



A story of dialogue, conflict and peacebuilding in Bolivia

Paramaribo, Suriname
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UNDP Regional Project on DD

<http://www.democraticdialoguenetwork.org/app/en>



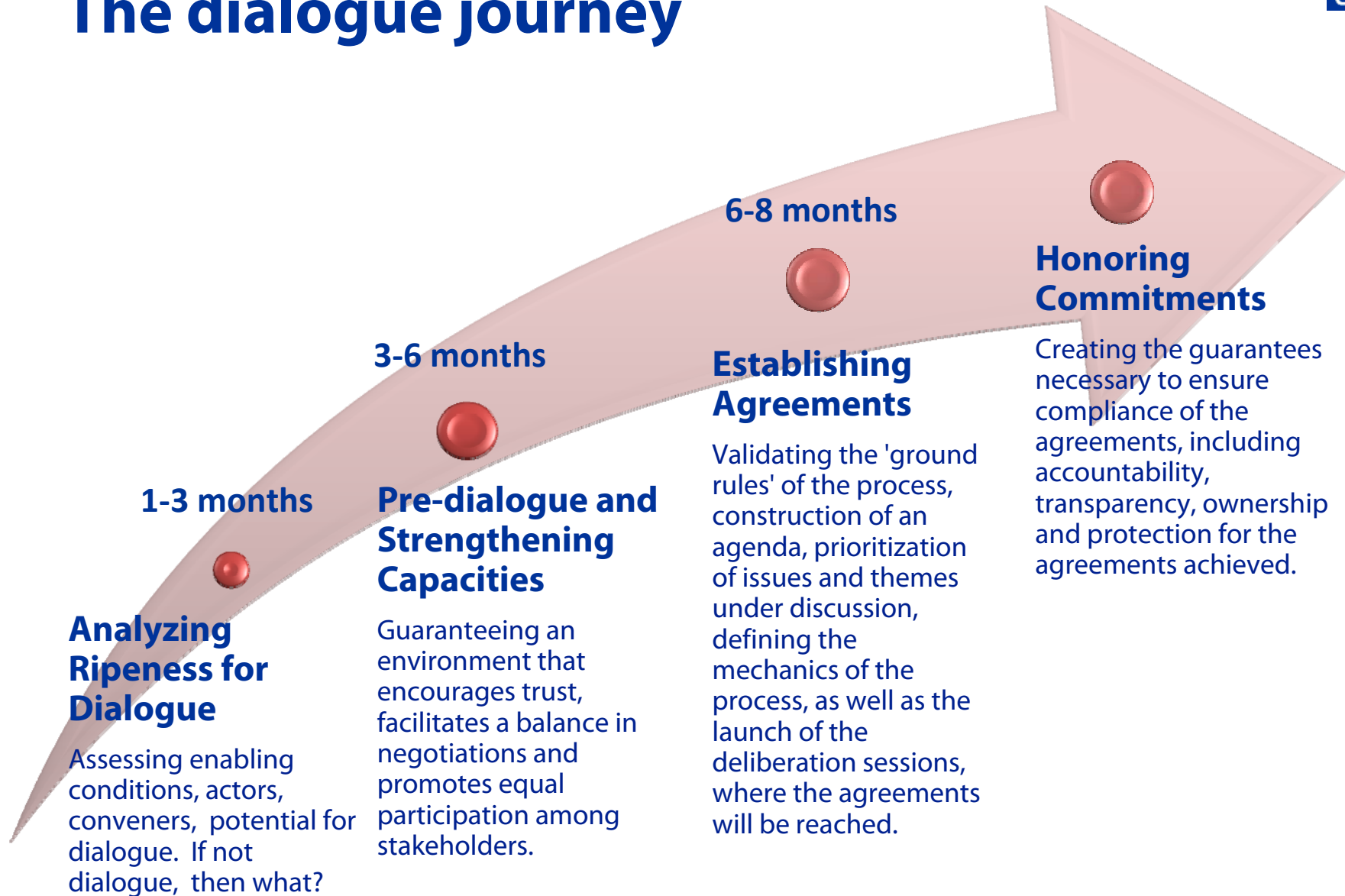
1. Demand-driven technical assistance for dialogue process design, implementation, facilitation, monitoring and documentation.
2. Capacity development among key stakeholders.
3. Knowledge production and sharing

A brief history of UNDP supported dialogue processes: Successes and failures

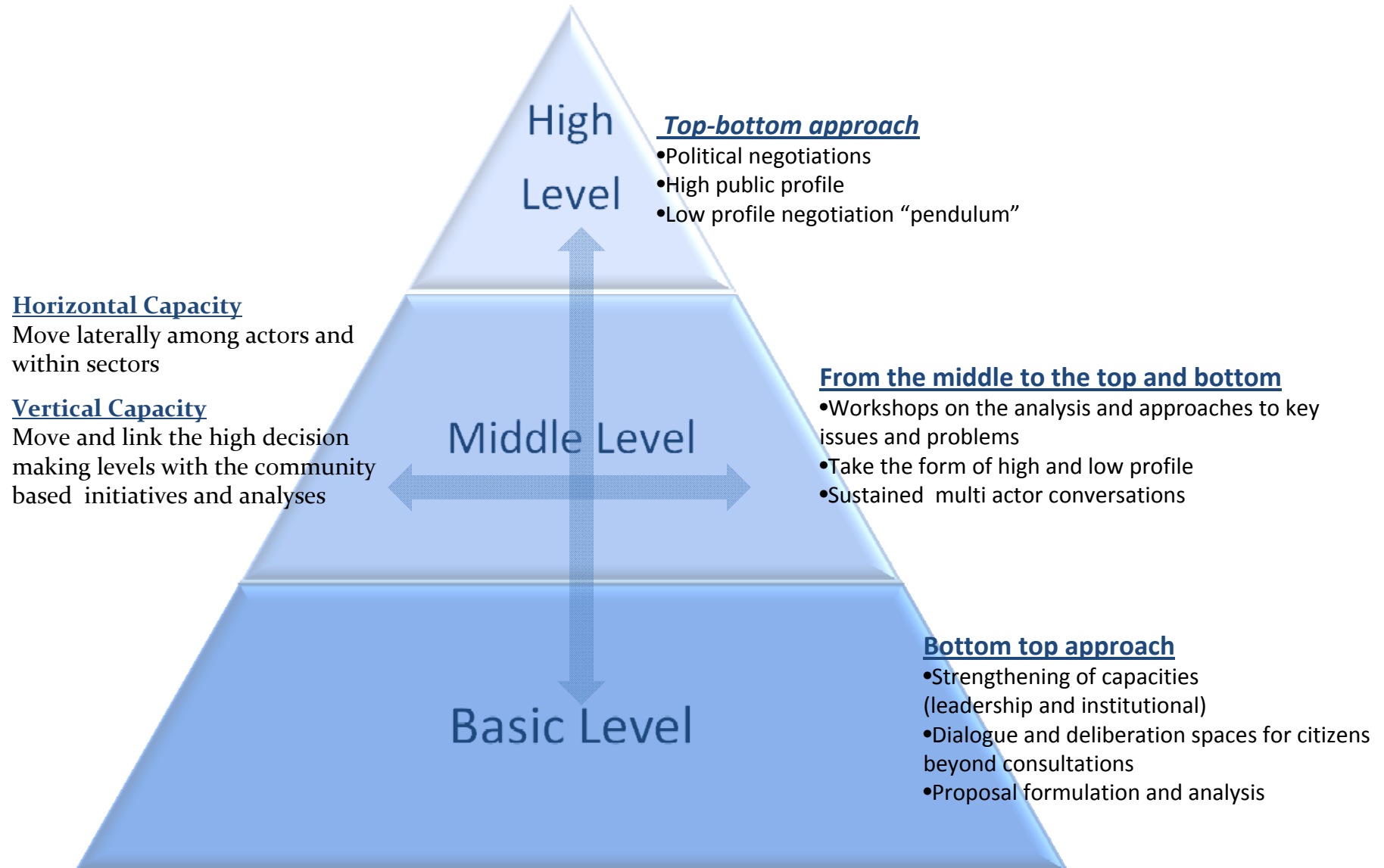


More details: www.democraticdialoguenetwork.org

The dialogue journey



Approaches to Dialogue processes





Why Bolivia?

- Recent major social and political changes
- Historic, ethnic, cultural and political divides
- Three year process to draft and approve a new constitution. Tensions, polarization and violence
- Constitutional reform solved through a laborious process of political dialogue and negotiated compromises paving the way for a majority approval of a new constitution in January 2009



Context

- First indigenous president ever. Wins by absolute majority
- Pledges to promote a new constitution that would change institutional structure of state
- Process opens space for regional governments to claim for autonomy.
- Ethnic and social recognition of coca growers as well as acceptance of the cultural significance of coca for Andean communities.
- Two parallel demands engrained in Bolivian society for a long time.
- Distribution of revenues from gas exploitation.
- Tension and violence. Risk of separatism
- Regional consequences.

main actors involved

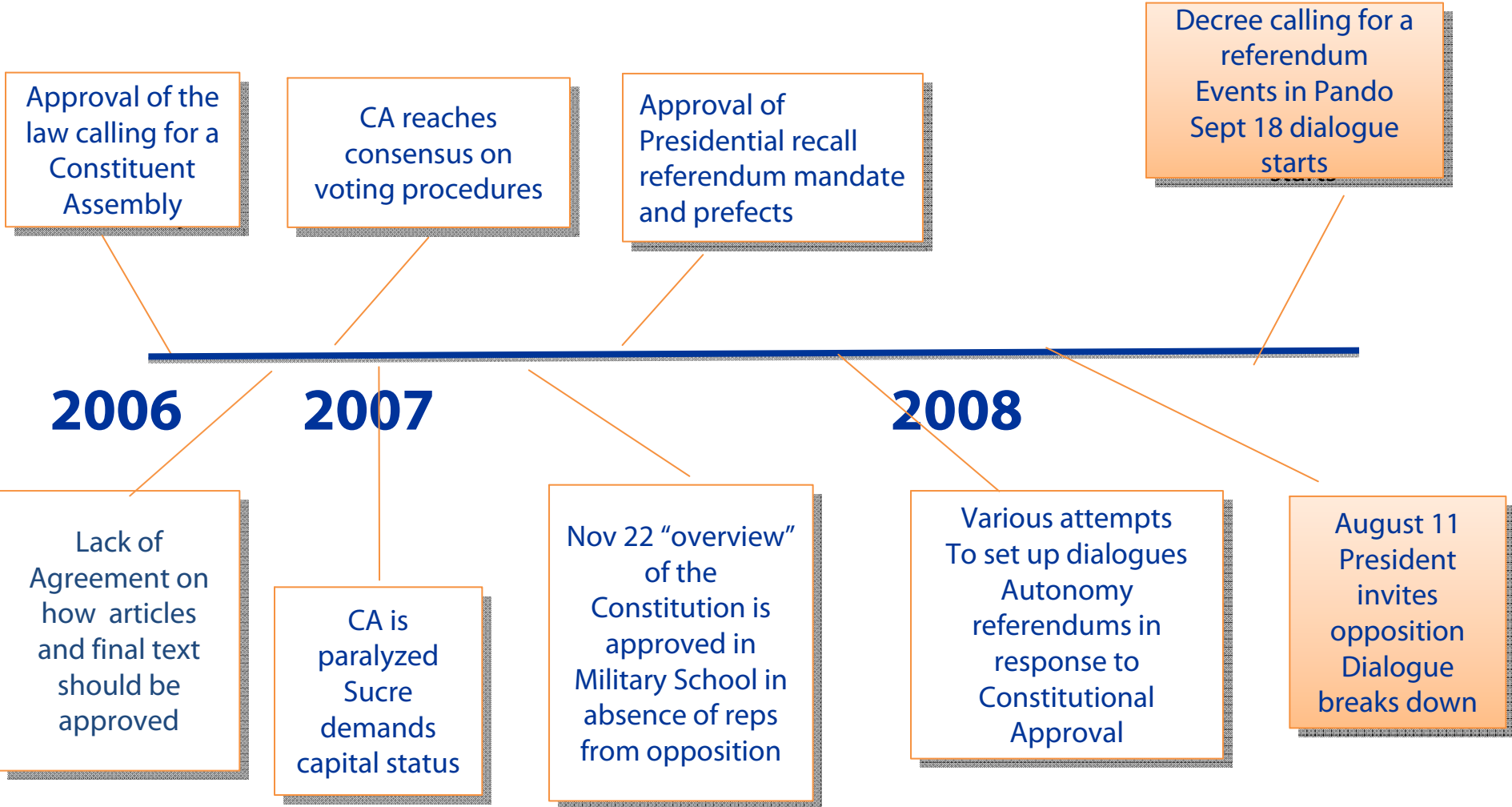
- President and his political base (peasants, indigenous, labor organizations and intellectuals)
- Four Governors of the Media Luna (half the country's surface, 42% of the national GDP including massive gas reserves and generous pastures of strategic agro industrial importance, one third of the country population, per capita GDP is one third higher than national average, its HDI is higher than Latin America average)
- Regional civic groups and entrepreneurs supporting autonomy
- Existing Political Parties



Main causes of conflict

- Discussion and approval of the constitutional project
- Re - Foundation of the state
- Autonomy demands
- Distribution of gas revenues
- Emerging social and political conflicts revealed and exacerbated old ideological, social, geographical, ethnic and regional territorial divides existing in the country

Conflict and Dialogue Timeline



Dialogue Attempt January 2008



High polarization

Government trying to hold a referendum to legitimize the Oruro constitution. Regional governments and autonomists groups claiming the procedure to approve the constitution had been illegal, and calling for and regional referenda to approve autonomy in four departments of the East and south

A dialogue table is set aimed at discussing and reaching agreement on
a) taxing on and distribution of gas revenues, b) harmonization of autonomous statutes and the national constitution, c) appointment of Supreme Court members an other state key positions.

Process failed



Some Reasons

1. Actors would seat to exchange but continue to confront in public
2. Civic movements operating in parallel to political parties would adopt radical positions
3. No procedural rules were set, lack of structure, organization, agreed upon agenda, and starting documents
4. Live transmission of dialogue sessions inhibited open and honest exchange



Second Attempt

On September 18 a dialogue starts between the President, Vice President, political parties and opposition governors

Procedural changes

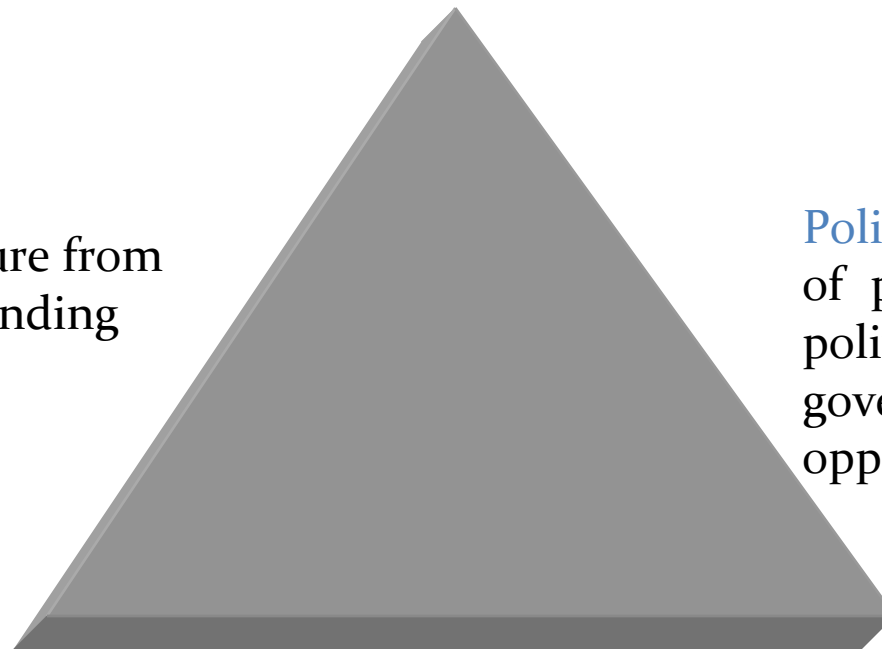
- Number of participants was reduced allowing for a more agile exchange as well as the definition of a viable and realistic agenda.
- Two technical commissions were created to harmonize regional statutes with the National Constitution.
- The popular claim for a dialogued, negotiated and peaceful solution was made public through the publication of opinion polls in mass media. Moral pressure.
- Twenty international observers from the UN, OAS, UNASUR, EU and several churches participated as observers during the sessions.
- Press was not authorized to participate in dialogue sessions.

In October 21st a draft Constitution was agreed upon in Congress and a law was passed calling for a Constituent referendum (law 3942). A new Constitution was approved in January 2009 with 61% of the vote ending a cycle of conflict related to the amendment of the constitution that had started in 2006.

Three dimensions that facilitated the solution to the conflict



Citizen: moral pressure from public opinion demanding peace and dialogue



Political: strengthening of political parties and political will of government and opposition.

Process: spaces for dialogue and trust building, sound technical proposals, defined agenda, rules



Key elements influencing the outcome

- ❖ National actors determine whether dialogue is needed and how to proceed
- ❖ Critical importance of preserving institutional spaces for processing conflicts and channel dialogues (National Electoral Court and National Congress) as well as existing institutions (political parties)
- ❖ Sound technical proposals made available during the Dialogue (Multiparty Democracy Bolivian Foundation)
- ❖ Track two/ informal dialogue spaces aimed at confidence building (Parallel table functioning since 2007)
- ❖ International observation (UN, OAS, UNASUR, EU)
- ❖ Citizen demand for a cessation of the violence, dialogue and a solution to the conflict. 92% of Bolivians thought the dialogue should continue