

LESSONS FROM THE OAS EXPERIENCE IN THE PROMOTION OF DIALOGUE AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

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Organization of
American States



WHAT IS DIALOGUE?

- "Dialogue is a fundamental component in the process of peace-building. When people are divided by their differences, the patterns of relating tend to reinforce separation, fragmentation and divisiveness."
- "Dialogue is a way of creating bridges across the chasms of our differences. It generates pathways for developing trust, changing old habits of thought and action and trying new behaviors".

As defined by The Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy

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- Dialogue is being increasingly used "to transform deep-rooted, value-based conflicts. With dialogue, small groups of people who hold opposing views on highly divisive and emotional public policy issues are brought together to have a 'new kind of conversation.'

By Heidi Burgess and Guy Burgess

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- "Dialogue is shared exploration towards greater understanding, connection, or possibility."

By Tom Atlee, Co-Intelligence Institute

- "The purpose [of dialogue] is to explore alternate viewpoints, to foster respect and understanding, and to help gain greater skill in both communicating and working more effectively across social and ethnic boundaries."

By Ethnic Dialogues, University of Kentucky Student Center



**CULTURE OF DIALOGUE: DEVELOPMENT OF RESOURCES
FOR PEACEBUILDING IN GUATEMALA**

OAS/PROPAZ was a specialized Program that supported Guatemala's Peace Process beginning in 1995. It successfully provided strategic support and training to increase government and civil society capacity in dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflict and differences. The objective of this program was to support the establishment of an infrastructure for peace-building, democratization and reconciliation in Guatemala and explicitly recognized that these processes were all interrelated.

After a successful development, for almost 8 years OAS/PROPAZ became a nationally coordinated initiative in 2003 and is now called The PROPAZ Foundation.



- Within the context of its democratic strengthening and peacebuilding activities, the OAS defined Dialogue as a problem-solving process used to address socio-political and economic-based issues that could not be effectively resolved by one or more government institutions alone.



MINIMUM CONDITIONS FOR DIALOGUE

- **POLITICAL WILL**

It is crucial to find political will and support in the different social sectors as well in the State so as to have transparent dialogue and therefore increase the possibility of arriving to an agreement

- **TRANSPARENCY AND FLOW INFORMATION**

Social actors and governmental institutions should have equal and fair access to reliable and relevant information.



- **UPHOLDING LEGAL STRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES**

The right of actors to engage in free and equal decision-making processes can be strengthened if a legal framework exists to protect it. This framework must facilitate the interaction between the State and the strategic social sectors.

- **TRAINING AND EDUCATION**

Successful dialogue requires new and innovative training for actors, making it possible for them to have an integral and complete vision of the dialogue process.



- **COORDINATION**

Effective dialogue processes need to be well coordinated between all sectors and actors involved or to be affected by the outcome of the process. Sometimes, a dialogue process benefits from an outside third party entity taking the lead in assisting in the design of the dialogue process or sometimes a national dialogue process is best developed and implemented completely with national counterparts.



- **COMUNICACION**

Regardless of what kind of dialogue is chosen, the ability to listen and jointly create a border understanding of the issues, interests and needs of each party as well as foster closer interpersonal and inter-institutional relationships is key. The success or failure of the dialogue process will depend on the quality of the interactions and the communication between actors.



CONCLUSION

- Ultimately dialogue is a tool of governance that can foster representative and participatory forms of democracy. Regardless of whether they are called dialogue roundtables, presidential commissions, national forums, councils of notables, or governability pacts, they are in essence political dialogue process in representatives of governments, political parties and organized civil society can come together to reestablish democratic order to address deep tensions in society.