heard fully, magic happened, her heart opened, and a profound shift took place in her.

When we use force, blame and self-righteousness instead, even if we manage to create the outcome we want in the short run, we distance ourselves from those whose actions we want to change. Success in the short run does not lead to the transformation we so wish for, neither in ourselves nor in those we are trying to change. Sooner or later, those with more power will prevail, and we are left bitter and defeated. This cycle is a major cause of “burn-out” among activists.

Moreover, on the spiritual plane, listening with empathy to others is one way of putting into practice the fundamental values of compassion and nonviolence. In order to hear Judy with true empathy, Arnina had to transcend thoughts of right and wrong. Indeed, before Arnina was able to listen to Judy, she received a significant amount of empathy from others for her own pain and despair. In cultivating empathy for Judy, Arnina was able to discover behind Judy’s statements a human being like herself, with the same basic set of needs. At the end of the dialogue both Judy and Arnina discovered and connected with needs they had not been aware of in themselves or in each other: a longing for unity.

Even when we want to embrace compassion, structures of domination are deeply ingrained in us. We all pay a price in the long run when our needs are met at others’ expense. Accordingly, the goal of the dance of empathy is to establish enough connection and understanding so that everyone can unite in looking for strategies to meet everyone’s needs. When we transcend our own enemy images so that we really experience the humanness of the other, we can truly show people that we care about their needs. When that happens, they are then usually more open to consider ways of meeting their needs which are not at the expense of other human beings’ lives, the planet, and other values of theirs.

How Can I Utilize Nonviolent Communication in My P/CVE Work?

The Importance of Language



The next aspect of nonviolent communication is around language. In order to allow for deeper connection and dialogue with others, two types of supportive language categories are helpful to help deepen self-discovery and to facilitate greater understanding and connection between people: **a needs inventory and a feelings inventory**. These example lists are neither exhaustive nor definitive.

Needs Inventory

CONNECTION	acceptance / affection / appreciation / belonging / cooperation / cooperation / communication / closeness / community / companionship / consideration / consistency / empathy / inclusion / intimacy / love / mutuality / nurturing / respect / self-respect / safety / security / stability / support / to know and be known / to see and be seen / to understand and be understood / trust / warmth
PHYSICAL WELL-BEING	air / food / movement / exercise / rest / sleep / sexual expression / safety / shelter / touch / water
HONESTY	authenticity / integrity / presence
PLAY	joy / humor
PEACE	beauty / communion / ease / equality / harmony / inspiration / order
AUTONOMY	choice / freedom / independence / space / spontaneity
MEANING	awareness / celebration of life / challenge / clarity / competence / consciousness / contribution / creativity / discovery / efficacy / effectiveness / growth / hope / learning / mourning / participation / purpose / self-expression / stimulation / to matter / understanding

Feelings Inventory

There are two parts to this list: **feelings we may have when our needs are being met** and **feelings we may have when our needs are not being met**. Feelings are when your needs **are satisfied**.

AFFECTIONATE	compassionate / friendly / loving / open-hearted / sympathetic / tender / warm
INSPIRED	amazed / awed / wonder
CONFIDENT	empowered / open / proud / safe / secure
GRATEFUL	appreciative / moved / thankful / touched
PEACEFUL	calm / clear-headed / comfortable / centered / content / equanimous / fulfilled / mellow / quiet / relaxed / relieved / satisfied / serene / still / tranquil / trusting
ENGAGED	absorbed / alert / curious / engrossed / enchanted / entranced / fascinated / interested / intrigued / involved / spellbound / stimulated
EXCITED	amazed / animated / ardent / aroused / astonished / dazzled / eager / energetic / enthusiastic / giddy / invigorated / lively / passionate / surprised / vibrant
JOYFUL	amused / delighted / glad / happy / jubilant / pleased / tickled
EXHILARATED	blissful / ecstatic / elated / enthralled / exuberant / radiant / rapturous / thrilled
REFRESHED	enlivened / rejuvenated / renewed / rested / restored / revived
HOPEFUL	expectant / encouraged / optimistic

Feelings Inventory continued...

Feelings are when your needs are **not satisfied**.

AFRAID	apprehensive / dread / foreboding / frightened / mistrustful / panicked / petrified / scared / suspicious / terrified / wary / worried
CONFUSED	ambivalent / baffled / bewildered / dazed / hesitant / lost / mystified / perplexed / puzzled / torn
EMBARRASSED	ashamed / chagrined / flustered / guilty / mortified / self-conscious
TENSE	anxious / cranky / distressed / distraught / edgy / fidgety / frazzled / irritable / jittery / nervous / overwhelmed / restless / stressed out
FATIGUE	beat / burnt out / depleted / exhausted / lethargic / listless / sleepy / tired / weary / worn out
ANNOYED	aggravated / dismayed / disgruntled / displeased / exasperated / frustrated / impatient / irritated / irked
DISCONNECTED	alienated / aloof / apathetic / bored / cold / detached / distant / distracted / indifferent / numb / removed / uninterested / withdrawn
VULNERABLE	fragile / guarded / helpless / insecure / leery / reserved / sensitive / skaky
PAIN	agony / anguished / bereaved / devastated / grief / heartbroken / hurt / lonely / miserable / regretful / remorseful
ANGRY	enraged / furious / incensed / indignant / irate / livid / outraged / resentful

How Can I Utilize Nonviolent Communication in My P/CVE Work?

The Importance of Communication



Feelings Inventory continued...

Feelings are when your needs are **not satisfied**.

DISQUIET	agitated / alarmed / discombobulated / disconcerted / disturbed / perturbed / rattled / restless / shocked / startled / surprised / troubled / turbulent / turmoil / uncomfortable / uneasy / unnerved / unsettled / upset
SAD	depressed / resentful / dejected / despair / despondent / disappointed / discouraged / disheartened / forlorn / gloomy / heavy-hearted / hopeless / melancholy / unhappy / wretched
YEARNING	envious / jealous / longing / nostalgic / pining / wistful
AVERSION	animosity / appalled / contempt / disgusted / dislike / hate / horrified / hostile / repulsed

The next aspect is around communication. There are five elements to be conscious of within the process of nonviolent communication. When experiencing disconnection from others, use this list to see if all of your elements are in alignment:

1. Consciousness – Ask yourself: Am I self-connected? Am I expressing myself honestly and vulnerably? Am I listening empathically? Am I valuing the needs of others as my own? Am I committed to seeking solutions that can meet everyone's needs?

2. Thought – Ask Yourself: Is there judgment or blame in my awareness? Am I angry or resentful in this moment as I engage with the other person?

3. Language – Ask Yourself: Are my words free of criticism and blame?

4. Communication – Ask Yourself: Is my non-verbal communication or tone of voice and body language congruent with my words?

5. Use of power – Ask Yourself: Do I want to overpower this person to get what I want? Am I caring about his or her needs as my own? Am I making a request or a demand in disguise? Am I prepared to hear the word no, listen empathetically and maintain connection? Am I willing to stay in the dialogue until we find a solution that accommodates both of us? All involved?

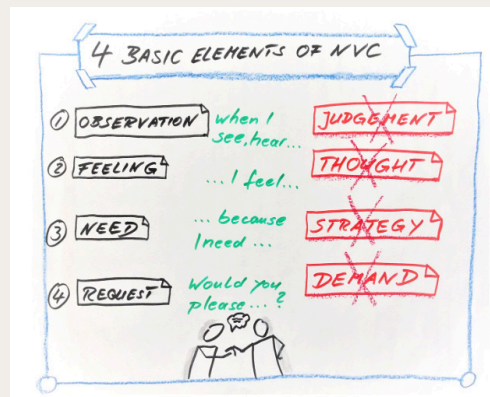


Photo Source: Moglich, Harald. "Non-Violent Communication." <https://harald-moeglich.de/en/non-violent-communication/>.

What Attitudes Should I Embody to Implement Nonviolent Communication?



Photo Source: Ulmer, Charlee. "Expressing Gratitude Through Non-Violent Communication." <https://duckvillageyoga.com/expressing-gratitude-non-violent-communication/>.

When living in, and relating from nonviolent communication consciousness we embody the following attitudes:

- **Self-Connection:** We relate to ourselves and the world from a still place within, a place of compassion, truth, clarity, and peace. To maintain self-connection, nonviolent communication proposes one engages in a daily practice known as "**Remembering**". Examples of Remembering practices include meditation, prayer, inspirational readings, poetry, inspirational music, and quiet time in nature.
- **Honest Expression:** We express ourselves vulnerably and without criticism or blame. We reveal our feelings and needs and ask for what we want, without demanding.
- **Empathic Presence:** We listen to others with a silent mind and an open heart. Our sole purpose is to connect with the speaker by understanding his or her feelings and needs deeply and without judgment. We attempt to remain empathically present even when we are the target of criticism, blame and other such forms of communication.
- **Self-Empathy:** When we are no longer able to be present to the other person, or when we become angry, we take time out to vent our judgments in the privacy of our minds. We identify and connect with the unmet needs in a given interaction and we mourn the pain of the unmet needs. This process enables us to reconnect with our essence. We use self-empathy also to mourn and heal from disappointment or loss, to celebrate needs met, or simply to understand ourselves more fully. Once we experience an organic shift, we are calmer and have more clarity to address the challenge at hand. We ask ourselves what we can do to fulfill the unmet needs in the situation.
- **Use of Power:** We attempt to influence others in the context of connection, rather than through coercion. We want others to contribute to us out of natural giving, and never out of fear, guilt, shame, duty, desire for reward, or to buy love. We care about the needs of others as our own, and we are committed to seeking solutions that can meet the needs of all involved.

At What Levels Should I Be Applying Nonviolent Communication?



The final aspect is means of influence. The process of nonviolent communication applies to three dimensions of life:

- 1. Personal** – We employ the nonviolent communication process to liberate ourselves from cultural conditioning; to heal the wounds of life; to transform judgments into understanding of unmet needs; and to transform anger, guilt, shame, depression and fear into life-serving emotions that increase inner peace and inner freedom.
- 2. Interpersonal** – We relate to others with empathy, honesty, mutuality, and care thus increasing trust, understanding, and harmony in relationships.
- 3. Societal** – We live nonviolent communication principles and implement the process in our efforts to contribute to a better world. Our social change work is fueled by gratitude as opposed to anger.

These dimensions are intertwined. Our state of mind and heart influences how we relate to others. How we relate to people can set in motion a chain of actions and reactions that impact society in unforeseen ways – for better or for worse.



Here are ten things you can do to contribute to internal, interpersonal and to organizational peace.

- 1. Spend some time each day quietly reflecting** on how we would like to relate to ourselves and others.
- 2. Remember that all human beings have the same needs.**
- 3. Check our intention** to see if we are as interested in others getting their needs met as our own.
- 4. When asking someone to do something, check first to see if we are making a request or a demand.**
- 5. Instead of saying what we DON'T want someone to do, say what we DO want the person to do.**
- 6. Instead of saying what we want someone to BE, say what action we'd like the person to take** that we hope will help the person be that way.
- 7. Before agreeing or disagreeing with anyone's opinions, try to tune in to what the person is feeling and needing.**
- 8. Instead of saying "No," say what need of ours prevents us from saying "Yes."**
- 9. If we are feeling upset, think about what need of ours is not being met, and what we could do to meet it,** instead of thinking about what's wrong with others or ourselves.
- 10. Instead of praising someone who did something we like, express our gratitude by telling the person what need of ours that action met.**

Additional Resources for Session 3



- The Center for Nonviolent Communication. “10 Steps to Peace.” Accessed October 17, 2022. <https://www.cnvc.org/trainings/articles/10-steps-peace>.
- The Center for Nonviolent Communication. “Feelings Inventory.” Accessed October 17, 2022. <https://www.cnvc.org/training/resource/feelings-inventory>.
- The Center for Nonviolent Communication. “Needs Inventory” Accessed October 17, 2022. <https://www.cnvc.org/training/resource/needs-inventory>.
- The Center for Nonviolent Communication. “Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life.” 2015. <https://www.cnvc.org/training/resource/book-chapter-1>.
- The Center for Nonviolent Communication. “What is Nonviolent Communication.” Accessed October 17, 2022. <https://www.nonviolentcommunication.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/What-is-NVC-Information.pdf>.

SESSION 4: Using Inter and Intrafaith Dialogue to P/CVE

Objective

In this fourth session, our objective will be to learn about the basic concepts, methodologies, models and tools needed to use intrafaith and interfaith dialogue for peace and reconciliation.

Expected Results

The expected results of this fourth session will be that participants will strengthen their ability and capacity to utilize intrafaith and interfaith dialogue as a tool to build trust and to promote peacebuilding and social inclusion within their P/CVE efforts.

Amount of Time Anticipated for Session 4: 2.5 hours

Agenda

PG. 49 – What is Dialogue?

PG. 53 – Dialogue? Debate? Discussion?

PG. 56 – What is Intrafaith and Interfaith Dialogue?

PG. 62 – Role of Policymakers Within Interfaith Dialogue

PG. 65 – Planning Your Interfaith Dialogue

PG. 67 – Designing Your Interfaith Dialogue

PG. 71 – Implementing Your Own Local Interfaith Dialogue in Partnership with Faith Actors and Institutions

PG. 76 – Monitoring and Evaluation

PG. 78 – Challenges to Implementing Interfaith Dialogue

PG. 85 – Module Certificate

What is Dialogue?



The word “dialogue” is derived from the Greek words “dia” meaning “through” and “logos” meaning “word,” as well as the verb “dialegomai,” which means “to become involved in a conversation with another.” **Dialogue is commonly understood as, “a form of interaction between two or more individuals of different identities that emphasizes self-expression and where each party strives to use active, empathetic and non-judgmental listening in a compassionate spirit of openness and understanding.”** In dialogue, the goal is not always finding a resolution to a problem or settling on a specific tangible action. Instead, the point is to explore and find common ground, which may lead to solutions or cooperation. Successful dialogue includes establishing mutual understanding and increased confidence and trust between the two parties.

Dialogue is like a movement, where those taking part in the exchange explore new possibilities. Participants are open, listen and ask questions. They take their time to savor and digest other viewpoints.

Together they try to figure out what makes sense for one party, what makes sense for the other party, and what sense they can make in concert. This is what makes dialogue ‘special’. Dialogue has proven itself, in theory and practice, to be an effective and efficient tool for creating the positive changes we urgently need as a global community. Dialogue works to de-escalate any stage of a conflict and has value in processes of peacebuilding and policymaking, organizational and societal development, and any initiatives aiming to create more inclusive and peaceful societies.

So why is dialogue a useful tool for resolving community tension and conflict?

- **Dialogue improves all processes in human interaction**, especially where involvement, inclusivity and engagement are needed.
- When dialogue is used to facilitate change or decision-making processes, **it leads to longer-lasting results and sustainable agreements**.
- **Dialogue is an efficient tool to bridge differences and de-escalate tensions** that could otherwise lead to conflict.



Graphic Source: Helde, Mette Lindgren. “The Dialogue Handbook.” 2020. Danish Youth Council and Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution.
https://duf.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/Editor/documents/International/Dialogambassadoererne/DialogueHandbook_final-169600_1_.pdf.

Principles of Dialogue

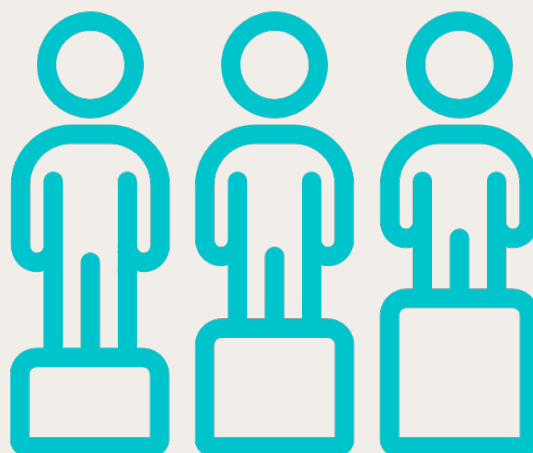
There are four basic principles which together make up the foundation on which the dialogue rests: trust, openness, honesty and equality. The four principles are interrelated and constitute preconditions for dialogue. They foster dialogue and are in turn fostered by dialogue.

Trust – When there is trust between persons in communication, it is easier to express opposing views. However, trust is not always a given when people wish to enter into a dialogue. On the contrary, opposite opinions can give rise to distrust and unease. Thus, the dialogical form per se can help build that trust. One party listens, while the other feels heard. It is reassuring to feel listened to. It gives rise to trust and courage to open up. The parties dare to communicate their views and profound values more honestly, even when they differ from each other. They begin to listen to one another and are inclined to ask more exploratory questions. Thus, a virtuous circle is set in motion.

Openness – Openness is both being honest about what you represent and being open to what the other suggests. You are open to understand the other's views and what underlies them, without necessarily having to accept them or agree with them. Openness is related to the building of trust. Communication driven by inquiry and curiosity signals openness and introduces trust into the conversation.

Honesty – Honesty is about authenticity in being who you are, both in your words and your way of being. Honesty fosters openness and trust, while dishonesty fosters mistrust. Honesty is required in communication to let the recipient gain insights into the needs and values that underlie the viewpoints. It is necessary to build trust in the relationship and to come across as authentic.

Equality – Dialogue is based on the value that everybody has something to say, regardless of status, gender, ethnic background, etc. In a dialogue everybody joins in on an equal footing. They may differ in status and power, but all voices have the same right to be heard. Notwithstanding differences in status, dialogue means seeking to communicate as equals. **This calls for paying attention to the implications of status and power in the relationship.** It might be necessary to compensate for discrepancies in status and power, say, by showing special consideration for the party holding less relative power.



Defining Dialogue Activity



This exercise aims to define and delimit dialogue as a concept, and to show its multifaceted and complex nature. This will enable participants to feel part of the process of defining and refining the concept of dialogue.

To Prep:

- Introduce the exercise with a brainstorming session, in which the facilitator asks participants to say the first word that springs to mind when she says: dialogue! (the word is written on the flip chart or blackboard).
- All words spoken by participants are written down on the flip chart or the blackboard under the headline 'Dialogue'.
- Depending on the words spoken, you reflect on the meaning together with participants. For example, the words can be divided into categories that refer to the nature of dialogue (basic values, frame of mind and practice), principles of dialogue and difference between dialogue and discussion. It depends on what feels relevant in the situation. After that, you write down a definition on the flipchart, for example:
 - *Dialogue is a special form of communication, in which participants seek to actively create greater mutual understanding and deeper insight.*

Questions for Reflection:

What did you gain from seeing/defining dialogue in this manner?

What are the advantages of dialogue?

Defining Dialogue Activity continued...



Questions for Reflection:

What are the challenges of dialogue?

How do you define success in dialogue initiatives?

What could be the basic objectives of any dialogue?

When is discussion more suitable than dialogue, and vice versa?

Can we use dialogue more than we do? When, how, etc.?

Dialogue? Debate? Discussion?



Dialogue is often confused with other ways of communicating, such as debate, discussion or argument. These forms of interaction are often employed in negotiations, where the goal is to devise solutions, arrive at joint decisions or reach an agreement. Emphasis rests on convincing, persuading and “getting your own way” – whoever has the best argument, wins. Debates and discussions are equally important in negotiations and as tools to reach agreements and results. Dialogue is not always the best or only way to communicate. It can be entirely appropriate to try to persuade others of personal views or values, to assert opinions or claim rights.

In situations where discussion and debate are the most obvious ways to communicate, a dialogic approach is often of great advantage – including when the focus is on making decisions, reaching agreements or closing a deal, or when you are convinced that your opinion is the right one. Participants in a dialogue actively explore both the subject on the agenda, the viewpoints on the subject matter, and the underlying beliefs. This type of conversation gives rise to trust, reassurance, confidence and a deeper degree of contact between the parties communicating. This strengthens the relationship and bridges the various beliefs and values in play.

Discussion or dialogue – or both?

Somewhat crudely, the differences between dialogue and discussion are as follows:

DIALOGUE	DISCUSSION/DEBATE
We try to learn	We try to win
We try to understand	We try to persuade with arguments
We listen to become wiser	We listen to identify flaws and errors
We try to express our own views and values as clearly as possible	We defend our position
We tolerate each other's differences	We have become more alike, or we have adapted
Nobody loses, both parties win	The loser surrenders
The destination is the journey towards greater understanding and deeper insight	The goal is to win the argument
Picture: a circle	Picture: a boxing ring

Source: Mette Lindgren Helde. “The Dialogue Handbook - the art of conducting a dialogue and facilitating dialogue workshops.” 2012. https://duf.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/Editor/documents/International/Publikationer/DialogHaandbog_UK_new.pdf.

When differing values, beliefs and views clash, our own categorizations and prejudices are often barriers to understanding. In a dialogue, one tries to take in the perspective of the other party, though being aware that one sometimes just cannot understand, let alone accept, their opinion. Merely recognizing this fact gives rise to greater mutual understanding of each other as the distinct human beings that we are. Thus, dialogue creates deeper respect for differences and an opportunity to become wiser. Because when we share our differences, knowledge and insights, something extraordinary emerges: a synergy effect. In somewhat simplified terms, this means that several people create something together that exceeds the sum of what each of them creates on their own.

When we manage to move beyond viewpoints and prejudices – both our own and those of others – it creates an opportunity for entirely new insights. Insight denotes understanding at a deeper level given the kind of person you are, including your experiences, values and feelings. Insight is related to ‘aha!’ experiences and realizations. It arises when what you used to think or understand is perceived in a new light. It happens through dialogue and reflection, when we put our thoughts.

Nature of Dialogue

A three-dimensional metaphor – **the head, the heart and the hand** – can be used to illustrate the multifaceted nature of dialogue. When we want to understand, deal with, conduct and teach dialogue, all three dimensions are important.

The head refers to the mind and points to the importance of gaining knowledge about dialogue with the purpose of developing an open mind and a dialogic mindset – that is, an awareness and ability

to consciously choose a dialogic approach, even in situations of profound disagreement that could otherwise lead to escalation of a conflict or even a fight. Instead, the question should be asked: “Do I want or need to (fight and) win? Or can I look for opportunities to enter into a dialogue with an open mind, trying to understand other perspectives?”



Graphic Source: KAICIID. “Guide to interreligious dialogue: Building differences and building sustainable societies.” 2021. <https://www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/guide-interreligious-dialogue>.

The heart refers to a set of dialogic values – respect for differences, equality, openness, tolerance, acknowledgement, empathy and compassion. The dimension of the heart implies a belief in dialogue as a valuable bridge-builder between people of different opinions, backgrounds and identities. The shared human desire to connect with others provides the opportunity to understand even those who may be perceived as different.

Finally, the hand refers to a set of practical skills and actions needed to make the dialogue happen.

The skills are communicative techniques and tools that support and enhance the dialogue – for instance, enquiry and curiosity, which can be shown by asking open, explorative questions and applying active listening with an open heart and mind. The hand dimension can also include certain guidelines for constructive behaviors that encourage dialogue and support a conversation or process.



Below are examples of an approach to dialogue.

Governing Principles	Goals	Qualities	Behaviors
Inclusiveness	Engage all parts of the system	Respectfulness	Inquire to learn
Joint ownership	Create the conditions for change on the basis of important issues	Transparency	Share what you know
Learning	Foster learning; facilitate deeper understanding	Openness	Listen empathically
Humanity	Create the sense of safety for openness	Empathy	Reflect back what you are hearing
Long-term perspective	Foster commitment to achieving sustainable change	Authenticity	Explore underlying assumptions – yours and those of others
		Patience	Acknowledge emotions as well as ideas and opinions
		Flexibility	Adjust to course to reflect new knowledge or understanding

What is Intrafaith and Interfaith Dialogue?



For dialogue, it is recommended to focus on opportunities related to commonalities between religions and cultures. Most of the world's religions are built on the same basic human values of respect, freedom, justice, community, love and compassion. The majority of religious and spiritual traditions highly value principles of acknowledgment, remorse, tolerance and forgiveness – principles linked to those of non-violent conflict resolution, peace and reconciliation processes. Choosing an intrafaith or interfaith dialogue approach that **focuses on common values found in most religions** is a fruitful technique for relating conversations and projects to the convictions and motivations of those with religious identities.

In preparing for an interfaith dialogue, as a prerequisite, it could be helpful to first start with an intrafaith dialogue. **Intrafaith dialogue aims to create introspective awareness and focus on the needs and challenges within the same faith groups and religious and cultural identities.** Beginning with intrafaith dialogue can be a complementary element in preparing the specific religious community for the next step of working with other faiths in interfaith dialogue in order to enhance the joint understanding within the same faith community. It can also offer an avenue for discussion between more moderate and radical views and possibilities for a change in the interpretation of the faith.

See this example of intrafaith dialogue from Iraq: After Saddam Hussein was ousted from power, a number of political prisoners were released. Some of these political prisoners were imprisoned as the result of information from neighbors or someone they know. After they were released, the former prisoners started threatening and retaliating against these individuals. These individuals went to their Sheiks to inform them of the situation. The former prisoners immediately stopped their threats, waiting

to be adjudicated by the Sheiks. The Sheiks of both the accused and the accuser started an investigation to determine guilt, using the religious principles of evidence-seeking to investigate the situation. This is an example of intrafaith dialogue to resolve a conflict between two parties of the same faith group.

If the violation is determined to be dishonorable to the whole tribe of the accused, the tribe distances itself from that person, forcing the accused to find a solution by himself. If not, the tribe will pitch in to pay compensation to the aggrieved family. In such cases, the community will come together in dialogue to negotiate the amount of compensation until they reach an appropriate amount. At this stage, dialogue becomes a community effort in order to arrive at a financial compensation that will be satisfactory to the victim.

Whereas, interreligious or interfaith dialogue, aims to create mutual understanding and respect by focusing on similarities and differences between faith groups and religious and cultural identities. Interfaith dialogue can assist in solving disagreements, issues or tensions at risk of escalating into violent conflict, especially in contexts where cultural and religious identities are at stake or part of the subject matter. Interfaith dialogue strives to create trusting connections that support people to live and cooperate with each other across boundaries.

To learn more about interfaith dialogue, watch KAICCID's video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJaeJz9jQU8>.



To support P/CVE efforts, religious institutions must also look to increase intra and interfaith dialogue initiatives within the community to and serve as bridge builders to create safe spaces and build positive inter-community relations and narratives. In North Macedonia, the interfaith dialogue between Orthodox and Muslim religious leaders, clergy, and communities, in order to create better understanding, and acceptance of each other is an interesting example of this. Indeed, both religious communities – the Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Religious Community have been engaged in activities promoting interfaith tolerance and co-existence. While both types of dialogue are helpful for building trust and mutual cooperation in promoting long-term peace, for the purposes of this training, we will focus on interfaith dialogue.

Interfaith dialogue has the advantage of appealing to a global majority – those who identify with a certain faith group or tradition. Dialogue, whether interfaith or intercultural, provides valuable support for involving and building bridges between all parties, regardless of social background, religious beliefs, national borders, or political and economic interests. Interfaith dialogue consists of the same qualities as dialogue and has, over the past decades, shown its force in managing problems and contributing to positive change processes, especially where:

- the stakeholders identify strongly with a religious belief;
- the issues at stake are perceived to be related to differences in religious beliefs or cultures; and
- the cultural, social and religious boundaries hinder the implementation of proposed solutions.

Interreligious dialogue can also be understood as theological conversations about holy scripts or disputes about different directions or interpretations of certain faiths.

Interest in interreligious dialogue is increasing for some of the following reasons:

- **Appeal:** Interfaith dialogue recognizes and appeals to religious identity. The notion of interfaith dialogue makes immediate sense to individuals, groups and institutions that define themselves as religious. It can engage people at the level of their identity, deepest beliefs and practices.
- **Addressing Tension and Conflict Between Faith Groups:** Interfaith dialogue provides opportunities to address religious and cultural dimensions of the issues at stake with mutual respect and through focusing on differences and similarities. It acknowledges the inherent complexity that often emerges when the parties involved belong to different religious or cultural groups. Interfaith dialogue contributes to the creation of clarity and cooperation, avoiding misinterpretations and increased polarization while shedding light on the common interests of a group or community.
- **Inclusion:** Dialogue calls for inclusion. Participants will feel more included when the importance of having a strong religious identity is acknowledged as a common interest from which to start. It is not necessary to be religious or identify with a certain faith community to engage in interfaith dialogue, as long as the purpose is finding mutual understanding and approaching differences in a constructive manner.

Interfaith dialogue as a way to create social cohesion and to empower women and youth.



Photo Source: KAICIID. "Guide to interreligious dialogue: Building differences and building sustainable societies." 2021. <https://www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/guide-interreligious-dialogue>.

In Nigeria, Justina Mike Ngwobia (<https://www.kaiciid.org/what-we-do/kaiciid-fellows-programme/elder-justina-mike-ngwobia>) is the Executive Director of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Movement, an interfaith organization. She works across faith, cultural and tribal lines to resolve conflicts. She created a network of female peacebuilders after their town became polarized with Christians and Muslims moving to different areas. The Network promotes interfaith and intercultural dialogue as alternatives to violent conflict. Justina discovered the crisis was largely the result of political manipulation: people were using religious groups for their own gain, leading to violent conflicts. The network offers training for women in conflict resolution and transformation, interfaith and ecumenical learning, democracy education, and human rights and gender sensitization, with the purpose of contributing to a lasting and sustainable peace in northern Nigeria.

Dialogue is key for promoting inclusivity and engaging women, youth, marginalized groups, diaspora communities and people who are typically not at the center of negotiations or policymaking. It allows diverse groups to be informed about peace processes and decision making, thereby promoting transparency and dispelling potential misinformation. Thus, dialogue should also be understood as a core preventative measure.

What are the **possible accomplishments** of interfaith dialogue?

- **Learning and understanding** of other faiths.
- **Rehumanizing individuals** of other faiths.
- **Spreading the message of interfaith peace.**
- **Developing specific joint actions** between the faith communities.



Corner Game Activity



This exercise highlights how we have different views, and how values and emotions underlie our opinions. It serves to explain what a dialogue is and to conduct one in practice around a subject that is close to participants' hearts. This may concern, say, an issue in their organization, school or workplace. The exercise highlights the challenge of staying within the dialogue and avoiding straying into discussion, as well as the differences between dialogue and discussion. It is well-suited to bring the principles of dialogue regarding openness and honesty into play among the participants. It can be combined with other exercises.

To Prep:

- Participants are asked to stand up. The facilitator asks a question concerning an issue in which the participants are involved, and which has many potential answers.
- The facilitator has already written down four possible answers to the question on large Post-its or pieces of paper. These are stuck on the wall (or held by other facilitators) in the four corners of the room.

Start the Activity:

- Participants are now asked to position themselves in the corner with the answer that is closest to being in keeping with their own view. Everybody must choose a corner.
- Example of a burning question and four answers: *How would you like to care for your parents when they are old?*
 - They will come and live with me.
 - They can come and live with me if they want.
 - They can live with me, but only for some time.
 - They will live in a care home.
- The answers must be phrased so as to make the differences between them clear, or it becomes hard to choose a corner.
- Participants are given 5-10 minutes to talk to others who have gone to the same corner about the reasons for their choice. Then at least a couple of members of each group provide feedback at a plenary session on what they have talked about. The participants learn more about what lies behind the standpoints. And they discover that a variety of views/values may substantiate the same answer. Now there is an opportunity to ask clarifying questions between the groups. The facilitator asks in a more exploratory manner, if no questions are forthcoming from the other participants.

The various corners are welcome to exchange views about their choices. Then the facilitator asks if, on
- the basis of the various presentations, anybody wants to change their corner. If so, they change their corner.

The facilitator inquires into the cause: *What made you change your mind?* The facilitator also continues
- to reflect with participants on this, which is linked to the concept of dialogue.

Corner Game Activity continued...



Group Reflection Questions:

To kick-start reflection in a relatively quiet group, the facilitator can join in. She can polarize (exacerbate differences between) opinions or ask questions that indicate similarities between different views, depending on what she thinks will invigorate the exercise. This can take place by means of questions that speculate about the underlying prejudices and interpretations, for example:

Do you think it reflects a lack of love if you do not want your parents to live with you?

Might there be causes other than selfishness for not wanting your parents to live with you? (if selfishness has been mentioned as a cause).

Corner Game Activity continued...



In this manner, the facilitator supports the group in examining the values behind the various views. If a discussion arises between participants in the various corners, the facilitator lets it carry on for a while. Then it is stopped, and the facilitator talks with participants about what happened to their communication right now.

What just happened to your communication?

Why was it difficult to continue to conduct a dialogue?

What was it like for you when it turned into a discussion?

How can you stay on the dialogical track?

When might it be relevant to leave the dialogue and take up discussion instead?

Role of Policymakers Within Interfaith Dialogue



Interfaith dialogue serves to transform perspectives and support viewing religious and cultural differences not as obstacles but as starting points of a process that aims to find sustainable solutions for the common good. **Initiatives that build bridges between religious and secular stakeholders create mutual confidence and have a larger impact overall,** as they improve inclusion and show that cooperation between different groups is possible.

Policymakers play a vital role in peace work. They establish laws and policies that support moving our societies in a more sustainable direction. Policymakers at all levels can (many already do) use their positions of responsibility and influence to advocate for dialogue, peace and social cohesion. Some examples of this include:

- Searching for a more in-depth understanding of how laws and policies can contribute to social cohesion and peace;
- Aiming to transform strained vertical relationships between the state and civil society by including all groups and increasing respect for religious and cultural diversity;
- Cultivating trust in government and official institutions that exist for the benefit of all members of society; and
- Engaging in partnerships and networks with faith-based organizations and religious communities to promote and implement policies to reach out to diverse members of their societies.

As many are already doing, their position of responsibility and influence can be used at all levels to advocate for dialogue, peace and social cohesion.

This includes, for example:

- Promoting and sustaining peace by denouncing all violence in the name of religion;
- Calling to protect religious and cultural diversity by speaking against oppression, marginalization, discrimination and persecution of minorities in the name of religion;
- Encouraging non-violence and dialogue when violent extremists seek to manipulate religion to justify violent actions; and
- Engaging in partnerships and networks with other faith-based organizations, religious communities and secular institutions at local, national and global levels.

Religious leaders and policymakers may see the issues at stake within the context of their own perspectives and roles. While religious leaders typically work as moral and spiritual leaders in their communities, policymakers most often approach issues from a secular point of view. To ensure meaningful engagement between both sides, **both parties should make the effort to understand each other.** Policymakers can acknowledge that every religious tradition offers resources for peace, reconciliation and the intention of living in harmony with others, despite their differences. Religious actors can embrace processes of rational analysis and use evidence-based information when starting peacebuilding initiatives, as evidence has the potential to influence the policymaking process. Both approaches can help build bridges between policymakers and religious communities, as well as religious leaders and civil society actors. In some parts of the world, policymakers are also religious leaders – and vice versa. In such cases, the importance of reaching out to policymakers or people working in civil society is especially clear, with the purpose of creating cooperative platforms for both secular and non-secular actors.

Speed Dating on Dialogue Activity



This is a great exercise to play when breaking the ice in partnerships between policymakers, faith actors and civil society actors. Familiarize yourself with it [here](#)!

In this exercise participants have a fast exchange about their understanding of dialogue through a set of short questions. They can share their own perspectives and experiences and explore those present in the group.

To Prep:

- Groups of two chairs facing each other are spread around the room. The participants are seated in pairs and the facilitator explains the exercise.
- In the pairs, the participants are divided into two roles: 'person A' and 'person B.' To save time, the facilitator can pre-assign the roles by placing signs on the chairs saying A and B.

Start the Activity:

- The facilitator reads the first question and person A repeats it to her partner. Then person B has two minutes to answer.
- After two minutes, the facilitator gives a signal to stop and person B repeats the same question for person A to answer.
- After the question is answered by both, everyone gets up and forms new pairs. Then the facilitator asks the next question. This can go on for several rounds.
- Suggestions for questions: The questions can be adapted depending on the group and context.
 - Did you engage in a dialogue recently? What made it a dialogue?
 - Did you recently find yourself in a conversation that was not a dialogue? What was missing?
 - Are there groups in society that you find it difficult to have a dialogue with? Why?
 - Is there something problematic about dialogue?
 - On a scale from 1 to 10 how dialogical do you think you are? Why?
 - Are there situations where you wish for more dialogue?
 - What is a good example of dialogue for you?

Speed Dating on Dialogue Activity continued...



Group Reflection Questions:

- The participants can be invited to share interesting or surprising statements they heard or the new insights they gained:

What was the most surprising answer you got?

What was the most interesting answer you got?

- The facilitator can explain to the participants that they should not recount exactly what was shared with them and by whom, but instead try to reframe the answer so that the general picture comes through, but without putting the person who answered under the spotlight.

- The facilitator can also ask whether the exercise made them realize something about themselves:

What did you discover during this dialogue?

Did you discover something about yourself? If yes, what?

Planning Your Interfaith Dialogue



There are five guiding principles to start interfaith dialogue initiatives. These five principles can serve as inspiration for promoting or starting dialogue initiatives to address issues of importance in individuals' contexts. These principles should be understood as points of awareness rather than a strict recipe. They are applicable at the individual, institutional and societal level. Asking these basic questions is a solid entry point for starting a new dialogue initiative.

PRINCIPLE 1: Purpose

WHY ARE YOU STARTING YOUR INITIATIVE?

A clear purpose drives and motivates any change process. This purpose can keep the initiative going, especially during difficult times. Determine the deep purpose for change and what drives your action.

PRINCIPLE 2: People

WHO IS CALLED?

Dialogue initiatives for positive change are a multilateral effort, and each actor has a role to play. If any important actors are excluded the dialogue becomes less effective. Include all stakeholders, leaders and actors from religious communities, policymakers at all levels, and representatives from business, media and civil society.

PRINCIPLE 3: Place

WHERE ARE YOU?

Any initiative that aims to transform behaviors, mindsets and structures must always center on where the change should take place. Looking at best practices and successes of other programs can serve as a reference and inspiration. Adapt your working strategy to the challenges and your own context.

PRINCIPLE 4: Plan

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

Planning is a matter of balance. Putting effort and resources into analysis and planning is key. It can feel scary or difficult to shift from planning to action but moving forward is only possibly through putting plans into practice. Stick to the plan, evaluate, change and adjust as needed.

PRINCIPLE 5: Patience

HOW WILL YOU STAY RESILIENT?

In the process of change, whether a small action or a major cultural transformation, reaching goals can take a long time. One intervention or project is seldom enough. Sometimes lifelong engagement is needed. Support and cheer on yourself and your collaborators and celebrate every success you achieve.

Let's dive deeper.

The first step is to clarify the purpose – the “why.” Gaining basic knowledge about the theories and methods of interfaith dialogue should come next. Thirdly, make a plan by defining a clear common goal, an outline of the expected results, and some milestones to serve as routes for action in practice. Planning is about making choices. A structured dialogue process is an effective way to ensure appropriate choices are made. In general, the more conscious the choices, the better the outcome. A well-known framework for this approach is the theory of change. This theory assumes that reality is ever changing, and that circumstances and humans are unpredictable – preparing a plan is recommended, but we should be aware that different systems around us hold an inherent complexity that affects the possibilities of reaching our goals.

The theory of change supports the process of deciding where to start, the steps to take, and in which order, by beginning with the expected result. We then work backwards until we land at the starting point, and from there actions can be selected for moving forward. The theory of change enables an integrated approach to project and program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and communication. When developing a theory of change, a variety of stakeholders should be involved, including other program colleagues, beneficiaries and partners. The process of developing a theory of change together – and the dialogue that accompanies it – is often as important as the diagram it produces.

Check out this interfaith dialogue initiative in Kosovo below: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJ5RLqv6BXg>.

Planning an initiative or a project:

Dialogue principles and processes are an integral part of implementing the following six steps:

1. Describe the problem you want to solve with your interfaith dialogue initiative.
2. Define the desired impact of the initiative and the target audience you want to reach.
3. Take an analytical approach and map the current situation.
4. Develop a theory of change together with the relevant stakeholders.
5. Make a plan defining the intended outputs, outcomes and results and work your way backwards to define the actions needed to reach your goals and make your theory of change diagram.
6. Start working!



Designing Your Interfaith Dialogue



An interfaith dialogue is a planned, structured learning process for a group, which actively involves the participants, and which has a particular purpose. It always offers scope for participants to contribute actively. The workshop must be tailor-made to its participants on the basis of their needs and the overall purpose of the event. Reflection on various activities must be incorporated throughout and variation must be at the heart of the planning.

The elementary design of an interfaith dialogue is composed of three parts:

- 1. Introduction:** opening and setting the framework
- 2. Action:** the activities (introductory talks, exercises, dialogue, reflection, conversations, etc.)
- 3. Finalization:** summing up, rounding off and evaluation



Introduction

The introduction must capture the participants' attention. It needs to give a clear idea of what the workshop is about, and it should motivate participants to get involved. The introduction comprises the opening and the setting of the framework for the workshop. **The opening** serves to establish a common understanding within the group as regards the purpose, content and form of the workshop. **The setting of the framework** aims to ensure an optimal process by fostering an atmosphere among participants that is conducive to dialogue and learning. This is achieved by bringing the principles of dialogue – **trust, openness, honesty and equality** – into play. Participants need to feel at ease, become keen and muster the courage to join in. **You do this by agreeing on a set of rules for the workshop, and by using icebreakers, in which participants 'discover' one another and begin to enter into contact.**

The opening and setting of the framework typically comprise:

- Entry – before you start. Readyng the room and yourself.
- Welcome, introduction of facilitators and participants
- Presentation of the program and issue
- Practical information
- Rules for the dialogue
- Icebreakers

A less experienced workshop facilitator can be tempted to race through the introduction in order to get on with the dialogue. However, consider that the dialogue has actually already begun, especially if you involve participants in, for example, laying down the rules.

Laying down the rules can include instructions, such as:

- Chatham House Rule or asking participants to keep what is said in the room confidential
- To respect differences
- Not to interrupt others when they are speaking
- To allow for all participants the time and space to speak
- For participants to not give anyone advice
- For participants to listen to others
- For participants to speak in the first person, using “I” statements
- Allowing participants the opportunity to skip answering a question that they feel uncomfortable answering or may find triggering

Action

The action is the workshop ‘core’ and what tends to take up the most time and attention. It comprises introductory talks, activities, exercises, sessions of shared reflection or of group work, discussion, questions and answers, dialogues and monologues. This is where the dialogue is deepened and unfolds in earnest.

Finalization

The final stage aims to bring together any loose ends and properly say goodbye. This is important for the sake of participants as well as the workshop facilitator. The finalization comprises three parts:

- Summing up of the content;
- Rounding off of the process; and
- Evaluation in terms of feedback from participants on the workshop.

The summing up focuses on revisiting key points, pearls of wisdom, and aha! experiences that came to light throughout the workshop. The participants are reminded of what they have learned, and they get an opportunity to reflect on their own learning. A workshop about dialogue often touches on profound values and unleashes powerful emotions. A proper rounding off helps the participants (and the facilitator) to leave the workshop in an emotionally appropriate state. It highlights the process and what it has been like to take part in it.

Furthermore, planning must take into account that the workshop has three dimensions:

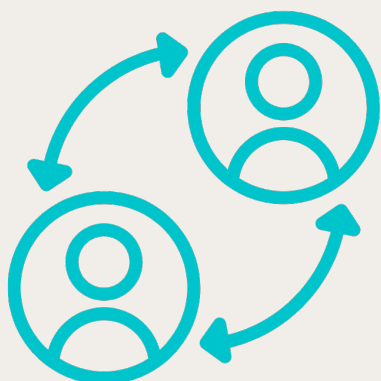
- 1. Content:** What will the workshop be about? What is going to happen?
- 2. Form:** How should the process be structured? How is it going to happen?
- 3. Process:** How do you prepare for the dynamics and what is to take place between the participants? To what extent are the participants to be involved and how?



Form

The form is the way in which things are done and is difficult to disentangle from the content. Form and content make up a whole, and ideally, they go hand in hand. The form in an interfaith dialogue concerns, for instance, how tables and chairs have been placed, and how you come across as a facilitator through your communication (everything you say and do). It includes, for example, how personal or formal you are, as well as your way of instructing, reflecting and holding dialogues. During planning, you make conscious choices so that the form underpins rather than contradicts the content.

For instance, placing chairs in a circle is standard in a dialogue. But you should always consider if this is really the optimal solution for this particular group, day and program. And even if you have a strong sense of humor, it may not be the personal characteristic most appropriate to exhibit with this particular group and subject matter. Everything you say and do is amplified and interpreted more keenly when you take to the floor and all eyes are on you as the leader of the workshop. This calls for additional thoughtfulness and for striking the right balance between being yourself as you are and being conscious of how your form comes across to others.



Process

In an interfaith dialogue, participants are always involved in the process. However, how and to what extent must be looked into during the planning. Participant involvement comes naturally in connection with the myriad dialogue activities throughout the workshop. In the opening stage, it obviously happens when participants have to agree on the rules. They can also have their say on what issues should be placed on the agenda, how many breaks should be held and when, and about their expectations as regards what they hope to gain from it. When you compare and reconcile expectations, you start from the contract, that is, what has been agreed beforehand, checking with participants if they are okay with this. If not, the program is adjusted as much as possible to their needs. This approach is an advantage if you have decided to favor a high degree of participants' involvement in the process. It will make them jump right into having a dialogue with one another about something they can all relate to.

Towards the end of the workshop, participants can be involved more or less directly in the summing up and rounding off. And always in the evaluation. In the latter, you must keep in mind that there are two tracks: What have the participants learned that was new to them (their gains)? And how did they like taking part in the dialogue (feedback to you as a facilitator)?

Facilitator

The person, group or organization calling people to dialogue has the responsibility to plan and conduct the process. How it evolves, however, is a shared responsibility of the group. Dialogue will unfold in the most rewarding way when one or more people take on the role of facilitator, convener or moderator. **Their purpose is to conduct and lead the process and hold space for participants to easily engage in dialogue.** When people gather to have a conversation on high stakes issues or are already in the midst of an escalated conflict, the facilitator has a certain wider responsibility. They need to be experienced and skilled in facilitation, dialogue and conflict management and have a deep respect for the delicacy of such processes. If the process is not conducted well, what was meant to resolve problems and build connections could have the opposite effect and escalate the tension, which may lead to conflict.

Building bridges with dialogue is best done with a sense of established purpose. If the participating individual or organization does not feel ready to convene a dialogue, partnering up with other dedicated people or organizations with more skills and experience is recommended.



Implementing Your Own Local Interfaith in Partnership with Faith Actors and Institutions



The ten principles and six phases of dialogue go hand in hand. These models are built on widespread understanding of how dialogic processes work and what is needed to plan and conduct them in a productive way. Both models also serve as an efficient framework for the early planning stages of dialogue, including when reaching out to potential participants to start building bridges across differences.

The following ten principles serve as a guideline when forming a dialogue's basic structure. Some of the principles are the participants' responsibility, while others fall under the duties of the organization or person leading the process.

The Ten Principles of Dialogue



Photo Source: KAICIID. "Guide to interreligious dialogue: Building differences and building sustainable societies." 2021. <https://www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/guide-interreligious-dialogue>.

1. Establish a safe space. A safe environment encourages participants in the dialogue to express feelings, ideas and even negative perceptions of others. Some features that help create a feeling of trust and openness include treating each other equally despite power asymmetries and sharing time and space fairly among all participants. To cultivate a safe space, the facilitator also considers the physical environment, respects different customs and religious, cultural and gender needs, and balances external pressures such as security agencies or the media.

2. Agree that the main purpose of the dialogue is learning. The participants should approach the dialogue with the intention of learning about others and their perceptions of the subject of the dialogue. This is essential for success, as it counters the negotiator or debater approach, which aims to prove one right and the other wrong. The dialogue dimensions of the head (the mind) and the heart (the will) are part of this principle.

3. Use appropriate communication skills. There are several types of communication tools that you should utilize within your interfaith dialogue process.

■ First, you should enter into **engaging contact**. Dialogue brings us into engaging contact. And communication endowed with this quality, in turn, nourishes the dialogue. You feel heard, seen and understood. You experience that you are truly seeing, hearing and understanding the other. What matters is to be at the only place where you can be at the only time that is possible: right here and right now. To pull this off, it is a good starting point to know your own views and values, and to be in touch with your own feelings and needs.

■ Second, you should be **listening actively and with empathy**, speaking with sincerity and respect. Active listening is a simple and effective tool to show that you have really heard what the other has said. You express genuine interest and curiosity by being fully tuned into what the other is saying. You ask questions and use confirmatory and appreciative body language, such as eye contact and nodding. You signal that you really do want to understand what is on the other person's mind. In its purest form, active listening means disregarding yourself. This is a key point to notice. We tend to want to take to the stage to have our say. And we want to help. There is nothing wrong with that. But in conversations where actively listening has been deliberately chosen as a tool to stimulate dialogue, you must resist the temptation to speak your mind. You refrain from giving advice and suggesting solutions. Unless you are asked directly. Otherwise, you are about to take over the conversation and hog the limelight. And this is not nearly as conducive to engaging contact and dialogue.

■ Finally, you should practice **mirroring**, including asking open-ended questions and repeating (parts of) what the other person says are simple ways to invite dialogue and increase mutual understanding. **Mirroring means rendering, word by word, what the other has just said.** It is a simple technique also used in active listening. Mirroring signals to the other that you have heard what was said. At the same time, there is a certain mechanical effect enabling you to understand something better when you have said it aloud. Hence the expression of 'savoring' the viewpoints of the other person. **You can also mirror the other person with your body language.** For example, you can lean forward when the other does so; put your hand under

your cheek, when the other does the same; or take up eye contact, when the other invites you to do so. We do this all by ourselves once the engaging contact has been established, and when we want a deeper contact to be there. But we can also stimulate the contact by deliberately mirroring the other.



Mette Lindgren Helde. "The Dialogue Handbook - the art of conducting a dialogue and facilitating dialogue workshops." 2012. https://duf.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/Editor/documents/International/Publikationer/DialogHaandbog_UK_new.pdf.

4. Set proper ground rules. Ground rules help to facilitate dialogue and support a safe environment. The rules can be established together with the participants or laid out at the beginning by the facilitator. Inviting participants to adjust or suggest rules is important to encourage the group to take ownership and thus ease their implementation.

5. Take risks, express feelings and confront perceptions with honesty. Dialogue aims to build confidence and provide a feeling of safety in the group. Participants should be encouraged to participate actively, speak openly and from the heart, and listen with attention to others' thoughts

and feelings. Taking risks can enhance the possibility for deeper learning and understanding of the self and others.

6. Put relationships before issues. Dialogue is a transformative process, based on building relationships and trust between different personalities and identities to overcome misunderstandings and manage differences. A way to do this is to see the other party as a partner, not a rival, and to notice a common interest in solving the issue instead of letting it be something that divides us. Even if the issues are not resolved among the dialogue participants, the objective remains to build sustainable relationships between them.

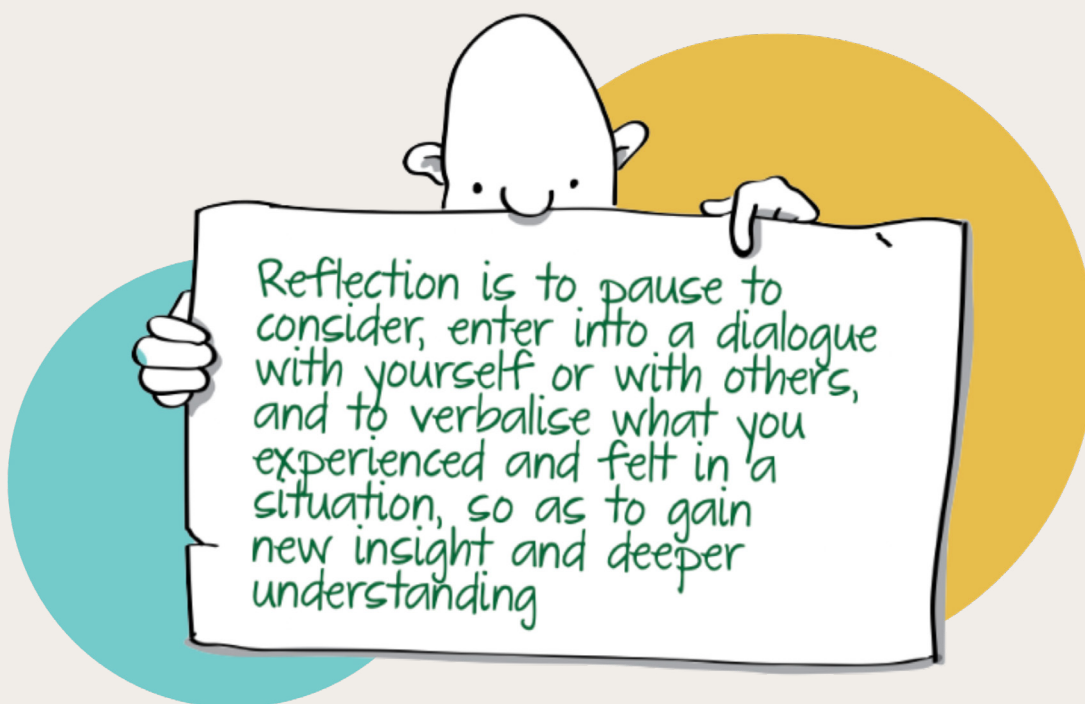
7. Gradually address the hard questions and gradually depart from them. Since investing in the relationship is vital for the success of the dialogue, we need to approach the problematic topic gradually. The more we invest in building the relationship, the easier it will become to address the hard questions. Addressing the hard questions can make the participants emotional; it is important to depart from these topics gradually and focus on the relationship and the common needs and interests of solving the issue.



8. Do not avoid difficult issues or quit. A dialogue often becomes challenging as we move through the different stages of the process. When difficult issues emerge, it is a sign that confidence has increased and the group dares to share what is important to them. It is essential to stick to the purpose of learning, creating mutual understanding and building relationships and not let the group derail into a discussion of what or who is right or wrong. Quitting in the middle of the difficult topics can create more damage than healing. Focus should be on creating clarity about the root causes of the issues and how different perspectives may contribute to a new common understanding and even a solution.

9. Expect to be changed. Dialogue provides the opportunity to walk in the shoes of others. By sharing perceptions, and resolving misperceptions when needed, we may discover some new perspectives. We should have flexible opinions and be ready to change. This is not about changing our values (although this can happen if we want) but about being open to changing our points of view, stereotypes about others and the way we perceive issues.

10. Bring the change to others. A dialogue can bring new learning, perspectives and relationships. Crossing the bridges we have built creates a space for many new opportunities. It is important to reflect together about how to bring these new perspectives to our communities and take concrete action together or with people from other faith groups or organizations.



The six-phase model explains the different phases that a well-conducted dialogue goes through. These phases are stepping stones that the facilitator needs to ease the dialogic process, both when planning and conducting the dialogue.



Photo Source: KAICIID. "Guide to interreligious dialogue: Building differences and building sustainable societies." 2021. <https://www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/guide-interreligious-dialogue>.

1. Get to know each other: Enter into an encounter with others with an open mind, ready to get to know the self and others in new ways. Be willing to listen to others' points of view and try to understand their identity.

2. Discover biases, fears, and taboos: Listen actively and acknowledge the issues, points or topics where different perceptions, perspectives or understandings can be found. Seek out more information and ask explorative questions to discover the foundations of others' worldviews and thinking patterns.

3. Identify differences and conflict issues: Clarify the issues and find out what is at stake – how you can "agree on where we disagree." Make a common decision on the starting point for the dialogue and what to include in the agenda.

4. Outline commonalities and agreements: Identify common purposes, needs, values and interests. Create distance from biases and look for any common goals.

5. Lay out a plan of concrete action: Talk about what can be done together starting from the agreed common purpose or goal. Clarify the next steps, who else should be involved, and how the common vision for change can be shared with others.

6. Maintain the dialogic relationship: Acknowledge the achievement of reaching a way to cooperate and support a common cause with agreed joint actions. Find out how to keep dialogue active, continue strengthening the new relationships and inspire others to spread positive change.

Monitoring and Evaluation



When implementing your interfaith dialogue, one way to stay on track – to learn from mistakes and successes and make adjustments when needed – is to consciously track how the dialogue is going. This practice, also known as monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), goes hand in hand with the theory of change. It adds to a project by clarifying the approach, rationale and goal and it requires a keen awareness of how to evaluate, including what methods to use and which indicators to monitor.

Evaluating the success of interfaith dialogue:

Research shows that dialogue contributes to positive social change and peacebuilding. However, evaluating the results of smaller dialogue initiatives can be challenging because:

- Results may be difficult to concretize and slower to emerge;
- Initiatives often involve a variety of parties, with dispersed accountability and multiple monitoring points; and
- To be effective, monitoring must capture change at different levels, including the:
 - Activities implemented (the process)
 - Effectiveness of the activities (performance)
 - Outcomes
 - Impact



Higher-level change from substantive partnerships between different individuals, organizations and institutions may be difficult to track in real time at another level without relevant, effective monitoring and adequate resources. This can make it difficult to recognize the effects of a certain activity or the initiative as a whole. Despite these difficulties, the evaluation process should not be skipped. Rather, we should acknowledge the challenges of MEL and use qualitative and quantitative methods to measure results, both tangible and intangible.

Interreligious dialogue can lead to numerous concrete outcomes. In a peacebuilding initiative, for example, the outcome could be the creation of new material or the improvement of existing material for peace-centered religious education, or the building of houses, shelters and schools or fresh research or literature. Activities that have the potential to contribute to peacebuilding and lead to tangible outcomes include joint interfaith work to counter hate speech, respond to health issues, reduce poverty and tackle climate change.

An increase in trust between two different religious or ethnic communities is an example of an intangible outcome. Such a result usually requires extensive joint collaborations in countering hate speech and developing common principles, aspirations and priorities through dialogue and related follow-up activities. These collaborative actions may increase encounters across cultural, ethnic or religious boundaries and create social capital, which could help reduce polarization between groups. These efforts may also lead to changes in discourse on social media or in broadcast news.

Key qualitative criteria for evaluating successes include focusing on changes in relationships, perceptions and beliefs while using narratives, stories and open-ended enquiries. To verify the cause and effect of such peacebuilding initiatives, it is necessary to have a plan and dedicated resources for monitoring and evaluation processes. This could include, for example, in-depth interviews with the target groups experiencing the changes. Such processes should consider monitoring, over time, the external factors that are not directly part of the dialogue process, such as activities by individuals, groups or organizations that may impact the political or peacebuilding context. Since there is no limit to how many of these factors there might be, monitoring should focus on key performance indicators that are integral to the success of the intervention, such as shifts in public opinion and media coverage of the issue.

Hear from three faith actors on how they approached interfaith dialogue in the United States after September 11, 2001: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPnZArtsG_c.



Source: Tedx Talks. "TEDxDU The Interfaith Amigos – Breaking the Taboos of Interfaith Dialogue." May 26, 2011. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPnZArtsG_c.

Challenges to Implementing Interfaith Dialogue



Implementing a dialogue initiative is not done in a day. Even though the dialogic approach involves moving the margins to the mainstream, many institutions and organizations still view dialogue and interfaith dialogue as an exception rather than a rule. Promoting dialogue can feel like an uphill task. It takes resources, determination and courage to build and cross bridges using dialogue. Being aware of these challenges allows for greater resilience when promoting dialogue.

Typical challenges when promoting dialogue include the following:

- **Applying dialogue to contexts that are accustomed to debate can be met with resistance.** For example, this might be the case in politics, where debate is the typical form of communication, and in educational systems dominated by assumptions that only one truth exists and the leader or teacher “is always right.” Working for change might be perceived as questioning the current system or troublemaking and could be viewed as a threat.
- **Dialogue is perceived by some people as “fluffy” because it is sometimes considered intangible and difficult to measure.** This is despite the major positive impact that dialogue can have on change and progress, largely an effect of the resulting mutual trust between parties.
- Resistance for dialogue is natural for us when our worldview and identity are challenged or when others try to persuade us.

Challenges when promoting interfaith dialogue may be tied to several circumstances, such as the following:

- **The importance of a religious identity is perceived in various ways.** Some people cherish religious identity within a certain faith group, although their degrees of commitment and practice may vary. Other people feel skepticism or even reluctance towards religion and find it hard to relate to. Some are not interested in the notion of religion or have more of a secular identity.
- **In some contexts, religion has a negative reputation.** Throughout history, the misuse of religion has, sadly, contributed to human misery. Religious teachings have been exploited to provoke discrimination and incite violence or used by politicians as a tool for mobilizing support for war, exclusion or discriminatory practices.
- **Religion is seen as part of the reason for tensions in society.** Some people associate religion with conflict rather than peace. This may lead to a tendency to exclude faith leaders and faith-based organizations from important decision-making processes. Some societies proceed without an awareness of the importance of including religious or cultural minorities in important decisions.

- **A lack of religious literacy or knowledge of other religions besides our own**, especially when it comes to differences and similarities between various faith groups, can lead to lower trust and increased biases and suspicion between groups.
- **Representation of those who participate may not be representative of the view or make up of the various communities.** Intrafaith and interfaith dialogues can invite exclusion based on existing hierarchical and patriarchal structures and values.
- There may be **language barriers** between the various communities.

There are various ways to overcome these challenges, such as knowing your own trigger points to unpack why certain issues hit a nerve or using words of affirmation rather than negation or criticism. Whatever the challenge may be, it is important to keep an open and respectful environment.

Yes, Ahmed Activity

'No' is a word that can easily block or put an end to any dialogue. This exercise is a fun way to experience saying 'YES' and overcome challenges to dialogue by exploring common ground and coming up with new ideas together. Besides this being a fun exercise, it helps us practice and develop an attitude of acceptance, creative thinking, positivity and openness.

To Prep:

- Two co-facilitators will be ready to do a demonstration in front of the participants. If there is no co-facilitator, the facilitator will need to choose one participant from the group in advance and explain the activity to him or her. Make sure the participant is not too shy and will be comfortable enough to do the demonstration in front of everyone.

Write
down any
thoughts!



Yes, Ahmed Activity continued...



Start the Activity:

- The facilitator explains the exercise as follows: “We all know the sales representatives we see on TV trying to promote and sell a product, such as the toothbrush or storage box which is the solution to all problems. In this exercise, I’m Ahmed, and I’m going to try and sell this pen to you with the help of my colleague Ahmed”.
- Invite participants to watch carefully as they will later be asked to do a similar exercise. Start acting as a demonstration of the exercise, like the example below.
- After the demonstration, participants are grouped in pairs and should be seated with some distance from each other. They are going to act as sales representatives themselves, and will enact a similar conversation, only they are trying to sell a different product of their choice.
- Before they start, the facilitator highlights the following guidelines once more:
 - Both participants’ names in the exercise are Ahmed (or any other name).
 - Both participants should imagine they’re on a TV show promoting the product.
 - One by one, each of the two persons should start saying: “Yes Ahmed” and find a way to repeat what his or colleague said about the object, before adding their own new sentence.

Example:

Ahmed 1: “I’m Ahmed, and this is my colleague Ahmed and we are here to tell you about this magical pen”.

Ahmed 2: “Yes Ahmed, this pen is one of a kind and can write anything in 10 seconds”.

Ahmed 1: “Yes Ahmed, not only can it write anything in 10 seconds, it also plays music when you write with it”.

Ahmed 2: “Yes Ahmed, not just music! It actually can turn into a monitor to show movies”.

Ahmed 1: “Yes Ahmed, not only does it show movies, it is also connected to the internet”.

Ahmed 2: Yes Ahmed, it’s not just the fact that it is connected to the internet that makes it special! Did you know you can use it to make phone calls?”.

Ahmed 1: Yes Ahmed, I know, phone calls! And guess what? It can also measure your blood pressure and heart rate!”.

Ahmed 2: “Yes Ahmed, not only does it measure your blood pressure and rate, it can also heat up your coffee!”.

Ahmed 1: “Yes Ahmed, coffee heating is not the only thing it is good at... It can talk!”

Ahmed 2: “Yes Ahmed, not only can it talk, it also measures weather temperatures and provides ten day weather forecasts”.

Yes, Ahmed Activity continued...



Reflection Process:

- Invite participants to sit in a circle for the reflection. Allow some time for any joking and laughter to dissipate before moving to a more serious reflection.

Reflection Questions:

How did you feel during this exercise?

How was it for you to hear your colleague replying with 'yes' to you every time?

How was it for you to have to start your reply with 'yes'?

Did it help to hear your colleague repeat what you were saying before adding something?

Do you think this "yes, and..." tool can be useful in real-life conversations? How?

Yes, Ahmed Activity continued...



Reflection Questions:

Can you think of real-life conversations you had, where sentences would usually start with 'no' or "I disagree with you"? How did that feel and how did you react?

Can you think of real-life conversations that remind you of the one you had in this exercise?

Which sentences, words, or ways of speaking can support a positive and accepting way of communicating with each other?

Would you try this way of communicating in your daily life? Why and with whom?

Additional Resources for Session 4



- Helde, Mette Lindgren. “The Dialogue Handbook.” 2020. Danish Youth Council and Danish Centre for Conflict Resolution. https://duf.dk/fileadmin/user_upload/Editor/documents/International/Dialogambassadoererne/DialogueHandbook_final-169600_1_.pdf.
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- Salek, Lucy. “Youth Preventing Violent Extremism in their Communities.” iDOVE. 2017. <https://jiliflc.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/iDove-Manual.pdf>.
- Search for Common Ground. “Community Dialogue Design Manual.” 2017. <https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CGI-Anglais-interactive.pdf>.
- UN OHCHR. “#Faith4Rights Toolkit.” <https://www.ohchr.org/en/faith-for-rights/faith4rights-toolkit>.
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[illegible]



**PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING
VIOLENT EXTREMISM THROUGH
COMMUNITY RESILIENCE TRAINING**

CERTIFICATE

**OF COMPLETION OF TRAINING MODULE 5:
BRIDGING PARTNERSHIPS WITH FAITH-BASED
ACTORS AND INSTITUTIONS IN PREVENTING
AND/OR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM
AND SUPPORTING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE
TO:**

THIS CERTIFICATE IS PROUDLY PRESENTED BY
*PAVE Consortium and The Network for
Religious and Traditional Peacemakers*

Training and Learning Objectives of Module 5:

- Participants gain an understanding of the important role that faith actors and institutions play in preventing and countering violent extremism.
- Participants gain an understanding on what polarization is, how it impacts local communities and what strategies local actors can use to identify, diagnose and address polarization, discourse and division.
- Participants gain an understanding on what the concept of nonviolent communication is and how to utilize and apply nonviolent communication as a skill and tool within communities within P/CVE efforts.
- Participants gain an understanding on the basic concepts, methodologies, models and tools needed to use intrafaith and interfaith dialogue for peace and reconciliation.