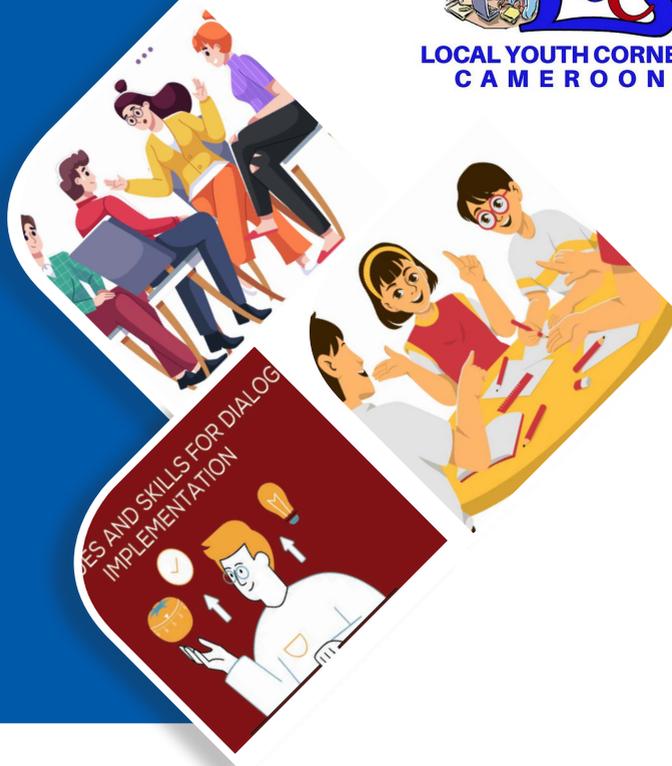


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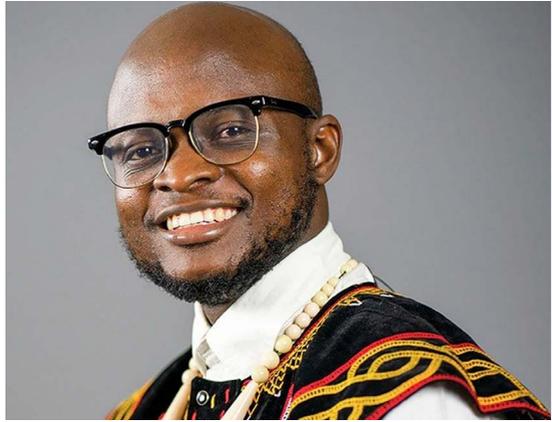


ORGANISING IMPROBABLE DIALOGUE: A FIELD GUIDE



Forward

In a world increasingly marked by division and conflict, looking for alternative and innovative ways to bring people together towards resolving these issues remains critical. This guide proposes “Improbable Dialogue” led by young people in Cameroon as an innovative and inclusive way of creating a safe space for people from



different walks of life to meet, honestly share experiences, and collaboratively reflect on the challenges and opportunities towards resolving the issues they are facing. Over the last four years, the youth-led civil society organization Local Youth Corner Cameroon (LOYOC), with the support of swisspeace, have collaborated with young people to pilot a series of improbable dialogues in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon toward resolving the conflicts affecting the regions and other parts of the country.

This field guide encapsulates the invaluable experiences of LOYOC in designing and facilitating the “improbable dialogues” as part of the “Enhancing Youth Capacities and Fostering Improbable Dialogues for Peace” (ENERGY) project, supported by swisspeace. This four-year journey of piloting this process saw a conscious effort of bringing individuals from different walks of life and people who will hardly meet for a dialogue to jointly design the agenda and propose the direction of a dialogue session between them. This is what makes this process “improbable”. Targeting over 120 individuals from over 15 communities across the Northwest and the Southwest regions, this ENERGY project piloted eight improbable dialogue sessions.

This field guide has been developed by a team from LOYOC with the support of experts from swisspeace and in collaboration with individuals who have participated in the dialogues as well as co-piloted these dialogue sessions in local communities. Building on these experiences, this field guide has documented

the methods and strategies which were used to ensure that these individuals from different walks of life were able to honestly share their experiences and exchange with each other towards finding solutions to the conflict situation in the regions.

The insights and methodologies captured in this guide reflect not only our successes but also the lessons learned from our challenges. This guide thus proposes a step-to-step process in designing an improbable dialogue, tools to use during implementation as well as some case study experience to provide a practical situation to help shape the experience of the user. By doing so, we aspire to inspire a new generation of facilitators, educators, and community leaders who will adopt this innovative dialogue approach to resolve the conflicts plaguing their communities.

As you delve into the content of this guide, I encourage you to embrace the spirit of innovation and openness that defined our dialogues. Facilitation is not merely a skill; it is an art that requires empathy, patience, and a willingness to listen deeply. It is my hope that this guide will serve as a resource for anyone passionate about creating meaningful conversations and fostering a culture of understanding.

By developing this Improbable Dialogue Field Guide, LOYOC hopes to contribute to propose an innovative form of dialogue with clear tools and guidance on how to design and implement. This Field Guide is meant to be one of the first practitioner-friendly documents on the subject incorporating the experiences of the organizers and participants with a depth of the lessons learnt. Together, let us continue to harness the power of dialogue to build bridges, foster connections, and pave the way for a more peaceful and inclusive future.

Achaleke Christian Leke
Executive Director,
Local Youth Corner Cameroon (LOYOC)



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Acknowledgment

We would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to swisspeace for their invaluable financial and technical support, which was crucial to the successful development of this field guide as part of the ENERGY Project. Their commitment has ensured the effective realization of this initiative. We are particularly thankful to the swisspeace team particularly Dr Sakah Bernard Nsaidzedze, whose expertise and guidance significantly enhanced our efforts throughout the process.

Our sincere appreciation also goes to Rev. Father Peter Kebei Afoukeze, who served as the lead dialogue facilitator; Mrs. Baiye Frida, who acted as an observer; and Rev. Gustav Ebai, who provided advisory support during the pilot phase of the improbable dialogue process. We are especially grateful to the young people from the Northwest and Southwest Regions who actively engaged in the various dialogue sessions, playing a vital role in shaping this initiative.

Additionally, we wish to acknowledge the 20 young individuals who organized community-level pilot sessions of improbable dialogues in their respective communities. Their dedication to testing the first draft of this guide was instrumental in refining the document and incorporating essential community experiences and insights.

Finally, we would like to recognize our dedicated project and research team, including Mr. Achaleke Christian Leke, who led the project; Miss Dione Sharon; Ntui Oben; Ekoko Caroline; Atefor Jude; and Ballo Ngomna, all of whom contributed significantly to the successful delivery of this project and the development of this field guide. We also extend our gratitude to the entire staff of LOYOC for their unwavering support throughout this journey.

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List of Acronyms

ENERGY – Enhancing Youth Capacities and Fostering Improbable Dialogues for Peace

LOYOC – Local Youth Corner Cameroon

FBO – Faith Based Organisations

NW – Northwest Region

SW – Southwest Region

CSOs – Civil Society Organizations

INGOs – International Non-Governmental Organizations

NGOs – Non-Governmental Organizations

NSAG – Non-State Armed Groups

UNESCO – United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization

FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigation

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

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OPENING

I. Why the Guide?

This field guide presents LOYOC's experience in designing and organizing improbable dialogues sessions across local communities in the Northwest (NW) and Southwest (SW) regions of Cameroon, as part of the "Enhancing Youth Capacities and Fostering Improbable Dialogues for Peace" (ENERGY) Project, with financial support from Swisspeace. Within the framework of this project, LOYOC, with the technical support from Swisspeace, piloted four (4) main improbable dialogues with a group of 20 young people from different walks of life within a period of four years. It further builds on the lessons learnt from the test phase of this guide which was implemented in four improbable dialogues in four other communities across the regions targeting 100 individuals by participants of the first phase of the project¹.

Upon piloting the process of improbable dialogue with young people from Cameroon's Northwest and Southwest regions, we found out that the participants of the dialogue process appreciated the key values and output of the process. During these dialogues, participants expressed the uniqueness of the process bringing people who will hardly meet to exchange ideas with each other towards solving

the issues they are facing. To foster greater enthusiasm for this dialogue model and encourage its widespread adoption it became crucial to develop a comprehensive guide that outlines our best practices and strategies for effective implementation.

Building on our experience of piloting "Improbable Dialogue" in the conflict-affected NW/SW regions, this field guide has been developed to document the

“ For the days I have participated in this dialogue I can now pride myself on being a solution-maker. I am happy because this dialogue has gone against the 'normal Cameroon style' where people like us will never be invited ”

Dialogue Participant

¹ To kickstart the development of this guide, 20 participants were selected from across the region to participate in three improbable dialogue sessions within a period of 4 years. For a period of four years, they collaborated with LOYOC to improve the quality of the manual through feedback and testing on the field.

processes, techniques and lessons gathered through the process to provide guidance to other stakeholders willing to engage in this format of dialogue.

This field guide builds on an informed view of the problems and divides that exist among youths and other groups of people while providing evidence-based approaches to improving dialogue and collaboration between them. It further highlights existing risks, mitigation strategies, and community entry points. Noteworthy is that the guide captures mainly youth community engagement within the context of this initiative and is adaptable to varying contexts, age and sex. This implies that the guide primarily focuses on how to involve young people in the initiative, but it is flexible enough to be applied in different situations or environments.

II. Who is this field guide for?

This guide is for individuals, government bodies and non-governmental organizations working at various levels in supporting and building safe dialogue spaces in conflict and non-conflict-affected settings. It helps institutions, especially peacebuilding organizations that have the mandate of empowering young people in building trust and understanding, countering violent extremism, and mitigating radicalization in Cameroon. This includes (but is not limited to).

- Peacebuilding organizations and local Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), engaging with communities in the Southwest and Northwest for formal and informal peace talk.
- Youth- and women-led CSOs.
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) based in Cameroon
- Individuals and peace advocates working on themes around creating safe dialogue spaces and other peace initiatives

III. How to Use the Guide?

This field guide is designed to help identify and analyze improbable dialogue in various contexts aspiring from LOYOC experience. To use this guide, consider the below;

- Understand the purpose of the Field Guide
- Familiarize yourself with key concepts and terms used in the guide
- Identify and understand your contextual realities and settings

- Evaluate dialogue design process to fit context
- Use the best suitable exercise and games provided in the Guide
- Practice regularly before engaging dialogue participants
- Use feedback to refine your understanding the dialogue process and updates the design.
- Keep a record of dialogues analysed and conclusions drawn for future reference.

IV. Overview of key sections of the guide

- Definition and Clarification of Key Terms.
- The Process and Design of Improbable Dialogue:
- Techniques and Skills for Dialogue implementation.
- Day to Day Dialogue session agenda.
- Lessons learned and Recommendations

FIELD GUIDE

CHAPTER 1

**DEFINITION, CLARIFICATION
AND OPERATIONALIZATION
OF TERMS**

CHAPTER 2

**PROCESS DESIGN OF
IMPROBABLE DIALOGUE**

CHAPTER 3

**TECHNIQUES AND SKILLS
FOR DIALOGUE
IMPLEMENTATION**

CHAPTER 4

**CASE STUDY AND
RECOMMENDATION**

CHAPTER ONE

DEFINITION, CLARIFICATION AND OPERATIONALIZATION OF TERMS

1.0 Introduction

To make this field guide easy to use, it is important to shed light on some key concepts and terms that are used throughout the document.

1.1 The Anglophone Crisis

The “Anglophone crisis” refers to the ongoing conflict in Cameroon’s Northwest and Southwest regions, which began in 2016. These areas were historically governed separately from French Cameroon as “Southern Cameroons.” Tensions escalated significantly after 2017, resulting in an armed conflict between separatist groups, often called Ambazonia fighters or “amba boys,” and security forces loyal to the Cameroonian government. The roots of the crisis lie in long-standing grievances regarding political and social marginalization. Activist leaders from these regions have accused the government of neglecting their interests and failing to address their concerns. Many believe that these grievances trace back to the 1961 plebiscite, which was intended to determine the future of Southern Cameroons. Over the years, the situation has deteriorated into violent confrontations, with civilians caught in the crossfire and widespread human rights violations reported. The conflict has not only led to loss of life but has also displaced many people, exacerbating humanitarian challenges in these regions. In 2016, these realizations resurfaced with a strong demand from activists for the separation of the country, demanding the independence of the North West and South West regions. In expressing these agitations, the activists rallied communities in the regions to engage in protests. Unfortunately, these protests grew into violence after several clashes between the activists and security actors. Young people from these regions, with the influence of the diaspora and coupled with the happenings on ground, some natives picked up arms against the state. This has led to numerous deaths and destructions of infrastructure including roads, bridges, schools, goods and so on.

Reports hold that both government and NSAGs groups’ responses to this conflict

have resulted in the destruction of properties, kidnapping for ransom, hospitals, and schools burnt down. **The Cameroon Conflict Human Rights Report 2022/23**, which examines events from January 2021 to April 2023, highlights how these acts have severely disrupted civilian life and hindered access to crucial services².

1.2 Peace

Inhabitants of the South West and North West regions have frequently voiced the desire for peace since the onset of the crisis. However, it's noteworthy that many individuals struggle to articulate a clear definition of the term. In the context of our field guide and LOYOC perspectives, peace is often conceptualized as a transversal notion that transcends mere absence of conflict. It is understood in broader terms as well-being, encompassing various dimensions of human life and societal structures. This understanding aligns with contemporary approaches to peace studies and conflict resolution, which emphasize holistic well-being rather than just the cessation of hostilities. Conversely, *UNESCO's Director-General, Audrey Azoulay*, expands this notion by stating that "peace is more than the absence of war; it is living together with our differences of sex, race, language, religion, or culture while furthering universal respect for justice and human rights, on which such coexistence depends." Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung further classifies Azoulay's perspective as representative of "positive peace," which emphasizes the importance of social justice and harmony in addition to merely the absence of conflict.

1.3 Peace process

Even though the "peace process" is a term that is frequently used, there is no universally acceptable definition for what it means or entails. According to *Collins Dictionary*, "a peace process consists of all the meetings, agreements, and negotiations in which people such as politicians are involved when they are trying to arrange peace between countries or groups that are fighting with each other".³ To this, *Wakugawa (2012)* suggests that the peace process is "a set of socio-political negotiations, agreements, and actions that aim to solve a specific armed conflict. Despite these varied definitions, a common perspective captured in all the definitions is the fact that the peace process consists of diverse mechanisms, tools and processes to end a conflict.

² Lemmon, J., 2023. Destruction or Disruption: Political Violence Inconsistencies in Liberation Movements.

³ Galtung, J. 2010. Peace studies and conflict resolution: The need for trans disciplinaryity. *Transcultural Psychiatry* 47(1): 20-32.

1.4 Improbable Dialogue

“

I feel this is a bottom-bottom dialogue. I did not feel someone was bigger or more important than him while in the dialogue room.

”

Dialogue Participant

Before exploring the improbable dialogue, it is essential to look at what we understand by dialogue in the first place. “**Dialogue**” refers to a process of authentic interaction in which individuals engage in meaningful exchanges, listening deeply and respectfully to one another⁴. This approach fosters an environment where participants are open to new ideas and perspectives, leading to a transformative experience. As they share their thoughts and experiences, the

insights gained not only enrich their understanding but also have the potential to change their viewpoints and attitudes, facilitating personal growth and deeper connections. Each participant in a dialogue strives to incorporate the concerns of others into their own perspective, even when they continue to disagree. No participant gives up their identity, but each recognizes the human value of the claims of the others and therefore acts differently towards them.

Improbable dialogue thus is a form of dialogue which brings together community members who may not normally work together to address conflict-related issues. This form of dialogue stresses the need to move beyond only talking to those who are like us and who think like us. It gives primacy to local communities over external perspectives in understanding the roots of ongoing conflict and recognizes that communities themselves have the necessary knowledge and expertise to overcome conflict. The dialogue must be open, and these spaces must be maintained over time so that they become transformative processes where people can exchange ideas and proposals on how, in concrete terms, collective well-being may be improved⁵.

1.5 Violent Extremism

There is no universally accepted definition of “violent extremism,” and it is often used interchangeably with terrorism. The **FBI** characterizes violent extremism

⁴Stains, R.R., 2016. Cultivating courageous communities through the practice and power of dialogue. *Mitchell Hamline Law Review*, 42(5), p.5.

as the act of encouraging, condoning, justifying, or supporting the commission of a violent act to achieve political, ideological, religious, social, or economic goals⁶. Similarly, *USAID* defines violent extremist activities as those that involve advocating, engaging in, preparing, or otherwise supporting ideologically motivated or justified violence to further social, economic, or political objectives⁷. Additionally, violent extremism can refer to the beliefs and actions of individuals who support or employ violence to achieve ideological, religious, or political aims, which encompasses terrorism and other forms of politically motivated violence⁸.

1.6 Collaboration and trust-building

In peacebuilding efforts, collaboration and trust-building are non-negligible factors. The process of peacebuilding is not the work of a single stakeholder. It is neither limited to the state, CSOs, international organizations, nor multilateral organizations. It is the joint effort of every component of the community. In this light, the collaboration between these different groups of the community is required for peace to reign. Collaboration can also only be achieved if the different components of the community understand and believe in each other. There must be trust between the different groups within the community for collaboration to be achieved in building sustainable peace. Bridging the divides existing between the different groups in the community is necessary for peacebuilding.

1.7 Why the focus on Young People?

In today's context, young people constitute major actors in the peace building of communities. They constitute non-armed actors in resolving conflicts and building peace within their communities, unlike defence and security forces, who on their part use weapons to respond to violent conflict. With this in mind, we understand that young people have a more important role to play in resolving conflicts and building peace and it's their failure in doing so that the defence and security forces then intervene. In other words, these actors play a sort of preventive and proactive role in conflicts, whereas security forces play a reactive role in resolving conflicts. It is imperative to analyse the role of each actor in building peace within their communities.

⁵ John Paul Lederach by Diego Arias / Special feature for *El Espectador* Originally published on October 16, 2021

⁶ FBI definition of violent extremism.

⁷ USAID definition of violent extremist activities (2011).

⁸ UNESCO reference to violent extremism (2017).

However, young people are often seen as being at the crossroads of conflict⁹. For this reasons, young people serve as *perpetrators, victims, and mediators* within conflict situations. It is well-documented that young people are involved as perpetrators in major conflicts around the world¹⁰.

In Cameroon, with the recent rise in violent extremism, we see youths at the forefront of the violence. Youths, being the most affected by the frustrations imposed by bad governance, tend to use violence as an alternative means of advocating for change. That being said, of course not every youth is directly involved as an actor in violent conflicts in Cameroon. Youth who do not directly partake in violent conflicts are victims and suffer from the effects of these violent conflicts. They are deprived of education and economic activities due to threats; some are directly affected by the results of violent conflicts by losing property, getting injured, and even losing their lives.

1.8 Conclusion

In a nutshell, this chapter primarily focused on the definitions and clarifications of key terms relevant to understanding the Anglophone crisis and its broader implications. By unpacking concepts such as “violent extremism,” “peace,” and “the peace process,” we laid the groundwork for a nuanced understanding of the conflict. We also highlighted the significant roles that young people play as perpetrators, victims, and mediators within these contexts. Emphasizing the importance of dialogue, collaboration, and trust-building, we recognized that sustainable peace requires the active involvement of all community members, particularly the youth. This foundation of clear definitions and concepts will be essential for navigating the complexities of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Cameroon and similar contexts.

9 Altiok, A., & Grizelj, A. (2018). *Youth and Conflict: A Crossroads of Opportunities and Challenges*. In this study, the authors explore the multifaceted roles that young people play in conflicts, emphasizing their unique position at the intersection of societal change and violence.

10 United Nations. (2003). *The Impact of Armed Conflict on Children: A Report by Graça Machel*. This comprehensive report outlines how children and youth are often directly involved in armed conflicts, detailing their roles as combatants and the broader implications of their involvement for peace and security worldwide.

CHAPTER TWO

PROCESS DESIGN OF IMPROBABLE DIALOGUE

2.0 Introduction

Understanding why and how to organize an improbable dialogue is very important. This chapter highlights key details on organizing the dialogue with a guide on how to choose participants, types of participants, and many other relevant things to take note of.

2.1. Why Improbable Dialogues

Improbable dialogue guarantees the participation of people who are hardly invited in formal dialogue processes to become key stakeholders in resolving conflicts. It sets a dialogue process which could be termed '*inclusive*' and provides an opportunity for bringing marginalized voices and even victims of conflict such as women and youth to take part effectively *in a bottom-to-bottom or bottom-to-top* conversation.

"For the days I have participated in this dialogue I can now pride myself on being a solution maker. I am happy because this dialogue has gone against the 'normal Cameroon style' where people like us will never be invited" said **a participant who is a bike rider**.

“I could not believe as a bike rider I was in the same room with other young people whom I always see to be special. Before I could know it, I became comfortable around them and was expressing myself with no fear”

Dialogue Participant

Improbable dialogues are **unique** because they are **systematic** in their approach. They begin by establishing a safe environment for dialogue and developing a common base of knowledge regarding concepts and participants. Additionally, these dialogues employ games and exercises to explore pressing issues and perspectives, ultimately moving from dialogue to action with the support of impartial facilitators. Improbable dialogues by their nature are not one-

off activities but a process which focuses on engaging a small group for a longer period to ensure they build trust and understand that despite their differences, they can always find a common ground or consensus. This approach responds to the concerns of many Cameroonians who claim the current dialogue process in Cameroon only seems like a one-off activity with many decisions arrived at in a very short space of time¹¹.

The objectives of this kind of dialogues can be summed up into two main objectives;

A. Context Objectives

- To reduce cleavages between young people
- To increase tolerance between young people
- To promote peace and security
- To reshape youth stereotypes

B. Process Objectives

- To improve understanding of perspectives among dialogue participants
- To foster trust-building and collaboration among dialogue participants
- To identify peacebuilding challenges and discuss ways to approach them

2.2. Who should be part of this Dialogue? (WHO?)

The dialogue adopts a strategy of mobilizing two major groups of individuals to be involved: **Dialogue participants and stakeholders**. For this reason, a stakeholder mapping and analysis is conducted to identify the different dialogue participants and stakeholders, their role, influence and impact in the dialogue process, the relationships among them, etc. Within this project, selected participants who effectively contribute to the dialogue sessions are also referred to as "**actors**" while **Stakeholders**", also known as third parties, refer to individuals within the community or beyond who are invited to attend or take part in the process but do not influence the decision or discussions during the dialogue sessions without an active role (dialogue advisers, observers, supporters, facilitators, etc.).

2.3. How to Identify Participants?

To identify the participants for the dialogue, it is critical to set some parameters.

¹¹ [https://www.africanews.com/2019/11/01/has-cameroon-s-national-dialogue-delivered-solutions-to-anglophone-crisis//](https://www.africanews.com/2019/11/01/has-cameroon-s-national-dialogue-delivered-solutions-to-anglophone-crisis/)

The process could be guided by **four (04) key strategic steps**.

- ▶ **Identifying:** This is the listing of groups and organizations relevant to the dialogue through desk research and recommendations.
- ▶ **Analyzing:** This is a process of understanding the interests and views of these groups through consultation workshops and interviews.
- ▶ **Mapping:** This entails visualizing the relationships between these identified groups in order to identify the key individuals; They include; government representatives, community leaders, youth Activists, dialogue facilitators, advisers, observers and supporters.
- ▶ **Prioritizing:** This ranking of actors and stakeholders, established through a comprehensive mapping process, aims to analyse their respective drivers, barriers, and needs. By identifying and categorizing each stakeholder's influence and relevance within the context, we can better understand the factors that motivate their actions, the obstacles they face, and the specific requirements they have for effective engagement. This detailed analysis is crucial for developing targeted strategies that address the unique challenges and opportunities presented by each actor in the dialogue process.

2.4. Dialogue Participants

It is always critical to work with a small team of not more than 30 people (Max). A small group of participants who represent the target persons provides an opportunity for easier trust-building, understanding and bonding. For this, it is advisable to have a smaller group as a way to;

- ▶ **Enhanced Trust-Building:** A smaller team fosters a more intimate environment, allowing participants to feel safer and more comfortable sharing their thoughts and experiences, which is crucial for building trust.
- ▶ **Facilitated Communication:** With fewer participants, facilitators can manage discussions more effectively, ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to contribute. This leads to richer dialogue and more diverse perspectives.
- ▶ **Easier Logistics:** Organizing meetings, coordinating schedules, and managing resources are simpler with a smaller group. This can lead to more efficient planning and execution of activities.
- ▶ **Improved Group Dynamics:** Smaller teams can better navigate interpersonal relationships and dynamics. Facilitators can observe interactions closely and intervene if conflicts arise, ensuring a more cohesive group experience.
- ▶ **Focused Discussions:** A small group allows for deeper exploration of topics, as discussions can be more targeted and nuanced. Participants can delve into complex issues without the conversation becoming unwieldy.
- ▶ **Increased Participation:** Individuals may be more willing to engage in discussions in smaller settings, reducing the intimidation factor that can occur in larger groups. This can lead to higher levels of engagement and more meaningful contributions.
- ▶ **Tailored Content Delivery:** Facilitators can adapt their approach to the specific needs and dynamics of a small group, allowing for a more personalized and relevant experience for participants.
- ▶ **Efficient Decision-Making:** In smaller groups, reaching consensus or making decisions can occur more swiftly, allowing the team to move forward with clear objectives and action plans.
- ▶ **Stronger Relationships:** Participants can form closer connections with each other, enhancing collaboration and support networks that extend beyond the immediate dialogue process.

Spotlight on LOYOC's Experience: Participant Selection

For the improbable dialogue, LOYOC mobilized a total of 20 young individuals from diverse backgrounds. Participants were divided into two groups: those from the formal sector and those from the informal sector. The selection included representatives from political parties, civil society organizations (CSOs), and local administrations, along with local business owners, bike riders, inter-rural transporters, and cultural group leaders. Specifically, the breakdown was as follows:

- Political Parties: 2
- Civil Society Organizations (CSOs): 4
- Local Administrations: 4
- Bike Riders: 2
- Local Business Owners: 2
- Inter-Rural Transporters: 2
- Cultural Group Leaders and Members: 4
- Local Cooperative Leaders: 2

Participants were drawn from the North West and South West regions.

Selection Criteria

Collective Criteria:

1. **Ethnicity/Origin:** Participants had to be from the North West or South West regions.
2. **Gender:** At least 40% of participants were required to be female.
3. **Sector Representation:** Participants needed to represent both formal and informal sectors.
4. **Profession**:** Inclusion of individuals from CSOs and local administration.
5. **Political Views**:** Participants had to have affiliations with the dominant political parties in the region, specifically the Social Democratic Front (SDF) and the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM).

Individual Criteria:

1. **Age:** Participants were required to be between 15 and 35 years old.
2. **Leadership Role:** Candidates needed to hold a leadership position within their community or professional environment.
3. **Thematic Mastery:** Participants should have a solid understanding of peace and conflict issues relevant to their communities.
4. **Exposure/Experience:** Candidates must have firsthand experience with the daily realities in conflict-affected areas.

This structured selection process aimed to ensure a representative and knowledgeable group of participants capable of engaging meaningfully in the dialogue.

Note: It's advisable to carry out a stakeholder analysis before beginning the dialogue process. Use stakeholder analysis as an opportunity to map the potential stakeholder. Ensure to engage directly with the institutions, organizations, syndicates, political parties, and public administration.

These actors are better analysed below:

a. Participants from the Formal Sector

The participants work in sectors that are organized by the government. We used the stakeholder analysis document (baseline document) to identify, map, and capture the interest and relevance of formal sector members. They include members of CSOs, members of political parties, and members of local administration.

¹²<https://theguardianpostcameroon.com/post/1898/en/authorisation-of-40-new-political-parties-more-allies-for-presidential-majority-ahead>

■ Members of Political Parties

Political parties greatly animate the political and conflict landscape of a country. In the case of Cameroon, we have over 369¹² with the main ones being the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), Social Democratic Front (SDF), Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CRM). Your baseline study or stakeholder analysis should identify key parties and their relevance to the process. Ensure your dialogue process brings political parties that will hardly want to interact due to their ideologies and connection to the conflict. Political parties are usually seen to be sensitive in terms of interest and views, anticipate that the other dialogue participants might not be comfortable because generally political parties, especially the ruling ones are considered as one of the sources of conflict. In this case, the dialogue design should consider activities to help deal with such conflicts to ensure a key outcome of the dialogue can also be around the change in participants' perception vis-a-vis each other.

■ Members of CSOs

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) are instrumental in addressing conflict and fostering peace within communities. These organizations are characterized as non-state, non-profit, and voluntary entities created by individuals in the social sphere, distinct from governmental bodies and market forces. CSOs represent a wide spectrum of interests and affiliations, all aimed at driving positive change within society. Given our specific focus on youth, we concentrated our efforts on engaging youth-led CSOs. In the selection process, we employed a thorough risk analysis to ensure that the chosen organizations align with our goals. We prioritized three key factors: trust, security, and mastery of thematic areas relevant to our mission. By emphasizing trust, we aimed to work with organizations that have established credibility within their communities. Security considerations ensured that the selected CSOs operate in environments that allow for safe and effective engagement. Mastery of thematic areas meant we looked for organizations that possess a deep understanding of the issues affecting youth and conflict dynamics.

For our initiative in Cameroon, we chose to collaborate with youth-led CSOs from our existing list of partners with whom we have previously engaged. After careful evaluation, we selected two organizations from the Northwest region and two from the Southwest region. This targeted approach not only leverages our established relationships but also ensures that we are working with groups that

have a proven track record in mobilizing youth and addressing the complexities of the current conflict landscape.

■ **Members of Local Administration**

The local administration can be considered as representative of state instruments and institutions at the community level. Also, local elected officials (mayors, councillors, regional assembly members, etc.) could be considered administrators. Local administrators serve as links between the people and the central administration and vice versa. The elected ones are considered to represent the voice of the people. They are critical in this dialogue because they possess a unique understanding of the context from a local governance perspective. A commonality among these administrators in the case of Cameroon is that they are also affiliated with political parties. If this is the case in your context, in selecting participants from this group, we are keen to identify administrators who hold different political views.

b. Participants from the Informal Sectors

■ **Local Business Owners**

Usually in times of conflict local business owners are directly affected. Many of them are victims through loss of property or kidnapping. In the case of the Anglophone crisis, they suffer from looting, constant lock downs, fire incidents and many more negative incidents spurred by the crisis. Being direct victims of the crisis, they can play a major role in the peace process, though they are rarely invited to participate in formal dialogue processes. The nature of their work provides them with the opportunity to also interact with many different people with a variety of opinions of the conflict daily. Thus, it is critical that this group of persons participate in an improbable dialogue.

■ **Leaders of Local Cooperatives**

Cooperatives serve as a hub for community income-generating initiatives. Since most of the economic activities in communities are subsistent, most individuals have grouped themselves into cooperatives. The economic setbacks imposed by the conflict greatly affected this group of people from different income-generating fields like farmers, market women, herdsmen and a host of others, making them key stakeholders. To this effect, inviting representatives of the cooperative groups provides a unique perspective within the dialogue process.

■ Leaders of Socio-Cultural Groups

Many conflicts arise from disagreements among various groups of people, often rooted in differing perspectives, values, or interests. While not all conflicts can be solely attributed to identity issues, many are significantly influenced by them, as cultural identities often shape individuals' beliefs and actions. At the core of these disagreements are the cultural norms and values that define each group, which can lead to misunderstandings and tensions. Thus, while identity issues may not be the sole source of all conflicts, they certainly play a critical role in many situations where groups clash over differing worldviews and interests. In this case, cultural groups are very critical because they serve as a common space where people of the same culture meet. In the case of Cameroon, socio-cultural groups are very organized and play a key role in promoting living together and community development. This strategic role they play within their communities has raised community respect and adherence to these groups. To this effect, inviting the leaders of socio-cultural groups is important. We believe they have a critical perspective to share as well as build their capacity to serve as a vector for peace.

2.5 Other Dialogue participants (Stakeholders)

Within the context of the guide, a stakeholder is defined as an individual or group, whether from the community or external, who may be invited to participate in the dialogue but will not have an impact on the decisions or discussions taking place. This category can include non-youth participants and representatives from organizations that play vital roles in peacebuilding and conflict resolution. Key stakeholders may encompass religious and traditional leaders, as well as members from faith-based organizations (FBOs), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs). In this context, stakeholders are classified into several roles, including observers, advisers, conveners, facilitators, organizers, donors, and supporters.

■ Observer:

In this context, observer refers to individuals who might be invited to observe the dialogue. It is believed that while observing they will be learning and could also provide reflections during debriefing sessions which could subsequently help improve the process. They are not expected to speak during the dialogue

sessions. However, they may also share views with organizers and facilitators at the end if invited for debriefing meetings. Identify those who have wide experience in convening and facilitating dialogues within their communities. Thus, religious and traditional authorities could be the best bet for this. They observe and make recommendations on the dialogues as well as facilitate in compiling the facts of the dialogue.

■ **Advisers:**

Similarly, this group is not expected to comment or react during dialogue sessions. Their role is to watch and advise dialogue facilitators, especially in terms of how to improve the process. Their perspective is mostly shared during debriefing sessions with other stakeholders. In the case of NWSW, LOYOC mobilizes dialogue or peacebuilding experts from NGOs and INGOs for this role.

■ **Conveners/Organizers:**

The convener/organizer of the dialogue refers to the individual or institution that invited the different participants and stakeholders to the dialogue. The convener/organizer's work starts from designing the dialogue to working with other stakeholders to mobilize resources for implementation. They also ensure every logistical need for the dialogue is met.

■ **Facilitators:**

Facilitators are individuals who are invited to the dialogue to serve as a catalyst for the sessions. They are responsible for the format, while the dialogue participants are responsible for the content. Their role is to create a conducive and reliable environment by structuring and sequencing the process (macro skills), facilitating communication and confidence-building (micro-skills). They can comment during dialogue sessions but do not have the right to decide on the subject or outcome of the dialogue. They have the mandate to interact more with the actors. Facilitators help with the delivery of energizers, activities, topical discussions, and capacity building. Based on common dialogue experiences and LOYOC experience, a group of **20 to 30 persons, 4 facilitators (1 lead and 3 co-facilitators)** would be appropriate for the dialogue. The lead facilitator should be an individual with extensive experience in convening and facilitating dialogue among vulnerable groups, who knows the conflict context and engages in conflict resolution on a day-to-day basis.

Spotlight on LOYOC's Experience: choice of facilitators.

In the case of Cameroon, we identified a reverend father as the lead facilitator. His rich experience in dialogues, mediation, and bridge building, coupled with his personal attributes of impartiality, humour and mastery of facilitation, made him a better candidate to lead the facilitation of these dialogues. He was assisted by three co-facilitators (project team members). They closely assisted the lead facilitator to ensure the proper management of dialogue participants.

■ Optional guest (Donors):

Inviting the Donor to the dialogue session is optional. For this process conducted by LOYOC, the donor which is swisspeace was present. The donor in this case refers to the partner that provided the financial support for the organization of the dialogue. Their presence at the dialogue is very important, as they might be able to help the organizers to provide technical support.

■ Supporters:

Supporters in this case are a group that can provide support in terms of ideas, technical and logistical needs during the dialogue.

2.5. Dialogue Participant Selection Criteria

The dialogue participants could be any group; young, old, women, or any group of persons. Nevertheless, it is important that *your selected group comes from different walks of life*. The participants should be invited to take part in these dialogues in their individual capacities. This is to ensure their freedom and ensure they represent their opinions and not those of their organizations.

Participants for the dialogue are selected following the parameters below:

- Participatory decision-making
- Inclusivity
- Voice to the voiceless
- Empowerment
- Gender-sensitivity
- Participants' backgrounds

2.6. How are the Dialogues Organized?

To implement these dialogues, 8 key factors are to be considered.

i. Location:

It is important to identify a neutral and secure location for these dialogues. The idea of neutrality is to respond to security worries and prevent conflicts of interest or any pressure based on location. To ensure ownership of the process

by the participants, it is important to consult the participants in the selection of dialogue locations and specific venue.

ii. Transportation of Participants:

The safety and comfort of the participants is of prime importance before, during and after a dialogue. Considering they are travelling into a new place they might be unfamiliar with; the participants are provided with resources for the most comfortable and affordable means of travel from their destination. They are provided with pick-up from the station to avoid incidents. A dedicated staff should be on standby to respond to related issues to travelers.

iii. Lodging and Feeding of Participants:

This is a very important component in assuring the comfort of participants. For convenience, we recommend using venues for the dialogue sessions that also offer lodging. Comfortable accommodation is provided to participants. On days where the participants are being lodge onsite, they should be provided with three square meals. We also recommend offering snacks during the dialogue.

iv. Timing for Each Dialogue Session:

Considering timing, it is advisable for each of the dialogue sessions to run not more than 6 hours. However, the dialogue the design should adopt a flexible approach to also work with the flow of the participants. If the session extends beyond 6 hours or if participants request extra hours, it will be accorded. Dialogue might even be flexible to run into the night if the participants deem it necessary.

v. Dialogue Location and Venue:

In designing the dialogue, it's crucial to choose a venue that promotes flexibility and comfort for participants. While hotel spaces can be ideal in some settings, we acknowledge that many communities, especially in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon, may lack such facilities. Therefore, we will focus on securing community centers, local meeting halls, or open public spaces that can facilitate meaningful interaction. These familiar and accessible venues will encourage community participation and create a welcoming environment for dialogue, ensuring that our approach aligns with the realities of the communities we intend to engage.

vi. Content of the Dialogue:

The content of the dialogue is the most important and delicate part of the dialogue process. This is since the actors and stakeholders are coming from different backgrounds with different expectations. Identifying and matching the expectations of participants and setting ground rules is an important start to a dialogue process. Even though the design of the dialogue is done by the conveners based on baseline data, some key themes and needs of participants should be identified by them. The process should be flexible. Over 70% of dialogue content is expected to be shaped by the participants. The dialogue sessions should adopt the use of contextually relevant, interesting, inspiring and feasible games and exercises, which go a long way to improve participants' ability to actively participate during the dialogue.

vii. Facilitation of the Dialogue:

For proper Dialogue facilitation, it is usually advisable to recruit external consultants to serve as dialogue lead and facilitator alongside the internal staff of the organization that developed the dialogue project. But in case of otherwise, this dialogue facilitation can be done by community lead who understand the dialogue facilitation process. The role of the facilitator will help the parties build understanding and trust, as well as identify consensus. Their role will be to create a conducive and reliable environment by structuring and sequencing the process (macro skills) Facilitating communication and confidence-building (micro-skills). Prior to the dialogue, ***the Host and the supporting/donor organization*** should engage in a design meeting with relevant stakeholders to reflect on the facilitation style and method design of the dialogue. The staff of the host organization must carry out capacity-building and reflection sessions with the facilitators prior to starting the process. The choice of the dialogue facilitator should be based on the need, personal knowledge, skills, experience, and technical expertise in the domain among other specific considerations in every given context.

viii. Methodology of Dialogue:

The dialogue should embrace a peacebuilding model that emphasizes a relationship-centred approach to social change and promotes collaboration across different social divides. This process should be guided by five key areas: building personal connections, articulating diverse viewpoints, deepening

mutual understanding, identifying shared values and strengths, and engaging in problem-solving and collective action. Additionally, to facilitate open information sharing and communication, the dialogue will adhere to the Chatham House Rules. The Chatham House Rules stipulate that participants are free to use the information received during discussions, but the identities and affiliations of speakers or participants must not be disclosed. This principle encourages candid dialogue by ensuring confidentiality, allowing participants to speak more freely without concerns about being quoted or identified outside the meeting.

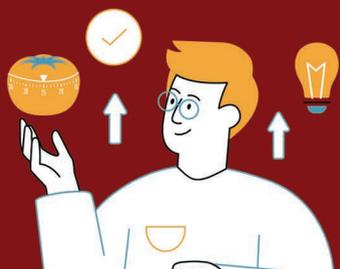
2.7 Conclusion

Here, we explored the essential elements involved in organizing an improbable dialogue, emphasizing its significance in fostering understanding and collaboration among diverse groups. We began by examining the rationale behind improbable dialogues, outlining their potential to bridge divides and facilitate meaningful interactions. The chapter detailed the various types of participants who should be involved, emphasizing the importance of inclusivity in the dialogue process. Furthermore, we outlined how the dialogues are organized, stressing the importance of creating a conducive environment for open discussion. Finally, we examined the content and methodology of the dialogues, ensuring that they are structured to facilitate meaningful exchanges and actionable outcomes. Overall, this chapter serves as a comprehensive guide to effectively designing and implementing improbable dialogues that can lead to transformative social change.

CHAPTER THREE

TECHNIQUES AND SKILLS FOR DIALOGUE IMPLEMENTATION

TECHNIQUES AND SKILLS FOR DIALOGUE IMPLEMENTATION



3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a guide to the dialogue proper with notes targeting key stakeholders and how the actors should react. It also provides the possible techniques and activities that can be used. It is worth noting that these are propositions drawn from similar processes. The strategies and guidance provided here could change or be re-adapted over time. It will walk you through the necessary steps including the holding and reporting of these dialogues. In addition to the techniques, the everyday dialogue process is a crucial component of this guide and should be presented in a straightforward manner. This allows us to share existing experiences that can be applied in various dialogue contexts. It is important to emphasize that this is merely a recommendation and can be tailored to fit other specific contexts. For instance, the improbable dialogues organized by LOYOC took place in **Douala, Limbe and Bamendjou**. They each took 3 days and had the objective to create a safe space for improved capacity building between and among young people for peace and security.

3.1. Dialogue Techniques

The different techniques and exercises presented in the guide are advantageous in triggering conversations between and among participants. These can be applied to topics related to the lives or experiences of participants and for

topics the participants already know something about. However, it is important to note that; mixing up how the material is presented and how participants engage with the material is extremely beneficial to create unique experience. Some useful methods which are suitable in accompanying dialogues exercises may include and not limited to; **brainstorming, frozen images, improvisation, simulations, role play, buzz group, feedback, reflection/debriefing, warm-ups, wind-downs, and videos** just to name a few.

Engaging participants in meaningful conversations is essential for the success of any dialogue process. The following techniques are designed to facilitate interactions among participants, allowing them to explore their own experiences and perspectives while deepening their understanding of shared topics. These methods can be applied to discussions that resonate with participants' lives or experiences, as well as subjects they are already familiar with. By varying the presentation of material and the ways participants engage with it, we can create a dynamic and stimulating dialogue environment. Below, these different techniques are elaborated while highlighting their unique advantages and disadvantages.

3.1.1 The World Café

The World Café is a straightforward, effective, and adaptable approach for facilitating large group dialogues. This creative method encourages collaborative discussions, enables the sharing of knowledge, and opens up opportunities for action among participants, regardless of the group size. "The participants *choose 4 to 5 topics* they want to discuss (more topics will require more time) and are *subsequently split into 4 to 5 groups*, each paired with one topic."

WORLD CAFE



■ The format in the Dialogue

- i. Setting:** The set-up for a World Café consists of several small tables (as many as you will have groups) covered with large sheets of paper, e.g. flip chart pages. Each table has enough chairs and coloured pens for the group members.
- ii. Welcome and Introduction:** The dialogue facilitator will begin with a word of welcome and an introduction to the World Café process, setting the context, explaining the etiquette of the cafe and putting participants at ease.
- iii. Small-Group:** The process will begin with the first of three twenty-minute rounds of conversation for the small group seated around a table. At the end of the twenty minutes, each member of the group will move to a different table. Only the table host will stay to welcome the next group and briefly fill them in on what happened in the previous round, using the flipchart tablecloths as a visual reminder of the previous conversation.
- iv. Questions:** Each round will be prefaced with a question designed for the specific context and desired purpose of the session. The same questions can be used for more than one round, or they can be built upon each other to focus the conversation or guide its direction. The question is at the heart of the conversation so make sure it matters for all participants.
- v. Harvest:** After the small groups, participants will be invited to share insights or other results from their conversations with the rest of the large group.

When bringing together the discoveries and insights of the small groups, the group gets an opportunity to see and link all the harvested information from a broader perspective. Patterns can be identified, and the collective wisdom becomes visible. Also, possibilities for action might emerge.

3.1.2 Brainstorm / Board Blast

Brainstorming is a quick way to get ideas or proposals from a huge group. The purpose of brainstorming is to generate as many ideas on a specific topic as possible, as quickly as possible, and to get 'first reactions' so that as many ideas are thrown in.

TRY Me: All these ideas are then written down on a newsprint or a board. After all the ideas are written down, the topic is opened for discussion, comments or questions. Thinking on your own about a problem is not as productive as when a group of people work together in solving



it. Collective thoughts are always more stimulating. A brainstorming group is a group with singleness of purpose who applies their creative thoughts to finding a solution to a specific problem. The brainstorming is also referred to as a board blast.

Advantages

- Many ideas can be generated in a brief period of time
- this method stimulates participation
- According to feedback from the participants of the improbable dialogue process, this dialogue technique have the following disadvantages.

Disadvantages

- Can get out of hand
- Some may not participate
- It may lead to confusion and clash of ideas
- It can cause double confusion between participants and presenters

3.1.3 Facilitation Techniques (Icebreakers & Introductions, Warm-Ups & ‘Energizers’ and Wind Down)

The tone of every dialogue group can affect its overall impact, and setting the right tone at the start is very important. ‘Ice breakers’ for introductions are games or activities that can be used to introduce actors or stakeholders to each other at the start of the activity. By using ice breakers or introductions, we can create a warm, friendly, personal learning environment, one from which trainees will feel comfortable participating and learning from. Warm-ups and energizers are quick games (5-10 minutes) designed to spark energy and laughter within the group. These activities help participants relax, connect with one another, and learn while having fun. In specific contexts, it can be beneficial to incorporate icebreakers that resonate with local cultures and experiences. For example, traditional storytelling games or local team-building activities can create a sense of familiarity and comfort among participants. Engaging in culturally relevant games—such as “Pass the Story,” where participants add to a communal narrative, or “Two Truths and a Lie,” using familiar local references—can foster connection and ease participants into the dialogue. Tailoring these activities to reflect the community's values and experiences enhances

engagement and promotes a welcoming atmosphere for all. Wind downs come at the end of sessions, especially at closing, to ensure an understanding and relaxed environment. Games can warm the group up to the topic and create an atmosphere that is ideal for learning. And sometimes, they do not necessarily have any relation to the topic.

Advantages:

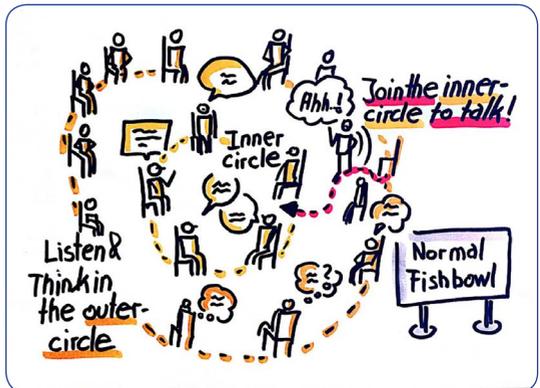
- Good techniques to help people feel part of the programme, at ease, and more comfortable with themselves and with others and feel more "at home" in a group.
- They break up the "cliques", invite people to form random groups and help individuals meet others in a non-threatening and fun way.
- They can set a tone for the time a group will be together, encourage people to feel "safe," and hopefully evoke lots of laughter and release tension. These create a good atmosphere to conduct a dialogue
- Energize trainees for example in the afternoons or during long sessions

Disadvantages

- Can get out of control
- Can take a long time if not properly managed

3.1.4 Talking Circles / Word Wheels

Participants are divided into two groups, one sitting in a circle facing outward and the other facing inward so that each person faces someone else. The participants are given a topic or a few questions that they must work on beforehand and then discuss with each other. These pairs then exchange views on an announced topic or questions. After a set period, the facilitator asks everyone on the inside to move one or two seats to the right and discuss with the new person sitting opposite. The participants can then have the opportunity to discuss different



Internet Source: On-line illustrative sketch of Outer circle, Visited March 2023

questions with different people. This process continues until each person has changed views with several others.

Advantages

- Interactive
- Good to share ideas
- Everyone participates in the exercise
- The occasional movement energizes the participants

Disadvantages

- Can get out of control
- People can talk about other topics or conduct side discussions
- Can take a long time
- Ideas are confined to two persons if you do not get group feedback

3.1.5 Simulation Exercises

These are also role-playing dialogue techniques in which the participant gets to experience and respond to an environment that is a reproduction of real-life conditions or issues or decisions.

“

I enjoyed this dialogue process because of the games and exercises. In a special way, the strategies used by the facilitators made me feel so comfortable, open and willing to share my ideas.

”

Dialogue Participant

TRY ME A simulation exercise attempts to create realistic situations of the kind that will be faced in practice and provides an opportunity for exercising the skills required in dealing with them. Through such a simulation one can re-examine previous behaviour, try out behaviours just acquired, or experiment with behaviours that strike the actors as potentially useful.

Advantages

- Controlled situation
- Develops practical experience for the participant in a non-threatening environment where non-consequential mistakes can be made
- Helps in transferring knowledge and giving the experience of decision-making

- Helps to evaluate and correct the participant's behavior

Disadvantages

- Can be time-consuming
- Some teams may not take it seriously

3.1.6 Role Play

Role-plays are intended to imitate a real situation and encourage trainees to reflect on what they would do or feel in that situation. In a role-play, people in the group participate in roles assigned to them without practicing beforehand. They perform the



action watched by others, and part of the exercise is to assess afterwards their response to being thrown into a situation. An example is a hypothetical press conference after a crowd control incident that has turned violent. Role-plays can help police officers to see things from others' points of view. The emphasis is not on problem-solving but rather on skill development and attitude change.

Advantages

- Good if the situation is similar to the actual work situation.
- Participants receive feedback which may give them confidence.
- Good for interpersonal skills and changes of attitudes.
- Can teach individuals how to act or react in a real situation.

Disadvantages

- Participants may be shy – they are not actors.
- Actors sometimes are not serious or too comic. Some situations cannot be implemented in role-playing.

3.1.7 Buzz Groups

TRY ME "Buzz groups" is an interactive technique designed to enhance participation and generate ideas within larger discussions. This method is

particularly effective when you want to engage a large number of participants in a short amount of time. The concept derives its name from the lively buzz of conversation that typically arises when small groups collaborate.

How Buzz Groups Work

1. **Preparation by the Facilitator:** The facilitator begins by identifying a relevant and pressing question or presenting a case study related to the topic at hand. This question should be open-ended and thought-provoking to encourage in-depth discussion.
2. **Formation of Small Groups:** Participants are then divided into small groups, usually consisting of two to three individuals. This size is optimal as it allows for a more intimate conversation where everyone can contribute without feeling overshadowed.
3. **Discussion Phase:** Each buzz group spends a few minutes discussing the posed question or case study. During this time, group members share their thoughts, ideas, and perspectives. The facilitator may encourage groups to appoint a spokesperson who will summarize their discussion points later.
4. **Feedback and Sharing:** After the allotted discussion time, the groups reconvene to the larger assembly. Each group takes turns sharing the key insights or themes that emerged during their conversations. This feedback session is crucial, as it allows for a broader understanding of different viewpoints and collective brainstorming.
5. **Synthesis of Ideas:** Once all groups have presented, the facilitator can highlight common themes, agreements, or unique insights that surfaced across the buzz groups. This synthesis not only reinforces the collective knowledge of the group but also helps guide the next steps in the discussion.

Benefits of Using Buzz Groups

- **Increased Participation:** Smaller groups encourage quieter participants to voice their opinions, ensuring a broader range of ideas and perspectives.
- **Time Efficiency:** This method allows for meaningful discussions to occur in a condensed time frame, making it ideal for large gatherings where time is limited.
- **Enhanced Engagement:** The interactive nature of buzz groups keeps participants actively involved, fostering a sense of community and collaboration.



Advantages

- All the participants are involved
- Many ideas can be generated in a short period of time
- Stimulates participation and interaction
- Non-threatening exercise and even the shy participants can take part

Disadvantages

- Can get out of hand
- May stray from the topic if not well managed

3.1.8 Human sculptures

TRY ME: Human sculptures are a creative way for participants to express their thoughts and feelings without using words. This activity can be done individually, in pairs, or in groups, and is adaptable to various themes.

Purpose

The goal is to allow participants to physically represent their interpretations of a theme—like violence, peace, or community—encouraging emotional expression and connection.

TIPS How It Works

Select a Theme

The facilitator introduces a theme (e.g., violence or peace).

Create Sculptures

Participants form shapes with their bodies that reflect their feelings about the theme. Groups can create different sculptures based on their interpretations.

Vocalization

After forming the sculptures, participants can share a single thought or word related to the theme.

Movement Exploration

Participants can slowly transition between sculptures, exploring various interpretations of the theme.

Collaborative Sculpture

All individual and group sculptures can be combined to create a large, collective piece representing the group's overall response.

Possible themes for exploration

Human sculptures can address topics such as:

- Violence
- Family
- Relationships
- Peace
- Community

Advantages

- Encourages non-verbal expression
- Fosters creativity
- Builds group connection

In summary, human sculptures provide a unique way to explore complex themes through ***physical representation and collective engagement***.

3.1.9 Group Discussions

Overview

Group discussion is a technique where participants are divided into small groups to discuss a specific topic or questions. This approach encourages active participation from everyone.



Process

- **Form Groups:** Participants split into small groups for discussion.

- **Discuss Topic:** Each group talks about a designated topic or set of questions.
- **Report Back:** Groups select a reporter to share key points in a plenary session.
- **Plenary Sharing:** During the plenary, groups present highlights of their discussions to the entire group.

Advantages

- Many ideas can be generated in a short period of time
- Stimulates participation and interaction
- All the participants are involved
- Inexperienced participants mix with experienced participants

Disadvantages

- Can get out of hand
- Some participants may dominate the groups causing others not to participate
- May stray from the topic if not well managed

3.1.10 The Fishbowl Technique in Dialogue

The Fishbowl technique which is a way of enabling a large group to all contribute to a single conversation. This is done by arranging the room so that the speakers asked to start the conversation are seated in the centre of the room 'in the fishbowl', with the other participants seated around them in a circle to listen to their conversation.

TRY ME Description

The room set-up is an important feature of a Fishbowl conversation. Four to eight chairs are set up as an inner circle. The people selected to start the conversation will be seated there, along with the facilitator. We will leave a few empty chairs from the start where other participants can intervene to share perceptions during the conversation.

The remaining chairs will be arranged in concentric circles. The rest of the group will begin the session seated on these chairs outside the fishbowl.

Our facilitator will open the discussion by posing a question (among one of the dialogue topics identified by participants on the first day of the dialogue) to the people in the fishbowl to trigger an open conversation.

The idea is that, once the conversation has started, any member of the

audience can come and join the fishbowl, either by taking an empty chair or replacing somebody already seated in the circle (who then finds a free chair in the audience). The discussion will then continue with participants frequently entering and leaving the fishbowl. This should allow as many participants as possible who want to spend some time in the fishbowl and take part in the discussion.

When time runs out, the fishbowl will be closed, and the facilitator will summarize the discussion.



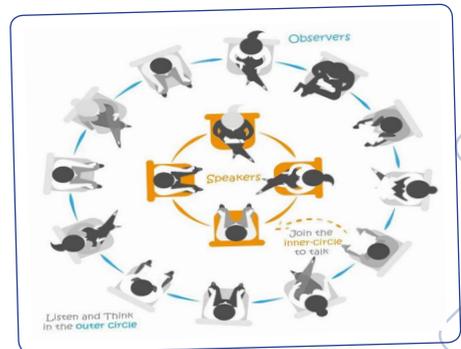
Source: <https://urbact.eu/toolbox-home/analysing-problems/fishbowl>

Advantages

- Controlled situation
- Can be used to discuss controversial or sensitive issues
- Enhance Dynamics individual involvement
- Individual differences are respected
- Dynamic group involvement

Disadvantages

- Can be time-consuming if not managed properly
- Not everybody will participate
- Fear of ridicule
- Fear of failure



3.1.11 Reflection/ Debriefing

This happens at the end of a session, a day, or a course. It provides an opportunity for participants and facilitators to assess and take stock, to reflect quietly on how they are responding to the work and the process as a whole. It is part and parcel of the learning process. Reflection can occur in silence,



in discussion prompted by questions from the facilitator or a combination of both. It could end with a brief group sharing. It is often useful to go round the circle asking each participant for one word that expresses how they are feeling, or a sentence encapsulating the key thing they have learnt, or something bad and something good about the session, or perhaps one thing they had wanted to say during the work but had not.

Advantages

- It helps facilitators and participants to reflect and take stock of activities
- It helps to maintain the tempo of the dialogue session right till the closing
- It helps in checking that the goals for the session or the specific exercise have been achieved and that the group is ready to proceed.
- It helps in checking whether group dynamics are supporting the work and that tensions are not causing any blocks in the process.
- It helps in checking that individual group members understand the process.

To ask questions and seek clarification if they are unsure of something.

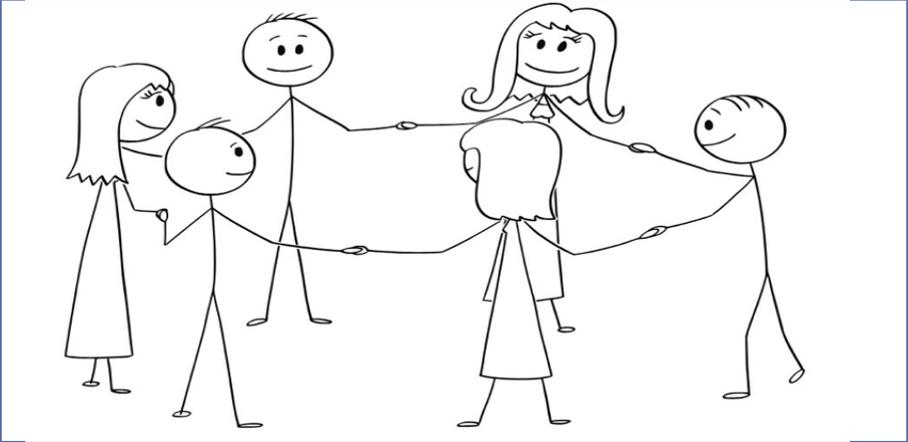
It comments on any problems they are experiencing.

It acknowledges how they are feeling about the dialogue.

3.2. Exercises and Games

These are exercises and games that the facilitator is expected to use to advance his role. They will help provide clarity on some conversations as well as imbibe in participant's knowledge about key themes around peacebuilding.

3.2.1 Getting to know each other: Identity Circle.



Facilitator's Note

- Ask participants to stand in a large circle.
- Explain that you will call out one statement, and anyone who identifies with that statement as part of their identity will take one step into the centre of the circle.
- Begin reading out the statements from the list one at a time in a clear, neutral voice, allowing time for participants to move in and out of the centre of the circle. After each statement, allow time for everyone in the centre to step back into the circle before reading the next statement.
- You may add or change statements on the list to fit the context. Seek to move gradually from those that are more evident to those that are more intimate or hidden.
- Come back into the plenary and follow the debrief questions, noting keywords and phrases on a flip chart sheet.

Identity List

These are suggestions to read out loud. Choose about 10 statements, starting with ones that are evident and moving to ones that reflect invisible or hidden parts of our identity. You can also add your own, according to the context and group dynamics.

¹³ This Exercise has been adapted from Search for Common Ground Common Ground Training Manual.

I am the youngest child	I am widowed	I speak 3 or more languages	I have more than two children	I am Christian
I am a parent	I grew up in a city	I am scared of the dark	I am a grand-parent	I am Jewish
I am a single parent	I grew up in a village	I play chess	My parents are no longer alive	I am Buddhist
I am single	I am a footballer	I don't drink alcohol	I am a singer	I don't believe in God
I am married	I am a traveler	I have children	I am Muslim	I have lost family members due to illness

Debrief Questions

1. What was this experience like? Did anything surprise you during the activity?
2. Did anything change about the way you see your peers now?
3. » Did the activity bring to light any assumptions that you didn't know you had?
4. Did anyone have an identity they wanted to hide? Why are we more comfortable sharing some identities rather than others?
5. Which of your identities are inherited (gender, race, etc.)? Which ones are chosen (profession, hobby)?
6. » Do you have identities which are aspirational, representing who you are becoming, or dream to be (a loving person, a citizen of the world, a changemaker, etc.)?
7. » What about nationality and religion – are they inherent or chosen?
8. Are our identities static or ever-changing?
9. Which of your identities do you think other people see immediately? Which are hidden?
10. » Which identities are most important to you?
11. Did your feelings towards others change when you were in the circle together? In what way?
12. » What about when you were not in the circle – how did that feel?
13. What happens to group identity when you are in a situation of conflict?
14. For example, when your nation or tribe was at war, when your neighbor's child bullies your child, or when you feel injustice against you because of your gender or religion.

15. Do we view people differently when we are in a situation of conflict?
16. » Why might this be important? How can we identify commonalities with others who at first appear different?

3.2.2 Adversarial Vs. Collaborative Approaches: Balloon

Activity: 10 minutes

Debrief: 35 minutes

Resources:

About 50 balloons, or enough for 3 times the number of participants

A toothpick for each participant



Objective:

To recognize that our default reaction to conflict is often adversarial, even when this is not in our best interest. Understanding this reaction, and what we can do to change it, is the key to beginning to respond to conflict with collaboration and identifying shared interests with perceived adversaries.

Facilitator's Note

In choosing, be aware of specific gender or cultural considerations regarding physical contact. Be conscious also that some cultures are more accustomed to adversarial approaches while others favor collaboration and may not be comfortable with confrontation.

Facilitation Steps

1. Give each participant a balloon.
2. Ask them to blow up their balloons and tie a knot in it.
3. Give each participant a toothpick.
4. Explain that to win, you must protect your balloon from popping during the exercise, which will last 1 minute.
5. Start the exercise, then stop after 60 seconds.
6. Look around and ask the participants who won and who lost.
7. Ask them, briefly, to describe what happened. Let people explain what happened and who did what but keep the debrief to only about 60 seconds.
8. Ask the group if they had a second chance and if they think they might be able to have more winners. Then hand out balloons to all those who lost theirs in the first round, so that everyone has a balloon and a toothpick.
9. Start the exercise and stop after 30 seconds.
10. Debrief the second round (either standing or seated depending on group needs).
11. You can ask the participants if they would like one last chance to try again and see if there can be more winners. You can do this either with those remaining with balloons or starting afresh with everyone.
12. Debrief once more after this last round.
13. Distribute the handout and present the key takeaways.

POSSIBLE DEBRIEF QUESTIONS

1. What happened during the first round? Why did you attack each other's balloons?
2. Why did we assume that there needed to be a winner and a loser?
3. What were the factors in the way the exercise was set up that made us resort instinctively to the competition? Did it serve your interests to do that? Example: "protect your balloon"
4. What happened in the second round? Did you change the way you perceived the others in the game? In what way?
5. Why was it difficult for us to see that opportunity of win-win?
6. What was necessary for the group to agree to collaborate and seek a win-win solution?

7. Did you trust each other? What did you do to try to reassure the others that you were not an adversary, but an ally? Did it work, or was there still fear and mistrust amongst you?
8. In what way does the activity resemble the way that we deal with conflict in our own lives?
9. Once you understand the activity differently, what changes did you perceive in yourself, the other person and the situation?
10. What was/would have been necessary for the group to agree to collaborate and seek a win-win solution?
11. Did anyone give their balloon to someone else to protect?

3.2.3 Defining Conflict and Violence: Piece of Peace

Activity: 05 minutes

Debrief: 10 minutes

Resources

A4 sheet for each participant

Facilitation Notes

- Ask participants to take a piece of A4 paper and write “PEACE” on it in large letters
- Ask participants to tear the paper into many pieces. Give them 15 seconds.
- Ask participants to put their paperbacks together. Give them 60 seconds.

Debrief Questions

1. How long did it take you to tear up your paper?
2. How long did it take you to put your paper back, together again?
3. Which was easier?
4. What do we see in our lives from this exercise?

Key Concepts

1. Peace is fragile and easily destroyed.
2. Destruction can happen quickly and easily.
3. Reconstruction takes much more time and energy.
4. Even when we restore peace after the violence, the scars and fissures remain.

5. Peace restored after violence can never be the “same” peace as it was before violence.

3.2.4 Reconciliation: The Prodigal Son

Activity: 25 minutes

Debrief: 20 mins

Objective:

Illustrate and discuss a process of reconciliation using dramatic storytelling to raise the deepest questions about the values which underpin forgiveness and reconciliation.

Materials:

1 copy of Handout the Prodigal Son for a volunteer to read the story. Alternatively, you may choose to narrate the story yourself.

Procedure:

- 1) Ask for one volunteer to read the story of The Prodigal Son (or read it yourself). Ask for 3 volunteers to act out the story, as it is being read, in an impromptu way. The 3 actors will play the parts of the father, the first son who leaves, and the second son who stays but who complains.
- 2) Place the 3 actors in different spots in the front of the room, e.g. the father may remain in the center frame but perhaps stand on a chair to represent his authority and also a sense of ‘home.’ The son who leaves and squanders the money must be able to move around, acting out his wasteful ways of a life filled with wine, women and song! The second son must be in the background, but not too far away, as he is watching from the shadows consumed by the injustice of his workload.
- 3) The facilitator explains that this story is about family conflict. The purpose of this story is to explore questions about the nature and interconnectedness of fundamental values of truth, justice, peace and mercy and the way they function in a forgiveness and reconciliation process. While this particular scriptural story is clearly embedded in a specific religious tradition, the roles, values, and core messages are familiar across many cultures and faith traditions.

Discussion: At the conclusion of the dramatic storytelling, ask the actors to remain where they are while the discussion takes place. These questions are suggested to bring out the main messages but the discussion may take other directions so do not feel constrained by them.

If you could say something to the son who leaves, what would it be?
If you could say something to the son who stays, what would it be?
In your opinion, what is the main point of this story?
Who is Jesus really talking about? The 'bad' son, who leaves, or the 'good' son who stays, or the father?
What sort of picture does the story paint of the father?
What does the story tell us about justice?
What does the story tell us about mercy and forgiveness?
What does the story tell us about peace?
What does the story tell us about truth and truth-telling?
If this story represents a typical family, is there anyone missing?
At what moment in the story is the son forgiven?
When does reconciliation take place?

Facilitator's Notes: This story weaves together the values of truth, justice, peace and mercy. We see that the first son wants 'justice' in the form of taking his equal share of his father's resources – even before his father's death. A minimalist understanding of justice can sometimes equate justice with the equal distribution of resources, and yet this story challenges us to see that life requires something more of us. The second son, upon his brother's return, is desperate to tell his 'truth' to his father in order to feel understood and appreciated; he is aggrieved that he has been treated unjustly and needs to tell his father about his sense of pain. In returning home, the first son is seeking peace with his family and is deeply aware that what he has done, in his own estimation, is unforgivable, yet he feels compelled to return. The actions of the father are totally beyond the comprehension of both sons, his mercy is unconditional, and this is demonstrated by the reinstatement of the ring, the modern equivalent of allowing this son to have a responsibility once again for the finances of the household.

The story indicates that there is a difference between forgiveness and reconciliation. In the story, the moment the son realizes his mistakes and turns toward home, the father sees him and is filled with compassion and forgiveness. The journey home, however, continues and the reconciliation between the father and son can be seen in the dialogue of acknowledgement and in the celebration that follows. As the father invites and challenges his other son into

the reconciliation process, we are left with the question of whether this actually happens. Perhaps in raising this as a final question the facilitator may choose to elicit responses from the participants about what they think happened between the two sons after the story ends.

This story, like all reconciliation stories, is full of possibilities for reflection but we recognize too that it cannot capture everything that could be said about forgiveness and reconciliation. The richness of this story often resonates deeply with people, and they find themselves challenged by the insights into family relationships. This story, like all stories of forgiveness and reconciliation, is not complete in itself. A discussion in a cross-cultural and multi-faith context will no doubt be a fruitful way of exploring the core values that can lie at the heart of a reconciliation process.

3.2.5 Energizers: Tropical Rainstorm

Activity: 5 mins

TRY ME

Everyone stands in a circle; the facilitator begins the storm by rubbing their hands together. One by one everyone copy's the person to their right. Each individual does only what the person on their right does, regardless of what the facilitator is doing. The facilitator moves from rubbing hands to clicking their fingers to clapping, slapping their thighs and to stamping their feet. The storm abates in the opposite way to which it began – that is, from stamping and slapping to clapping, clicking and rubbing. The round ends with silence.

Facilitators Notes: In order to do this exercise effectively, you will have to memories the order of actions forwards (rubbing hands together, clicking fingers, clapping hands, slapping thighs, stamping feet) and backwards (stamping feet, slapping thighs, clapping hands, clicking fingers, rubbing hands).

3.2.5 Starting, Warming Up: Say who you are & show what you like

Activity: 10 mins

- ¹⁵ Schwarz, R. (2002). *The Skilled Facilitator: A Comprehensive Resource for Facilitating the Dialogue*. Jossey-Bass.
- ¹⁶ Kaner, S. (2014). *Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision-Making*. Jossey-Bass.
- ¹⁷ Block, P. (2011). *Community: The Structure of Belonging*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- ¹⁸ Schein, E. H. (2013). *Humble Inquiry: The Gentle Art of Asking Instead of Telling*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- ¹⁹ Dukes, F. (2004). *Facilitating Group Communication in Charitable Organizations*. In *The Handbook of Group Communication Theory and Research* (pp. 413-428). Sage Publications.
- ²⁰ Miller, R. (2010). *Dialogue in Organizations: An Overview*. In *Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together* (pp. 78-91). Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- ²¹ Heron, J. (1999). *The Complete Facilitator's Handbook*. Kogan Page.

TRY ME

Ask the participants to stand in a circle.

Let them introduce themselves by telling the group their name plus one thing they like to do, while simultaneously performing the act e.g.: “I am Marie ... and I like to jump” (ride a bicycle, read, plough, prepare food, run, smile, play football, work on the computer, do gym, dance, hug others, etc.).

After the first round, the one to the left introduces the person on their right, e.g.: “This is Marie and she likes to jump” and everybody does the movement.

- **Variation**

You can do another round in a different manner: Whoever remembers a name and the respective movement of a person, can introduce this person.

You can change from “what I like to do” to “If I was an animal» and mime the behavior of the respective animal e.g.: “If I was an animal, I would be a mouse”.

3.3. Being a Facilitator:

3.3.1 Facilitators: Roles and Responsibilities

Facilitators play a crucial role in dialogue sessions, acting as catalysts for meaningful conversations. Their main objective is to create a supportive and trustworthy environment by effectively structuring and guiding the dialogue (macro skills) while facilitating communication and building confidence among participants (micro skills). A good facilitator will set a welcoming and open tone, ensuring that everyone feels comfortable and engaged.

3.3.2 Key Principles for Effective Facilitation

- **Embrace Authentic Experiences:** Facilitators should not limit themselves to a purely facilitative role. Engaging in real-life conflicts and acknowledging genuine emotions are essential for bringing authenticity and freshness to the dialogue¹⁵.
- **Share Knowledge Generously:** By openly sharing skills and experiences, facilitators contribute to the growth of all participants, regardless of their experience levels. This collaborative approach fosters strong, cohesive teams in any setting¹⁶.
- **Connect Activities to Topics:** After exercises, facilitators should ask reflective questions to link the activities to the overarching topic. Questions such as “What did you learn from this activity?” or “How does this relate to our main

discussion?” can help participants draw meaningful connections¹⁷.

- **Understanding Facilitation:** The term "facilitates" means "to make easier." Therefore, facilitators should prioritize the process of discussion over the content itself. While the content pertains to what is being discussed, the process focuses on how the group engages with that content¹⁸.

3.3.3 Functions of an Effective Facilitator

- **Encourage Full Participation:** Ensure that all voices are heard and valued¹⁹.
- **Promote Mutual Understanding:** Foster an environment where participants seek to understand each other's perspectives²⁰.
- **Foster Inclusive Solutions:** Strive to find solutions that consider all viewpoints²⁰.
- **Teach New Thinking Skills:** Help participants develop new ways of thinking and approaching issues

3.3.4 Skills of a Good Facilitator

Facilitators must be sensitive to the emotional landscapes of participants, many of whom may have faced challenging experiences. It's essential to recognize signs of distress and address them appropriately. If discussions become particularly intense or emotional, facilitators should feel empowered to pause the session for a break—this could involve offering coffee, tea, or a moment to stretch. During the break, it's beneficial to check in with participants who may be feeling overwhelmed.

3.3.5 Core Principles for Facilitation

- **Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Encourage deeper reflection by posing questions that invite discussion, such as “What are your thoughts on peace?” instead of simple yes-or-no questions.
- **Encourage Equal Participation:** Keep track of who wishes to speak and create a fair speaking order to ensure everyone has a chance to contribute.
- **Facilitate Peer Interaction:** Allow participants to respond to each other's questions and summarize key points at the end of discussions to reinforce understanding.
- **Acknowledge Diverse Viewpoints:** Respect and recognize the variety of perspectives within the group.
- **Be Mindful of Sensitive Topics:** Stay alert to issues that may evoke strong emotions and handle them with care.

- **Prioritize Listening Over Speaking:** Focus on listening to participants rather than dominating the conversation.
- **Maintain Focus on Content:** Ensure discussions remain relevant and centered on the topic while guiding the process effectively.
- **Recognize Participants' Concerns:** Show awareness of the themes and issues that are important to the group.
- **Allow for Silence:** Embrace moments of silence, giving participants time to reflect before or after contributing to the discussion.

3.3.6 Self-evaluation tool for facilitators

Is the process inclusive? Are all the stakeholders involved? Is there a checklist of participants?

Is the process reflective i.e. not pre-decided?

Did I consider gender issues? Did women get the same chance to speak as men?

Is there a balance?

Is the process flexible? Are you able to modify and adapt? Are the participants and other stakeholders (advisers, supporters and conveners involved in monitoring the process?

If something goes exactly according to plan, is this an indicator of success or inflexibility?

Did your emotions change during the event?

Ask yourself- Did I learn anything?

Look for indicators like body language, blank expressions, lack of interest, and silences. Are people asking questions, are you being challenged?

Is everyone involved?

Does the facilitator become invisible? Do participants start dialogues amongst themselves?

If people keep bringing up the same issues, is it because they aren't following the process or because they're not being heard?

Are you breaking down traditional power groups and promoting those that are marginalized?

What kinds of open-ended questions are you using?

Are you open to criticism? Are you receiving any?

Is your agenda inclusive of everybody's needs and experiences?

3.3.7 Indicators afterwards

Have you achieved your objectives for the dialogue?

Has the process led to changing practice or behavior?

Has there been an increase in the participation of previously marginalized groups?

The next time you meet is there continuity in the level of understanding?

Are there any signs of progressive change?

Are there any signs of a sustained change?

Are there any signs of positive thought or growing levels of confidence?

Is there any evidence of growing confidence to criticize?

Is there any evidence of attempts to go beyond the immediate stakeholders, to initiate things independently?

Are there any examples where attitudes or beliefs have changed?

3.4. Possible risks and challenges during the Dialogue and proposed mitigation strategies

From a multidisciplinary perspective, it is crucial to identify the various risks and problems that might be explored while organizing a consistent and successful dialogue process. To ensure that dialogue processes run smoothly, all the challenges need to be addressed with the help of mitigating strategies.

Challenges	Mitigation strategies
The participants are slow to respond to the process	In such a case, we will check to determine whether the facilitator's directions have been understood. He or she may need to restate the purpose of the process and how it should be carried out. We might also have people who resist participating because of "power" issues in the group (given power disparities among our participants). If so, we will invite them to participate to the degree they feel comfortable as well as assure them that the purpose of the process is to share different insights, experiences, and personal reflections on the topic. It is also important to make sure members are physically comfortable.
One or a few members dominate the dialogue.	The instructions you give to participants about respecting time limits are helpful. We will invite participants to be conscious of each person having time to share his or her reflections, ideas, and insights. It may be helpful to invoke the ground rule "It is important to share time equitably" when a few individuals dominate the discussion. Another solution will be to tell the group we want to hear from those who have not said much. Participants will look at the facilitator to restrain domineering members. Sometimes, this situation happens when those dominating the dialogue feel they have not been heard. Restating the essence of what they've expressed will show that we have understood their point of view

<p>The dialogue facilitator feels strongly about an issue and has trouble staying unbiased</p>	<p>The dialogue facilitator will need to remain on task, which is to guide the process and to elicit and respect all members' thoughts. If he or she really respects the views of others and shows interest and curiosity for other experiences and viewpoints, it will not be difficult to keep personal ideas from over-influencing the dialogue. This is not to say that the dialogue facilitator will not share with the members in the process. However, he must guard against moving from a discussion leader into a "teacher/ lecturer" mode.</p>
<p>A participant walks out of a group following a heated conflict.</p>	<p>Sometimes the conversation may become heated. Other times, people may seem to be on the verge of fighting; and sometimes they may even walk out. The best way to deal with conflict is to confront it directly. Remind participants that they were told initially to expect conflict but that they agreed to respond to differences respectfully. The dialogue facilitator will endeavor to avoid name-calling, personal attacks, and threats. In this situation, the facilitator and co-facilitators will appeal to the group for support. If they accept the ground rules, they will support us.</p>

CHAPTER FOUR

Lessons Learned, Challenges and Recommendations

4.0 Introduction

Engaging in improbable dialogue is inherently intricate and can lead to misunderstandings or even expose participants to potential risks. Therefore, it is crucial to consider several key aspects when organizing such dialogues. This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the four improbable community-level dialogues which serve as case study, detailing the objectives, methodology, implementation process, challenges faced, outcomes, and recommendations for future initiatives. To this, this chapter also will provide essential recommendations to assist you in navigating this process effectively. Among these recommendations are:

4.1 Lessons learned from Field guide Test: Case studies on Organization of Improbable Dialogues

To test the Improbable Dialogue Field Guide and ensure contextual alignment within the North West and South West regions of Cameroon, and to validate the effectiveness of dialogue techniques, exercises, and guidelines provided in the Improbable Dialogue Field Guide, LOYOC, with technical and financial support from their partner swisspeace, provided seed grants and technical support to youth civil society leaders who were trained in designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating community-level improbable dialogues. These trained participants were organised into four groups, with two groups per region, based on their geographical locations.

In the **Northwest region**, participants were grouped into Boyo and Mezam, while in the **South West region**, participants were grouped into Fako and Kupe-Muanenguba. Additionally, four participants from the first phase of the project who demonstrated



Enhancing Trust, Collaboration and Unity
Among Bike Riders and Taxi Drivers in Bamenda i, ii and iii

significant commitment and mastery of improbable community-level dialogues were carefully selected to mentor and support the participants in designing and implementing their dialogues.

In **Kupe-Muanenguba**, project participants identified a farmer-grazer conflict around the Kupe Muanenguba Twin Lakes and developed a dialogue titled “Enhancing Collaboration and Understanding between Farmers and Grazers in the Muanenguba Twin Lakes Area”



to foster trust and understanding between these groups.

In **Fako**, participants recognised an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) and designed an improbable community-level dialogue titled “Building Trust

and Understanding to Resolve GBV Uprising in Tole through Improbable Community Dialogue” to address this pressing issue. In



Mezam, participants identified growing tensions between motorcycle (bike) riders and taxi drivers and developed a dialogue titled “Enhancing Trust,

Collaboration, and Understanding among Bike Riders and Taxi Drivers in Bamenda” to mitigate this problem.

In **Boyo**, participants designed and implemented a dialogue titled “Strengthening Trust and Relationships between KOMCUDA and Kom Football Lovers in Belo through a Community-Level Improbable Dialogue” to improve relationships and trust within the community.



Methodology

- 1. Conflict Identification:** The project participants began by identifying existing conflicts within their communities where they believed they could contribute to resolution efforts. This initial step ensured that the dialogues would be relevant and targeted toward pressing local issues.
- 2. Orientation and Q&A Sessions:** Participants then engaged in orientation sessions facilitated by Local Youth Corner (LOYOC) to align their objectives with the broader goals of the project. During these sessions, they also participated in Q&A sessions designed to provide clarity and guidance as they crafted their community-level improbable dialogue proposals. These proposals were developed in a way that aligned with the project's objectives, ensuring consistency and impact.
- 3. Proposal Design and Review:** Participants regularly revisited the Improbable Dialogue Guide to update their techniques and approaches, ensuring that their plans were both innovative and feasible. These reviews, along with the Q&A sessions, were conducted via Google Meet, allowing for real-time feedback and collaboration.
- 4. Implementation Support:** During the implementation phase, participants were accompanied in the field by LOYOC program offices in the North West and South West regions. This hands-on support ensured that the dialogue sessions were conducted effectively and in line with the project's goals.
- 5. Guided Implementation:** The implementation of the community-level improbable dialogue proposals was steered by the Improbable Dialogue Field Guide. This guide provided participants with detailed techniques, exercises, and energizers to facilitate the sessions effectively. Throughout this phase, participants received ongoing technical support and guidance from LOYOC to ensure that the dialogues were conducted smoothly and met the project's objectives.

4.2 Challenges faced

Improbable dialogue at the community level faces several significant challenges, including limited resources, time constraints, and difficulties with stakeholder management.

- 1. Challenges with Stakeholder Management:** Managing diverse stakeholders with varying interests and perspectives presents another layer of difficulty. Ensuring that all voices are heard and adequately represented, while also coordinating logistics and maintaining clear communication, proved to be a complex task. This complexity often resulted in miscommunication

and misalignment of goals among stakeholders, further complicating the dialogue process.

- 2. Lock downs cocupled with Roadblocks posed a significant challenge to participants**, particularly those in the Kupe-Muanenguba area. These obstructions hindered their ability to travel, resulting in delays in the dialogue session. The logistical difficulties created by these roadblocks not only affected time used for the dialogue but also their budget for transportation.
- 3. Limited Resources:** The process of improbable dialogue demands substantial financial investment and adequate time for thorough engagement and reflection. Due to budget constraints, we were unable to allocate the necessary resources to extend the dialogue sessions beyond a single day, which hindered the ability to fully digest and address the complex issues at hand.
- 4. Time Constraints:** Effective improbable dialogue is a time-intensive process that requires participants to engage deeply with one another, reflect on shared experiences, and collaboratively develop solutions.

Our limited budget forced us to condense the sessions, reducing the opportunity for participants to process information and engage in meaningful conversations

Recommendations gathered from Field Test

- **Stakeholder Mapping and Analysis:**

It is essential to carry out comprehensive stakeholder mapping and analysis to identify key stakeholders involved in the improbable community dialogues. This process should include a detailed examination of each stakeholder's interests, influence, and potential impact on the dialogue outcomes. By systematically categorizing stakeholders such as community leaders, local organizations, government representatives, and marginalized groups we can gain insights into their motivations and concerns.

Once the mapping is complete, this analysis should inform the development of targeted engagement strategies tailored to address the specific needs and priorities of each stakeholder group. By customizing approaches based on their interests, we can foster a more inclusive environment that encourages active participation and collaboration. This strategic alignment not only enhances stakeholder buy-in but also contributes to the overall success and relevance of the dialogue initiative.

- **Facilitate Inclusive Participation:**

To ensure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to express their views and contribute to the dialogues, it is crucial to establish robust mechanisms for inclusive participation. This may involve designing a range of participatory tools, such as surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder forums, each aimed at capturing diverse perspectives from various segments of the community.

Surveys can be utilized to gather quantitative data on stakeholder opinions, while focus groups can facilitate in-depth discussions, allowing for nuanced insights into specific issues. Stakeholder forums, on the other hand, can serve as platforms for open dialogue, where participants can share experiences, raise concerns, and collaborate on solutions.

By implementing these mechanisms, we can ensure that marginalized voices are heard, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment among all stakeholders. This inclusive approach not only enriches the dialogue process but also strengthens community ties and enhances the overall effectiveness of the initiative.

- **Phased Implementation:**

Implementing community-level improbable dialogues in a phased approach is highly recommended. This strategy involves conducting the dialogue sessions over an extended period—spanning multiple days or even weeks—to facilitate deeper engagement and foster more meaningful interactions among participants. By distributing the sessions in this manner, communities can ensure that participants have ample time to reflect on discussions, absorb new ideas, and build relationships with one another. This gradual engagement also allows facilitators to adapt their methods and content based on participant feedback and emerging dynamics, enhancing the overall effectiveness of the dialogues. Furthermore, this phased implementation can be beneficial from a budgetary perspective. By spreading out the sessions, communities can allocate resources more effectively, avoiding the financial strain of intensive, one-time events. This approach also provides opportunities for securing additional funding or support between phases, thereby increasing the sustainability of the initiative.

Ultimately, a phased implementation not only enriches the dialogue experience but also helps to cultivate an ongoing culture of collaboration

and understanding within the community, ensuring that diverse voices are actively engaged in shaping a shared future.

- **Training of Community based improbable dialogue facilitators in these communities :**

One recommendation is to establish a comprehensive training program for a selected group of individuals within the community to become facilitators of improbable dialogue. This initiative aims to enhance local capacity by equipping these individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to foster open and constructive conversations among diverse community members. The training should encompass a variety of techniques and methodologies designed to encourage dialogue in situations where perspectives may conflict or differ significantly. It would involve workshops, role-playing scenarios, and interactive exercises to help facilitators develop their communication, mediation, and conflict resolution skills. Additionally, the program should focus on the unique dynamics of the community, allowing facilitators to tailor their approach to local contexts and cultural nuances. By empowering these local facilitators, we can create a sustainable model for ongoing dialogue that builds trust, promotes understanding, and ultimately contributes to stronger, more resilient community relationships. This investment in local talent is crucial for fostering a culture of collaboration and inclusivity, ensuring that diverse voices are heard and respected in community discussions.



4.3 Other Possible Recommendations for organizing a good improbable Dialogue session

- **Keep it low key:** It is obvious that many change makers will feel excited to communicate their good works on social media and other platforms. While this is a very heroic feeling, we observe during our process that an improbable dialogue can fail or expose the participants to security risks if we do not communicate strategically. Thus, we would like to recommend that while executing the dialogue try to not be excited about the outcome, stay objective and ensure that you communicate publicly only when necessary.
- **Dialogue location should trigger creativity:** A key quality of improbable dialogue is the ability of the participants to feel relaxed in an environment where they feel safe and connect with nature. In LOYOC's experience, participants were more creative when the locations we used were closer to the seaside and could give participants access to nature. This might seem like a small thing, but the participants claimed that the kind location helps to improved participation in the whole dialogue process.
- **Don't make it too serious:** Traditionally, dialogue processes are sometimes very serious to achieve, and for this reason, it is important to do it properly, the dialogue host must ensure they keep the process nice and simple. For example, it is advisable to make the dialogue participant feel free and less conditioned in the room before engaging conversation, this could include encouraging participants to dress however they are comfortable, while staying decent.
- **Don't make your dialogue seem like a training:** Dialogue processes should be distinct from training. It will be good to ensure the facilitators do not monopolies conversations or proof to the participants they are lecturing or training them. The Dialogue is about the participants and not the facilitator or the organizer. So, provide more time and space for the participants to express their ideas.
- **Beware of tension in the room:** Since the dialogue is for people from different walks of life, do not imagine that they will be best of friends or be on good terms. Remember one of the key outcomes of the dialogue is also to ensure that participants can come together despite their differences. If you experience disagreement during the dialogue

“I used to feel dialogues must be done in conference rooms, dressed in suits and all tight up. I felt so at ease during this process because the locations connected me to nature. The sea breeze gave me more life.”

Dialogue Participant

session, you must apply peace building and conflict transformation tools within the process.

- **Follow up with participants**, before, during and after the dialogue: If you make your process seem like a one-off activity or event, it will be very possible for the participants to lose their interest in the process. It is important to create a common communication platform, for example, a WhatsApp group or any other platform which can be in-person or online. This kind of platform will facilitate follow up and a day-to-day communication among the participant during this process and even after

4.4 CLOSING

This field guide encapsulates the essence of effective dialogue facilitation, drawing from the experiences and insights gained through LOYOC's "Enhancing Youth Capacities and Fostering Improbable Dialogues for Peace" (ENERGY) project in Cameroon. Over the past two years, we have witnessed first-hand the transformative power of creating safe spaces where young people from diverse backgrounds can come together, share their stories, and engage in constructive conversations.

The principles and practices outlined in this guide emphasize the importance of fostering trust, encouraging full participation, and promoting mutual understanding. As facilitators, our role is to not only to guide discussions but to cultivate an environment where every participant feels valued and empowered. By embracing authenticity, sharing knowledge generously, and employing reflective questioning techniques, we can bridge divides and foster inclusive solutions that resonate across communities.

Moreover, recognizing the emotional complexities that participants may bring to the dialogue is crucial. It requires sensitivity and awareness to navigate challenging topics while maintaining a focus on the process of communication. Facilitators must remain attentive to the dynamics within the group, ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to contribute while also respecting different viewpoints.

As we move forward, let us commit to applying the insights gained from this guide in our own contexts. Whether in schools, community organizations, or informal gatherings, the methodologies presented here can serve as a foundation for fostering peace and understanding through dialogue. By leveraging the power of

conversation, we can inspire change, build genuine connections, and contribute to a more harmonious society.

In conclusion, the journey of dialogue facilitation is ongoing, and each interaction presents an opportunity for growth and learning. Together, let us harness this potential to create spaces where dialogue thrives, and where young voices play a pivotal role in shaping a peaceful and inclusive future.

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