

Guide to interreligious dialogue

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BRIDGING DIFFERENCES AND
BUILDING SUSTAINABLE SOCIETIES



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Established in 2012, the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) is the only intergovernmental organization overseen by representatives of Member States together with a Board composed of senior members of the world's five major religions. KAICIID is dedicated to the facilitation of dialogue between different cultures and religions and serves to connect religious leaders and policymakers to encourage peacebuilding, minimise conflict and foster social cohesion. The KAICIID mission is essentially to promote meaningful exchange between people of different religions and backgrounds in pursuit of mutual understanding and, through this understanding, acceptance. This cannot be achieved without a deep-seated appreciation of dialogue as a pathway to peace.

H.E. Mr Faisal Bin Muaammar, Secretary General, KAICIID

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FOREWORD

Faisal Bin Muaammar, KAICIID Secretary General 2012-2021

After more than eight years of practicing and promoting interreligious dialogue across the globe, KAICIID is excited to present this guide as both a beginner's introduction to interreligious dialogue as well as a helpful reference to those already experienced in dialogue facilitation.

This comes at a time when easing tensions and building bridges is sorely needed all over the world. So what do we do when the challenges that face our world loom, seemingly insurmountable, before us? In my years of striving to create a more just and peaceful world, I have found only one answer: the transformative and healing power of dialogue.

Over the past decades, I have spoken with those from communities ravaged by war and conflict, convinced that peace could never be possible. Yet, time and again I have witnessed warring brothers and sisters sit down at the same table, listen to each other's grievances, cry over shared losses, and find peace and reconciliation.

I have seen the unlikeliest of alliances form through mutual understanding and respect. I have watched individuals from homogenous communities open their eyes to the beauty of difference and diversity.

With an understanding of this great power of dialogue, KAICIID was founded with a unique mandate and structure designed to foster dialogue among people of different faiths and backgrounds, to overcome differences and fears, and to cultivate mutual respect.

Interreligious dialogue is both our area of expertise and our passion.

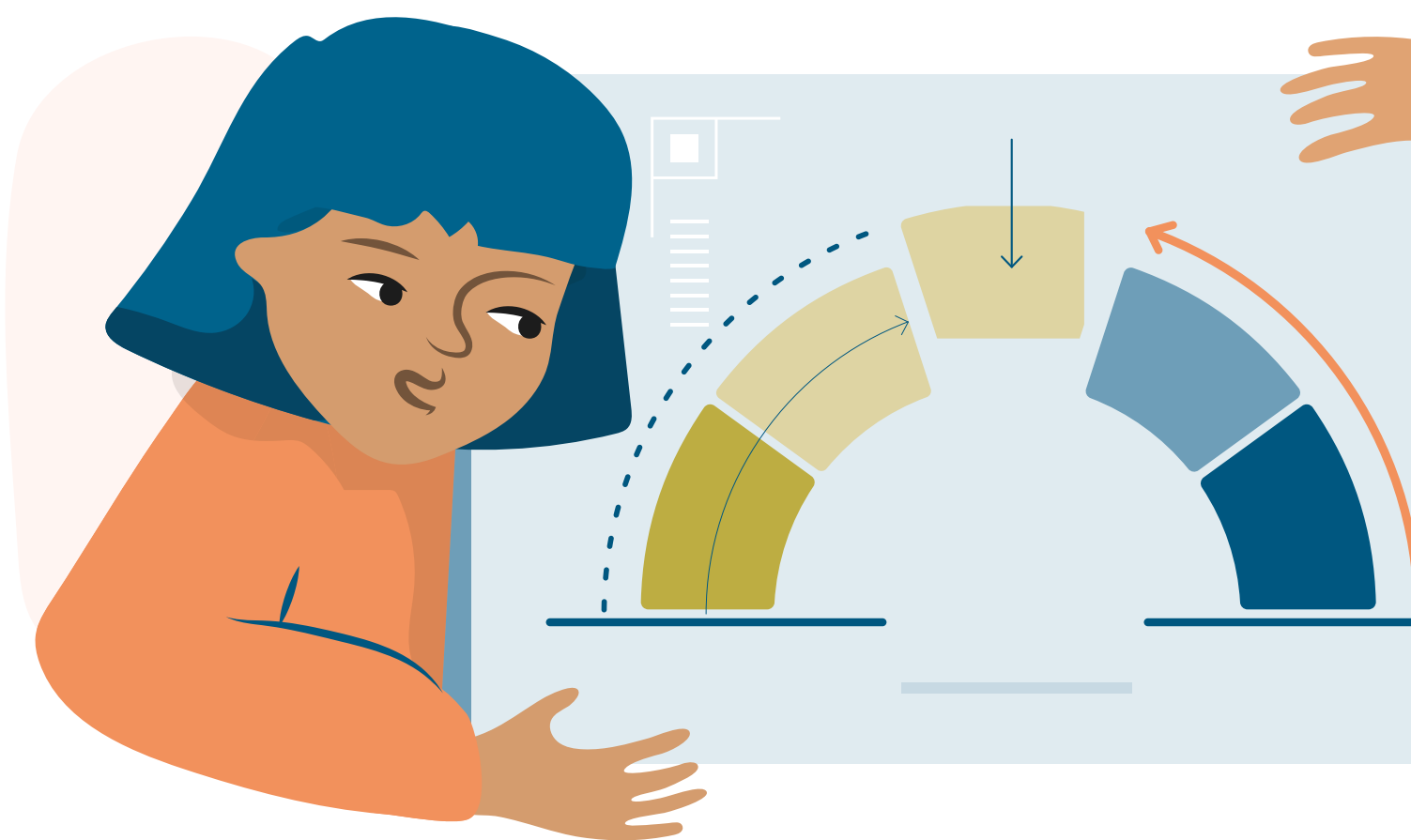
Nearly 85% of the world has a religious identity. It is at the very heart and soul of our being. And because of its power, it can be an incredible force for good.

The major world religions share the same common values: love for one's neighbour, mercy, tolerance and coexistence. Interreligious dialogue helps us to recognise the commonalities we share with our neighbours and build communities based on peace and tolerance. We are convinced that interreligious dialogue is the clear path toward building more peaceful societies.

In these pages you will find inspirational stories of dialogue, best practices for overcoming misunderstandings and fostering mutual respect, and tools to create peaceful, cohesive communities. This guide was designed with the goal of informing and inspiring both newcomers and dialogue veterans to try their hand at facilitating interreligious dialogue, thereby amplifying the healing power of dialogue.

Our world desperately needs radical, life-changing, transformative dialogue. We hope this guide brings us one step closer toward that goal.

Injustice – or justice? War – or peace? Polarisation – or social cohesion?



Regardless of who we are or where we live, most of us would choose the second options. Even so, most people would argue that creating a more just and peaceful society is not easy.

Indeed, it is not – but it is also not impossible. Bearing in mind the global challenges facing humanity, we must urgently unite our efforts to point the world in a more peaceful, just and socially cohesive direction.

This is a remarkably complex challenge in a highly diverse world. Humanity’s multitude of different social groups, religions and cultures means we need to coexist and cooperate across many boundaries and

with individuals and groups different from ourselves.

When encountering differences and disagreements, we always have a choice: handle them through peaceful means or respond in ways that polarise and widen the gaps between us, escalating tensions into destructive conflict and even violence or war.

Dialogue has proven itself, in theory and practice, to be an effective and efficient tool for creating the positive changes we urgently need as a global community. The importance of dialogue has been understood by many different religious traditions for



centuries. More recently, the need for dialogue has been increasingly acknowledged by top leaders of secular organizations, including the United Nations.

Dialogue offers a useful approach to seeking cooperation and inclusion instead of polarisation. Dialogue makes it easier to look for common interests, needs and values and to build trusting relationships between parties – and across differences.

Dialogue works to de-escalate any stage of a conflict and has value in processes of peacebuilding and policymaking, organizational and societal development, and any initiatives aiming to create more inclusive and peaceful societies.

Interreligious dialogue consists of the same qualities as dialogue and has, over the past decades, shown its force in managing problems and contributing to positive change processes, especially where:

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

Interreligious dialogue serves to transform perspectives and support viewing religious and cultural differences not as obstacles but as starting points of a process that aims to find sustainable solutions for the common good.

See the annex for sources on the theory and use of dialogue and interreligious dialogue in different contexts.

Building and crossing bridges

The International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to promoting interreligious dialogue. Since 2012, KAICIID has acted as a convener and supported religious leaders, policymakers, activists and networks and has supported groups in many parts of the world in their efforts towards peacebuilding, thus contributing to inclusion and strengthening social cohesion¹.

Looking back over the years at the contacts made and knowledge gathered, KAICIID has witnessed many examples of interreligious dialogue leading

to positive change. We have seen this happen both through training programmes and through a variety of initiatives where cooperation across faith groups and between secular and religious communities has been the key approach.

In this guide, KAICIID offers a roadmap to support the journey into the field of dialogue and interreligious dialogue.

A vital step towards positive change without leaving someone behind is to harness the unique strengths of building and crossing bridges between all stakeholders in a society. An insight gained throughout the work of KAICIID is the importance of building these connections between groups belonging to different religions. It is equally important to form strong connections between policymakers and secular civil society on the one side and religious leaders, their communities and faith-based organizations on the other.

Since more than 80% of the people around the world identify with a religious group, organization or tradition, religious leaders and faith-based organizations have a far-reaching impact on influencing the outlooks of billions of people across the globe. Religious stakeholders are uniquely positioned to increase positive change in ways that other organizations cannot. The engagement of religious actors is crucial when it comes to overcoming current global and local challenges².

Policymakers make the decisions needed to foster tangible positive change through laws and the allocation of resources. They play important roles in efforts to build sustainable, peaceful and socially cohesive societies, as do governments at all levels as well as civil society.

Together, religious leaders and policymakers hold the keys to the future. Dialogue and interreligious dialogue are powerful and peaceful tools for bridging the gap between these actors and support them in their cooperation towards positive change.

Who is this guide for?

This guide aims to be relevant to the people dedicated to pivoting the world towards a more peaceful, inclusive and sustainable future.

The guide intends to reach religious leaders, members of religious communities and faith-based organizations and policymakers at all levels in institutions, as well as governments and other organizations responsible for formulating or amending policy and political decision-making processes.

The guide also addresses readers not yet familiar with interreligious dialogue but curious to understand more about its potential.

What is this guide for?

This guide aims to illuminate, in a short, general and accessible way, the extensive area of interreligious dialogue. We hope to inspire individuals and organizations to invest in the dialogic approach in both religious and secular contexts.

The guide also encourages readers to reach out to their communities, initiating cooperation across religious, cultural and institutional boundaries.

The guide is introductory and should not be perceived as an academic paper. Its content has been synthesised from sources which can be found on KAICIID's website and in its publications. Examples of manuals and toolkits are included throughout for further reading on the subject.

For additional sources, we refer to the extensive material on dialogue and interreligious dialogue provided by numerous organizations and research institutions worldwide. Further information, knowledge sharing, lessons learned and free online training can be found on the KAICIID website.



www.kaiciid.org

The annex of this guide lists some of the sources foundational to the work of KAICIID, suggestions for further reading, and links to organizations dedicated to interreligious dialogue.

We are all called to daily moments of choice, when we decide whether to promote greater connection or greater separation between ourselves and others. Each of us can contribute to positive change by seeking opportunities to choose a dialogic approach in our own circles of influence. With this guide on hand, it may be easier to walk the dialogic pathway.



1

**A globalised
world needs
interreligious
dialogue**



Photo © HarryKiiM Stock/Shutterstock.com

We live in turbulent times. On the one hand, we live in a world of famine, injustice, polarised societies, war and conflict. On the other, the standard of living for many people is increasing, and popular sustainability-based movements are demanding justice, democracy and dignified living conditions.

The world is full of impressive examples of compassion, solidarity, creativity and joy. It is inhabited by strong, resilient people who reach out to each other with an honest desire to make positive change.

But we face severe global challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a decline in positive development, especially in the poorest countries. An escalating climate crisis is putting the planet in jeopardy. Many conflicts around the world are dividing communities. Demands for transformation on all levels to redress our unsustainable systems are more pressing than ever.

The question may not be if but how we can turn the course of our societies towards a more sustainable direction, together.

A plan for all of us



The United Nations Agenda 2030 contains 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets describing global challenges and indicating how to solve them. This builds on the idea that everyone has the same basic needs in terms of health, education, water, security, equality and a clean environment, and should have a common interest in creating a peaceful and sustainable world for everyone.

The plan's point of departure is the notion that peace and development go hand in hand, as poverty and a lack

of sharing resources are among the most common reasons for violent conflict and war. Most wars take place in developing countries in some of the poorest parts of the world. Working for development and the fairer sharing of resources is interrelated in multiple ways with working towards peace and socially stable societies.

Converting a complex plan like Agenda 2030 into concrete actions that produce real impact is a challenge. It is further complicated by our world's many different perspectives, cultural backgrounds, faith groups and

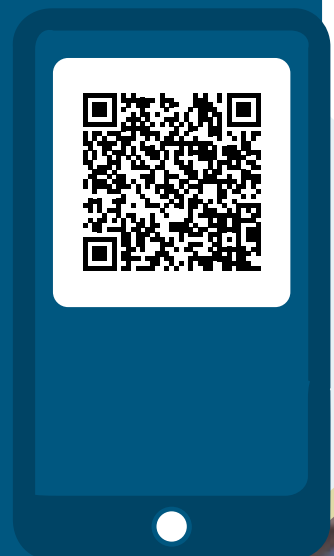


UNITED NATIONS AGENDA 2030:

17 Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations Agenda 2030, issued by all United Nations Member States in 2015, promises peace and prosperity for both people and planet. It represents an urgent call to action for all world citizens.

www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/





Dr. Amina J Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and Chair of the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, addressed the current global challenges at the the G20 Interfaith Forum (2020), which brought together religious and political leaders:

social groups. People hold different values, needs, interests and political points of view. Reaching a common understanding of interests and perspectives across these differences can slow decisions and hinder concrete action.

SDG 17 (partnerships for the goals) emphasises that to succeed in building a sustainable future by implementing Agenda 2030, two principles are essential:

- » **create inclusive partnerships at the global, regional, national and local levels;**
- » **engage and include all groups and stakeholders of society.**

Among other things, this means involving more stakeholders, including those who are not so often heard, and building bridges between people from different parts of society. It is vital to include religious leaders and faith-based organizations in efforts to create a better, more sustainable world.³

“Our social fabric is being stretched as the threads begin to fray in every corner of the globe. Inequality is growing. Divisions are widening. Livelihoods are being lost in millions. Climate change is not on pause and we see ever-rising assault on cultural diversity, religious pluralism and human rights around the world. The 2030 Agenda for sustainable development charts a way for response and recovery that can overcome these challenges. It provides framing for health response and tackling socioeconomic impact. But realising the 2030 Agenda and ensuring a global response to COVID-19 takes commitment and courage. It takes understanding that in order to solve big challenges, we need to come together. There is strength in diversity, and we need solidarity now. All of you represent that understanding and values that are so deeply rooted in old faiths - values such as inclusion, social justice and leaving no one behind.”⁴





Religious stakeholders:

KEY ACTORS FOR BUILDING PEACE AND SOCIAL COHESION

The majority of the poorest countries are non-secular. The vast majority of their citizens define themselves as religious believers, and faith communities play an important role in people's everyday lives. Faith-based organizations provide a significant portion of the world's healthcare services, education and humanitarian aid, particularly in hard-to-reach communities.

Religious leaders and faith-based organizations should not be overlooked in any process contributing to peace, social cohesion and positive change.

They are often highly trusted and respected in their communities and have the power and influence to change societies for the better. Their networks often cross political and geographic borders. Many religious actors have increasingly aligned their work with global development agendas in recent years. As a result, they have long been considered experts in the field of sustainable development and can be crucial partners in implementing the SDGs.

Dialogue and interreligious dialogue:

PATHWAYS TO SUSTAINABLE PEACEFUL SOCIETIES

As dialogue has been gaining recognition, several platforms, programmes and projects around the world that aim to contribute to positive change and confront global and local challenges are using dialogue and interreligious dialogue as their core approach and method.

The greatest achievements in any process of change are revealed when we reach out to the stakeholders we typically tend to avoid. They often belong to the groups we most need to connect with to create the

trusting relationships that form the basis for sustainable and socially cohesive communities.

Interreligious dialogue has the advantage of appealing to a global majority – those who identify with a certain faith group or tradition. Dialogue, whether interreligious or intercultural, provides valuable support for involving and building bridges between all parties, regardless of social background, religious beliefs, national borders, or political and economic interests.

“Bringing together followers of religions and diverse cultures through a constructive dialogue aims to serve humanity and peace purposes and spread good all over the world so differences are no longer a reason for conflict but a factor towards social harmony ... it is a critical time in the history of mankind to embrace our differences and engage in interreligious and intercultural dialogues.”

H.E. Ms. Lubna Qassim, Deputy Permanent Representative of the United Arab Emirates to the United Nations Office in Geneva and other international organizations⁵



Building and crossing bridges with interreligious dialogue

Dialogue can be broadly defined as the art of facilitating relations between officials from different governments. It is the core approach of diplomacy. There are two diplomatic tracks in peacebuilding: track 1 diplomacy refers to encounters between governmental officials of different sides; and track 2 diplomacy refers to efforts made to bring together different non-governmental actors and organizations to prevent, manage, resolve or transform conflicts.

However, many conflicts around the world are not only governmental or non-governmental in nature.

Hence, track 1.5 diplomacy is needed, as it involves a mix of governmental and non-governmental participants in efforts to build peace. In a conflict, track 1.5 diplomacy recognises the importance of including all stakeholders in finding a solution. It can ensure the engagement of religious communities and grassroots and civil society partners and groups, which would be excluded from both track 1 and 2 diplomacy.

Bridge building may sound like a time-consuming challenge. But inviting multiple perspectives, not only into peacebuilding but into any kind of change

“The G20 Interfaith Forum (2020) brought together religious and political leaders ... united in their conviction that spiritual faith is not a cause for violence and oppression, but for reconciliation, justice and peace. This message rings true and powerful against those preachers of hate that still try to use religion as a false justification for oppression and violence.”

H.E. Mr. Alvaro Iranzo Gutiérrez, Ambassador of Spain in Saudi Arabia ⁶

process, enhances collaboration, innovation and sustainability and gives it a greater chance of success.

Initiatives that build bridges between religious and secular stakeholders create mutual confidence and have a larger impact overall, as they improve inclusion and show that cooperation between different groups is possible.

Religious leaders and policymakers may see the issues at stake within the context of their own perspectives and roles. While religious leaders typically work as moral and spiritual leaders in their communities, policymakers most often approach issues from a secular point of view.

To ensure meaningful engagement between both sides, both parties should make the effort to understand each other. Policymakers can acknowledge that

every religious tradition offers resources for peace, reconciliation and the intention of living in harmony with others, despite their differences. Religious actors can embrace processes of rational analysis and use evidence-based information when starting peace-building initiatives, as evidence has the potential to influence the policymaking process. Both approaches can help build bridges between policymakers and religious communities, as well as religious leaders and civil society actors.

In some parts of the world, policymakers are also religious leaders – and vice versa. In such cases, the importance of reaching out to policymakers or people working in civil society is especially clear, with the purpose of creating cooperative platforms for both secular and non-secular actors.

“Wise people [were] a step ahead of the advocates of clashes, they made them miss the opportunity of transforming the world into a brutal inferno that creates useless tragedies, rekindles the dark side of history’s past events and painful memories, and paints a bleak picture of a future ablaze with horrors. Nothing will sidestep its gloom except promoting the language of dialogue ... based on mutual interests and benefits, and to restore awareness of the responsibility of human beings in building world peace.”

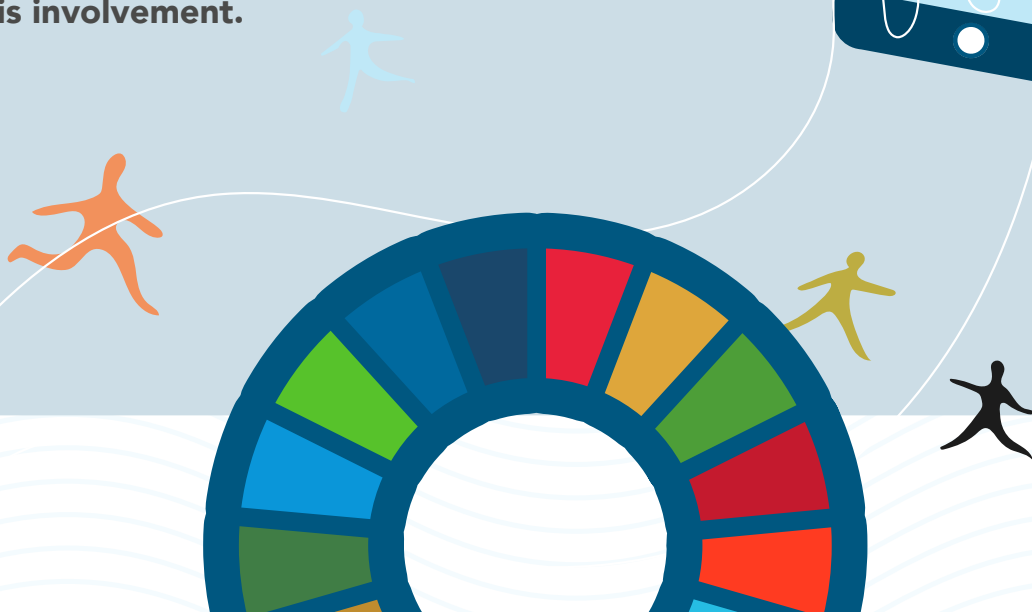
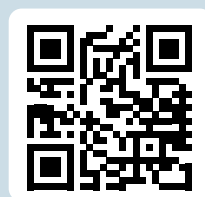
H.E. Dr. Mohammad Bin Abdulkarim Al-Issa, Secretary General of the Muslim World League⁷



A final call to action by the G20 Interfaith Forum (2020)

Faith traditions already mobilise communities and tap into common values of care for people and the planet. The recommendations from the G20 Interfaith Forum, where religious actors engage with every one of the 17 SDGs, show this involvement.

www.kaiciid.org/faith4sdgs



“If we truly want to motivate individuals to collective action across sustainable development, we need to tap into the common values of faith, which advocate care for people and the planet.”

Faisal Bin Muaammar, KAICIID Secretary General



Role of religious actors

Religious leaders and members of faith-based organizations influence billions of people and play a vital role in working towards peace and social cohesion.⁸

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

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

Role of policymakers

Policymakers play a vital role in peace work. They establish laws and policies that support moving our societies in a more sustainable direction.

Policymakers at all levels can (many already do) use their positions of responsibility and influence to advocate for dialogue, peace and social cohesion. Some examples of this include:

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

Interreligious dialogue can support the SDGs

DIALOGUE AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE PROVIDE A VALUABLE ROUTE TO REACH ANY OF THE 17 SDGS AND 169 TARGETS.



Keeping in mind the KAICIID mandate, and using the experience gathered in the Centre's work with dialogue initiatives, the SDGs that most clearly benefit from interreligious dialogue are listed below:

SDG

4

QUALITY EDUCATION – ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Interreligious dialogue contributes to target 4.7: “By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”

SDG

5

GENDER EQUALITY – achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. Interreligious dialogue can contribute to target 5.5: “Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life” and 5.c: “Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.”

SDG

16

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS – promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. Interreligious dialogue can contribute towards target 16.a: “Strengthen relevant national institutions, including through international cooperation, for building capacity at all levels, in particular in developing countries, to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.”

SDG

17

PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS – strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development. Interreligious dialogue can contribute towards target 17.16: “Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries.”



A large, stylized number '2' is rendered in a light blue outline. It is positioned above a horizontal yellow line that spans the width of the page. To the right of the '2', there is a solid blue semi-circle and a yellow arc that curves upwards and to the right. The background is a dark blue gradient with subtle patterns of concentric circles and scattered dots.

What are dialogue and interreligious dialogue?

Dialogue is more than a conversation

The word “dialogue” is derived from the Greek words “dia” meaning “through” and “logos” meaning “word,” as well as the verb “dialegomai,” which means “to become involved in a conversation with another.” Dialogue is commonly understood as a process of communication where ideas, opinions or values are exchanged through an oral conversation. Dialogue also represents the most direct pathway to creating human connection.

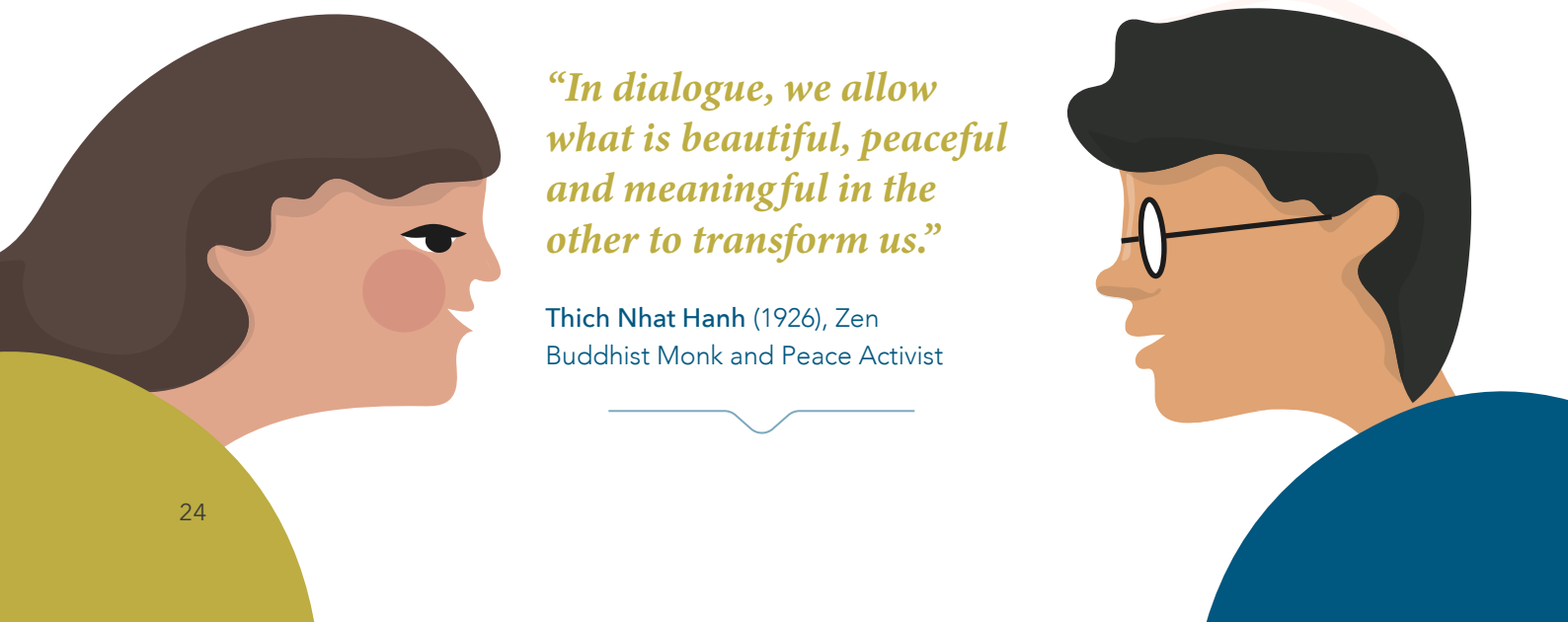
However, there is more than one definition of dialogue. KAICIID defines dialogue as “a form of interaction between two or more individuals of different identities that emphasises self-expression and where each party strives to use active, empathetic and non-judgemental listening in a compassionate spirit of openness and understanding.”⁹

In dialogue, the goal is not always finding a resolution to a problem or settling on a specific tangible action. Instead, the point is to explore and find common ground, which may lead to solutions

or cooperation. Successful dialogue includes establishing mutual understanding and working out how to move forward together.

The results of a dialogue process usually contribute to resolving disagreements or taking steps towards a solution. A “third way,” something not yet seen or even imagined, may emerge through dialogue.

Dialogue is a success when it leads to increased confidence between the involved parties and the building or re-establishment of more trusting relationships.



“In dialogue, we allow what is beautiful, peaceful and meaningful in the other to transform us.”

Thich Nhat Hanh (1926), Zen Buddhist Monk and Peace Activist

Qualities of dialogue



Dialogue **improves all processes in human interaction**, especially where involvement, inclusivity and engagement are needed.



When dialogue is used to facilitate change or decision-making processes, it **leads to longer-lasting results and sustainable agreements**.



Dialogue is an efficient tool to bridge differences and **de-escalate** tensions that could otherwise lead to conflict.

Dialogue has proven its relevance and effectiveness in:

- » peacemaking initiatives – ending war and building peace;
- » communities where tension between groups is at risk of escalating into violence;
- » building inclusive communities and strengthening social cohesion;
- » contexts where ideas need to be put into action and agreements made in an inclusive and participatory manner;
- » changing the culture and behaviour of an organization.

In this guide, dialogue is defined as a broad and dynamic concept and can be understood as a(n):¹⁰

- » specific kind of structured conversation or way of communicating;
- » process with(in) a group that can be applied at many different levels;
- » topic to teach and train, and a set of skills to learn;
- » set of methods, tools and techniques;
- » approach to conducting a change process;
- » way to facilitate contact between different actors and stakeholders;
- » way of existing or living your life.

“In order to dialogue, it is necessary to know how to lower the defences, open the doors of the house, and offer human warmth.”

His Holiness Pope Francis (2011)

Nature of dialogue

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



The head refers to the mind and points to the importance of gaining knowledge about dialogue with the purpose of developing an open mind and a dialogic mindset – that is, an awareness and ability to consciously choose a dialogic approach, even in situations of profound disagreement that could otherwise lead to escalation of a conflict or even a fight. Instead, the question should be asked: “Do I want or need to (fight and) win? Or can I look for opportunities to enter into a dialogue with an open mind, trying to understand other perspectives?”

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

Finally, the hand refers to a set of practical skills and actions needed to make the dialogue happen. The skills are communicative techniques and tools that support and enhance the dialogue – for instance, enquiry and curiosity, which can be shown by asking open, explorative questions and applying active listening with an open heart and mind. The hand dimension can also include certain guidelines for constructive behaviours that encourage dialogue and support a conversation or process. Examples include:

- » **striving to eliminate judgement;**
- » **trying to understand the other and what is going on beyond one’s own biases and preconceived ideas;**
- » **being present and aware in the moment;**
- » **using self-reflection.**



Dialogue is not a debate

Dialogue is often confused with other ways of communicating, such as debate, discussion or argument. These forms of interaction are often employed in negotiations, where the goal is to devise solutions, arrive at joint decisions or reach an agreement. Emphasis rests on convincing, persuading and “getting your own way” – whoever has the best argument, wins.

Debates and discussions are equally important in negotiations and as tools to reach agreements and results. Dialogue is not always the best or only way to communicate. It can be entirely appropriate to try to persuade others of personal views or values, to assert opinions or claim rights.

In situations where discussion and debate are the most obvious ways to communicate, a dialogic approach is often of great advantage – including when the focus is on making decisions, reaching agreements or closing a deal, or when you are convinced that your opinion is the right one.

Entering most situations with a dialogic mindset, being open to others’ perspectives, and striving to communicate with dialogic tools will smooth this process as well as create confidence and good relationships.

“Debate is competitive; dialogue is collaborative. Debate is divisive; dialogue is transformative.”

Dr. Helene Ijaz (1946),
Canadian Cross-Cultural
Educator and Mediator

Interreligious dialogue: a unique kind of dialogue

The purpose of interreligious dialogue is to convene people from different backgrounds, religions, cultures and identities in a safe and constructive space to discover similarities and identity differences.

Interreligious dialogue rests on the same basic values as dialogue. It differs in that religious identities are central to those engaged in dialogue.

KAICIID uses the following working definition of interreligious dialogue:



Interreligious dialogue, also referred to as interfaith dialogue, aims to create mutual understanding and respect by focusing on similarities and differences between faith groups and religious and cultural identities.



Interreligious dialogue strives to create trusting connections that support people to live and cooperate with each other across boundaries.



Interreligious dialogue can assist in solving disagreements, issues or tensions at risk of escalating into violent conflict, especially in contexts where cultural and religious identities are at stake or part of the subject matter.



Interreligious dialogue supports people, institutions and communities in addressing challenges (local, national or global) through an interreligious lens and eases the cooperation needed to solve those challenges.



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



In the context of this guide, and in the work done by KAICIID, interreligious dialogue is not a way to discuss who has the "right" belief, nor does it have the purpose of converting individuals or groups to a certain religion.

Although interreligious dialogue, and the field of dialogue as a whole, have evolved over the past few decades into a specialised area of study, their importance is still being questioned by some religious and policymaking institutions. Still, the importance of interreligious dialogue is growing as an applied practice in peace-building and in efforts to work for inclusive and socially cohesive societies. It is rapidly emerging as a necessary tool for the education toolbox.¹¹

Hundreds of organizations worldwide, such as the African Union, the European Union, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), work with interreligious dialogue as an approach to building social cohesion through peace and reconciliation transformational processes.

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

APPEAL

Interreligious dialogue recognises and appeals to religious identity. The notion of interreligious dialogue makes immediate sense to individuals, groups and institutions that define themselves as religious. It can engage people at the level of their identity, deepest beliefs and practices.

ADDRESSING TENSION AND CONFLICT BETWEEN FAITH GROUPS

Interreligious dialogue provides opportunities to address religious and cultural dimensions of the issues at stake with mutual respect and through focusing on differences and similarities. It acknowledges the inherent complexity that often emerges when the parties involved belong to different religious or cultural groups. Interreligious dialogue contributes to the creation of clarity and cooperation, avoiding misinterpretations and increased polarisation while shedding light on the common interests of a group or community.

INCLUSION

Dialogue calls for inclusion. Participants will feel more included when the importance of having a strong religious identity is acknowledged as a common interest from which to start. It is not necessary to be religious or identify with a certain faith community to engage in interreligious dialogue, as long as the purpose is finding mutual understanding and approaching differences in a constructive manner.

“People fail to get along because they fear each other; they fear each other because they don’t know each other; they don’t know each other because they have not communicated with each other.”

Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
(1929–1968), Baptist Minister
and Civil Rights Activist

“The twin imperatives of interreligious and intercultural dialogue promote understanding among different religions, cultures and humanistic traditions to challenge ignorance and prejudices and foster mutual respect. Intercultural dialogue aims to facilitate peaceful coexistence in a multicultural community and cultivate interreligious and intercultural understanding. It also serves as a tool for prevention and resolution of conflicts by enhancing respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.”

Prof. Priyanka Upadhyaya, UNESCO Chair for Peace and Intercultural Understanding at Banaras Hindu University, Global Fellow, Peace Research Institute Oslo¹³



Interreligious dialogue as a way to create social cohesion and empower women

In Nigeria, Justina is the executive director of Justice, Peace and Reconciliation Movement, an interreligious organization. She works across faith, cultural and tribal lines to resolve conflicts. She created a network of female peacebuilders after their town became polarised with Christians and Muslims moving to different areas. The network promotes interreligious and intercultural dialogue as alternatives to violent conflict.

Justina discovered the crisis was largely the result of political manipulation: people were using religious groups for their own gain, leading to violent conflicts. Her motivation grew when she

visited people in rural communities and saw how they were suffering and struggling to survive.

The network offers training for women in conflict resolution and transformation, interreligious and ecumenical learning, democracy education, and human rights and gender sensitisation, with the purpose of contributing to a lasting and sustainable peace in northern Nigeria.

Justina says: **“Women are natural peacebuilders. When you build up a woman, they will be able to build a better family and that will translate into a better society.”¹²**

THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT: OTHER TYPES OF DIALOGUE

The basic dialogue approaches, methods and skills described in this guide are not specific to interreligious dialogue and can easily be modified to accommodate other types of dialogue. This can be relevant when the participants or stakeholders:

- » live in a secular society or a context where religion does not play an important role;
- » do not define themselves as belonging to a certain faith group;
- » do not view religious identity as something positive.

A rule of thumb when working with dialogue initiatives is to provide a basic understanding of the local context, the relevant stakeholders' needs and the issues at stake. A dialogue process or initiative can be framed as, for instance, an interethnic, intercultural, intergenerational or intergender dialogue.

The 10 principles of how to conduct dialogue and the six-phase model of dialogue described below are general approaches and can be adapted to specific contexts and conditions.



Guides to planning and facilitating dialogue and interreligious dialogue

Several manuals and guides have been developed and are used by KAICIID and partners in different programmes. This material constitutes a wide range of knowledge, methods and tools for dialogue and interreligious dialogue and describes in detail the facets of dialogic work. Two examples are given here.



BUILDING BRIDGES:

The Guide for Dialogue Ambassadors was created by the Dialogue for Peace Programme as part of the Better World Framework and the Scouts Global Network to support the Scout Movement. It aims to spread the practice of dialogue worldwide. The guide explores the many roots and manifestations of dialogue with the purpose of instilling an attitude of peace and respect towards others in the hearts of all young people.

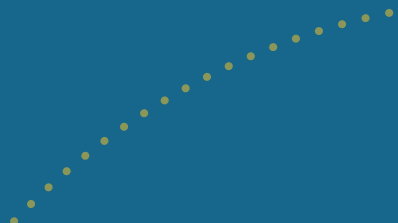
www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/dialogue-peace-manual-guide-dialogue-ambassadors



FELLOWS:

The Interreligious Dialogue Resource Guide is a resource guide and toolbox covering the majority of the interreligious and intercultural dialogue material presented during the KAICIID International Fellows Programme training sessions, with further information on select topics and exercises.

www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/fellows-interreligious-dialogue-resource-guide



3

Building bridges



A journey of lifelong learning

Dialogue is a way to deep dive into understanding what it is to be human and all the extraordinary things we are capable of achieving – despite our differences, and because of them – as long as we work together.

At a glance, dialogue may look like a simple framework that is easy to apply. But successfully conducting dialogue that really makes a difference requires certain knowledge, skills, methods and tools. For many people, entering the broad field of dialogue, whether as a participant or convener, marks the beginning of a lifelong process of exploring and learning about bridging differences.

Leading dialogue as a structured conversation or process is possible with relatively simple tools. Calling a group of people to sit together in a circle with just a few ground rules, as well as a purpose, an honest approach and an openness to explore an issue, will be enough to commence the dialogue process.

When the dialogue's subject involves high-stake issues related to religious and cultural identities, as is often the case in interreligious dialogue, it is helpful to have:

- » a strong grasp of dialogue as a concept;
- » a deep understanding of how religion and culture impact us and our worldviews;
- » knowledge of different behavioural patterns, norms and values related to our own cultural and religious identities;
- » an awareness of the dynamics of intercultural and interreligious encounters;
- » the courage to intentionally invite participants to explore their religious and cultural identities and their implications to their interaction;
- » tools to help us behave and communicate in constructive ways when dealing with multicultural or multireligious diversity in groups.

The role of the facilitator

The person, group or organization calling people to dialogue has the responsibility to plan and conduct the process. How it evolves, however, is a shared responsibility of the group. Dialogue will unfold in the most rewarding way when one or more people take on the role of facilitator, convener or moderator. Their purpose is to conduct and lead the process and hold space for participants to easily engage in dialogue.

When people gather to have a conversation on high-stakes issues or are already in the midst of an escalated conflict, the facilitator has a certain wider responsibility. They need to be experienced and skilled in facilitation, dialogue and conflict management and have a deep respect for the delicacy of such processes. If the process is not conducted well, what was meant to resolve problems and build connections could have the opposite effect and escalate the tension, which may lead to conflict.

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



UNITED RELIGIONS INITIATIVE: INTERFAITH PEACEBUILDING GUIDE

The **Interfaith Peacebuilding Guide** is a resource for groups from different religions who are making a difference one meeting at a time in their local communities. It is aimed at encouraging people from diverse faiths who have been strangers or even enemies to become friends and allies dedicated to peace, justice and healing. The guide is designed for groups that have just begun to work together as well as those that are more established, seeking to strengthen their planning and sharpen their skills.



<https://www.uri.org/what-we-do/resource-library/interfaith-peacebuilding-guide>

Support structures for dialogue and interreligious dialogue



Dialogue is an organic process. It is largely unpredictable and must be handled as such. Principles and models can serve as support structures to keep us on track and stay focused when planning and conducting dialogue.

The 10 principles and 6 phases of dialogue go hand in hand. These models are built on widespread understanding of how dialogic processes work and what is needed to plan and conduct them in a productive way. Both models also serve as an efficient framework for the early planning stages of dialogue, including when reaching out to potential participants to start building bridges across differences.¹⁴



The following 10 principles serve as a guideline when forming a dialogue's basic structure. Some of the principles are the participants' responsibility, while others fall under the duties of the organization or person leading the process.



1

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

2

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

3

Use appropriate communication skills. Listening actively and with empathy, speaking with sincerity and respect, and knowing how to convey basic ideas or questions with clarity are all important communication skills to enable a constructive dialogue. Asking open-ended questions and repeating (parts of) what the other person says are simple ways to invite dialogue and increase mutual understanding. This principle involves the dialogue dimension of the hand (practical skills).

4

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

5

Take risks, express feelings and confront perceptions with honesty. Dialogue aims to build confidence and provide a feeling of safety in the group. Participants should be encouraged to participate actively, speak openly and from the heart, and listen with attention to others' thoughts and feelings. Taking risks can enhance the possibility for deeper learning and understanding of the self and others.

“Real dialogue is where two or more people become willing to suspend their certainty in each other’s presence.”

Dr. David Bohm (1917–1992), American Physicist

6

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

7

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

8

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

9

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

10

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

“The most important thing in life is to speak with people you disagree with.”

Irwin Kula (1957), Rabbi and President of the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, United States of America

Six-phase model of the dialogic process



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

THE SIX PHASES ARE BUILT ON A MODEL OF IDENTITY-BASED DIALOGUE AND MAY BE ESPECIALLY SUITABLE IN INTERRELIGIOUS AND INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE.

1. GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER

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

2. DISCOVER BIASES, FEARS AND TABOOS

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

3. IDENTIFY DIFFERENCES AND CONFLICT ISSUES

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

4. OUTLINE COMMONALITIES AND AGREEMENTS

Identify common purposes, needs, values and interests. Create distance from biases and look for any common goals.

5. LAY OUT A PLAN OF CONCRETE ACTION

Talk about what can be done together starting from the agreed common purpose or goal. Clarify the next steps, who else should be involved, and how the common vision for change can be shared with others.

6. MAINTAIN THE DIALOGIC RELATIONSHIP

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

“I just want people to conduct themselves as humans and behave with humanity.”



These words are from Ruth, a Jewish woman with Moroccan parents. Experiencing anti-Semitism as a child sent her on a lifelong quest to break down barriers and build communities. In France, where she lives and works as a lawyer, there is a high degree of cultural diversity, which at times is accompanied by tension and growing division between groups. Building bridges is crucial.

After completing the KAICIID International Fellows Programme, Ruth wanted to spread the knowledge, methodologies and tools of interreligious dialogue. She formed a training

initiative focusing on interreligious dialogue and managing cultural differences among Christians, Jews and Muslims. She trained Christian, Jewish and Muslim counsellors. Then she engaged with civil society by supporting community work with young people whose antisocial behaviour is driving them to the fringes of society.

Ruth now trains leaders of local suburbs with socially vulnerable populations. She sees a growing desire across religious communities to weave together the kaleidoscope of cultural threads that make up modern-day France.¹⁵



DANISH YOUTH COUNCIL DIALOGUE HANDBOOK

<https://duf.dk/materialer/produkt/the-dialogue-handbook>

The Dialogue Handbook contains creative dialogue tools, ideas on planning and carrying out workshops, insights into the role of workshop leaders and facilitators, and 34 exercises and activities suitable for dialogue workshops. It was published by the Ambassadors for

Dialogue project, through which young volunteers from Denmark, Egypt and Jordan have cooperated since 2012 to become better at dialogue and deliver training and workshops to thousands of young people.





4

**Preparing
to cross
bridges**

Dialogue is key for promoting inclusivity and engaging women, youth, marginalised groups, diaspora communities and people who are typically not at the centre of negotiations or policymaking. It also allows diverse groups to be informed about peace processes and decision making, thereby promoting transparency and dispelling potential misinformation. Thus, dialogue should also be understood as a core preventive measure.¹⁶

In today's globalised world, we are becoming ever more connected economically and politically through media and communication technologies. Many of us live in multicultural societies; exposure to diversity related to faith, culture and lifestyle is a basic premise in everyday life.

And yet we often experience differences as challenging. Despite the fact that there are more similarities than differences between cultural, ethnic and religious groups, humans have a tendency to focus on the differences.

The dynamics of difference

Different religious and cultural backgrounds bring diverse values and perceptions of what is right and wrong. Misunderstandings sometimes occur in our communications due to differing behavioural norms and habits. Disagreements sometimes escalate and create tension and destructive conflict. But religious and cultural differences do not directly cause difficulties with human interaction. Disagreements, disputes and conflict are common in all groups and parts of society, even in groups that identify with the same family, culture or religion.

When the involved parties have different religious or cultural backgrounds, it is often assumed that any disagreement is rooted in these differences. However, most conflicts actually derive from misinterpretations or structural issues such as inequality, injustice or a lack of social or political power.¹⁷

Sometimes having a conversation is enough to identify the root cause of a disagreement, or to resolve misunderstandings and find common ground. Sometimes our unique worldviews can cause natural frustrations of a disagreement to escalate.

Challenging, criticising or harassing a group identity often results in strong emotional reactions.

Tensions may escalate, sometimes into conflict, regardless of whether the root cause lies in real or perceived cultural and religious differences.

In such cases, it is important to keep calm, focus on finding clarity on the possibly complex issues at hand, and change the course of the negative dynamics.

“You don't get harmony when everybody sings the same note.”

Doug Floyd (1949), American Writer

Dialogue and interreligious dialogue help in finding common ground, communicating across boundaries, understanding others' perspectives, creating trusting relationships and bridging differences. In this way, dialogue serves to de-escalate tensions between groups and explore solutions for the common good.

“Comforted by how much we share, we are able to delight in our differences.”

Raffi Cavoukian (1948), Armenian-Canadian Singer, Lyricist and Author

Dialogue as a peaceful means to resolve conflict, build peace and transform systems

Conflicts arise from disagreements that are not easily solved, often related to a basic need that cannot be fulfilled. Basic needs include equal rights, sharing resources fairly, and acknowledging and respecting group identity. Conflicts can also derive from differences in norms, habits or values that can be hard to accept and respect, or because of misunderstandings in communication.

Conflicts are part of life and cannot and should not be avoided. The dynamics of conflicts – how they escalate and how to solve them – are complex. Most of us feel uncomfortable when we encounter conflict, but it is important to understand how we approach differences and disagreements. It is key to maintain a respectful attitude and communicate constructively across boundaries, but also to consciously choose methods that call for peaceful solutions.

Approaching intercultural and interreligious tensions, polarisation and conflict by using dialogue is a widely acknowledged method of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is an umbrella term that covers all actions which aim to resolve destructive conflict. Actions can take place after a peace agreement is signed or before a war, with the purpose of preventing violent conflict through de-escalation initiatives. Peacebuilding also refers to actions that work for

justice and inclusion in a community and which contribute to social cohesion.

Effective, simple actions that contribute to a more socially cohesive society include reaching out to community members and external parties to create trusting relationships and safe spaces for dialogue and to initiate meaningful conversations on contentious topics. These actions are key in the pursuit of a socially cohesive society, which is a society that has high levels of trust and interaction across religious and cultural differences; where tensions between groups rarely lead to polarisation and destructive conflict; and that are more resilient in keeping the peace when crises and problems do occur.

This approach to understanding and handling social dynamics is included in the notion of creating a culture of peace.¹⁸ A culture of peace does not mean there are no disagreements or conflict. Rather,

it means that predominant reactions to conflict are non-violent, keeping the focus instead on positive progress that benefits all.

Most societies have a conflict-habituated system and are built on the understanding that arguing, fighting, violence and war are legitimate ways to resolve disagreements. Many of us may have adopted this approach, meaning we might not automatically look for peaceful solutions when tensions are at risk of escalating into destructive conflict.¹⁹

We all have a choice, as individuals, leaders, or members of groups, communities and societies, over which kind of system we want to support and live in – a conflict-habituated system or a culture of peace.

“The culture of peace is also a vital element to end the violence, and to promote and practice the non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation. The fuller development of a culture of peace is integrally linked to enabling people at all levels to develop skills of dialogue, negotiation, consensus-building and peaceful resolution of differences.”

H.E. Mr Rodolfo Solano Quirós, Costa Rica’s Minister of Foreign Affairs and Worship²⁰

Conflict-habituated SYSTEM



A CONFLICT-HABITUATED SYSTEM, OR CULTURE OF DESTRUCTIVE CONFLICT, REFERS TO A GROUP, COMMUNITY OR SOCIETY IMPRINTED WITH A HIGH DEGREE OF TENSION AND NEGATIVE CONFLICT.

Conflicts mostly play out in destructive ways, characterised by dynamics of escalation and fight/flight response, often violently and sometimes ultimately leading to war.

Even contexts that may not have frequent violent conflict can be understood as conflict-habituated systems. In these systems, people and institutions automatically approach disputes in ways that increase tension and destructive conflict; this could include disagreements in interests, resource allocation, decision-making, power dynamics, debates, discussions and polemics.

CULTURE of peace



A CULTURE OF PEACE IS A SET OF VALUES, ATTITUDES, MODES OF BEHAVIOUR AND WAYS OF LIFE THAT REJECT VIOLENCE AND PREVENT DESTRUCTIVE CONFLICTS BY TACKLING THEIR ROOT CAUSES.

Conflicts are signs of needed change and an opportunity for development. They should be handled in non-violent ways through dialogue and negotiation among individuals, groups and nations.

The core values and principles of a culture of peace include:

full respect and promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedom;
commitment to peaceful settlement of conflicts;
adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding at all levels of society.

DIALOGUE IS BOTH A MEANS AND AN END. WHEN A CONFLICT-HABITUATED SYSTEM IS TRANSFORMED INTO A CULTURE OF CHOOSING DIALOGUE AND NON-VIOLENT DIALOGIC METHODS, THE PROCESS ITSELF CONTRIBUTES TO CREATING A PEACEFUL SOCIETY.

Challenges and opportunities in promoting interreligious dialogue

Dialogue clearly offers many advantages and opportunities, but promoting dialogue also comes with its own set of challenges.

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

Typical challenges when promoting dialogue include the following:

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

“Dialogue is an art in itself – it is rare, fragile and often exposed to risks of being ignored or misunderstood.”

Henrik Hammargren,
Executive Director, The
Dag Hammarskjöld
Foundation²¹

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

- » The importance of a religious identity is perceived in various ways. Some people cherish religious identity within a certain faith group, although their degrees of commitment and practice may vary. Other people feel scepticism or even reluctance towards religion and find it hard to relate to. Some are not interested in the notion of religion or have more of a secular identity. See resources in the annex for an elaboration of this complex topic.
- » In some contexts, religion has a negative reputation. Throughout history, the misuse of religion has, sadly, contributed to human misery. Religious teachings have been exploited to provoke discrimination and incite violence, or used by politicians as a tool for mobilising support for war, exclusion or discriminatory practices.
- » Religion is seen as part of the reason for tensions in society. Some people associate religion with conflict rather than peace. This may lead to a tendency to exclude religious leaders and faith-based organizations from important decision-making processes. Some societies proceed without an awareness of the importance of including religious or cultural minorities in important decisions.
- » A lack of religious literacy or knowledge of other religions besides our own, especially when it comes to differences and similarities between various faith groups, can lead to lower trust and increased biases and suspicion between groups.

“If the structure does not permit dialogue, the structure must be changed.”

Paulo Freire
(1921–1997),
Brazilian Educator
and Philosopher

“If religion is not part of the solution, it will become part of the problem.”

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks (1948–2020),
British Orthodox Rabbi,
Philosopher and Author

“If we take the world’s enduring religions at their best, we discover the distilled wisdom of the human race.”

Dr. Huston Smith
(1919–2016),
American Religious
Studies Scholar

“All religions. All this singing. One song ...”

Rumi (1207–1273),
Poet, Hanafi Jurist
and Islamic Scholar

“It is never too late to give up your prejudices.”

Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862),
American Philosopher,
Naturalist and Poet

Promoting interreligious dialogue

Challenges can also be seen as opportunities to apply interreligious dialogue. The best way to promote (interreligious) dialogue is to teach or lead by example to show the way for others and enhance their curiosity.

For instance:

- » apply a dialogic process in meetings for attendees to witness the benefits of dialogue in action;
- » use dialogic communication techniques as active listening when in a disagreement;
- » show a dialogic mindset when meeting people from other groups in your community;
- » start a dialogue or interreligious dialogue initiative.

It is recommended to focus on opportunities related to commonalities between religions and cultures. Most of the world's religions are built on the same basic human values of respect, freedom, justice, community, love and compassion. The majority of religious and spiritual traditions highly value principles of acknowledgement, remorse, tolerance and forgiveness – principles linked to those of non-violent conflict resolution, peace and reconciliation processes. See resources in the annex for more on the complex topic of relations between religion and peace and reconciliation processes.

Choosing an interreligious dialogue approach that focuses on common values found in most religions is a fruitful technique for relating conversations and projects to the convictions and motivations of those with religious identities.



ARE YOU EAGER TO EDUCATE YOURSELF IN INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE?

The International Fellows Programme is a one-year KAICIID training course on dialogue facilitation, intercultural communication and the promotion of social cohesion. The programme brings together leaders and educators from Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and other religious backgrounds from around the world.

Fellows are equipped with the skills to educate their students and communities about interreligious dialogue so they can become facilitators and leaders in dialogue and active peace advocates in their own communities.



www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/international-fellows-programme



www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/five-years-kaiciid-fellows-programme



5

**Crossing
bridges**

When working towards a better world, there are multiple interventions, strategies and actions to choose from that put dialogue or interreligious dialogue at their core.

Building bridges creates positive change, but crossing bridges by implementing activities together can be even more important.

Examples of such initiatives include:

- seeking public support and advocacy of dialogue as an approach;
- influencing stakeholders through networking, agenda-setting, newsletters and social media to promote dialogue;
- building capacity by increasing gender equality and training people in interreligious dialogue;
- doing community work in areas of aid, health, education and social cohesion.

Below are some examples of initiatives that use interreligious dialogue to cross bridges



Example 1:

A SOCIETY FACING VIOLENCE OR WAR

NEED:

- to create a ceasefire and bring opposing parties to the table to start a peacemaking process.

JOINT ACTIONS FOR CROSSING BRIDGES THROUGH DIALOGUE:

- increase confidence;
- enable rapprochement;
- convene spaces for dialogue and negotiations in formal or informal contexts;
- work towards an agreement, contract, transaction, reconciliation or trauma healing process.



Religious leaders counter violence through interreligious solidarity

Tensions among religious and ethnic groups in the Central African Republic have created a fragile society plagued by conflict between armed groups. At the height of the violence, Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga gave refuge to Imam Omar Kobine Layama and his wife.²²

His Eminence Cardinal Nzapalainga recalls: "I wanted to send a strong message to the world that we are brothers and not enemies... Even though many of the anti-Balaka [an alliance of militia groups] threatened to march on the Archdiocese to root out the Imam and assassinate him, we stood our ground, we defended him until the end."

Apostle Nicolas Guerekoyame agreed to host the Imam's younger brother and his family: "When the anti-Balaka learned that I was hosting a Muslim family, they threatened to attack my family and the church. This situation lasted until after six months... While he was still with us with his family, I was not the only one supporting them; the church had accompanied me in this task and was assisting him financially, morally and spiritually."²³

This experience prompted their joint action, as expressed by the Imam: "Our presence as three is a strong message to the international community and others that demonstrates that the conflict in the Central African Republic is not interreligious, and that our (religious) communities have been held hostage by the rebel militias that are fighting over power. We do not want that religion to be instrumentalized to destroy the country. This is why the three of us advocate together."²⁴



DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE: A HANDBOOK FOR PRACTITIONERS

Dialogue strengthens democratic institutions by providing citizens with opportunities to voice their concerns, needs and interests. Democratic **Dialogue: A Handbook for Practitioners**, published by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) in cooperation with the Organization of American States and the United Nations Development Programme, aims to provide decision-makers, dialogue promoters and practitioners with a practical guide on organising, facilitating and assessing dialogue processes.



www.idea.int/publications/catalogue/democratic-dialogue-handbook-practitioners

Example 2:

AN UNEQUAL SOCIETY PRONE TO TENSION AND VIOLENCE

NEED:

- to transform structures or cultures that foster conflict into cultures of peace.

JOINT ACTIONS FOR CROSSING BRIDGES THROUGH DIALOGUE:

- strengthen social cohesion by building an active civil society;
- build capacity via training on human rights, rule of law, policymaking, conflict management, resolution and non-violent peacemaking;
- create safe spaces for people to meet despite differences.



We have to be peace messengers!

Religious and ethnic tensions have erupted into violence in Myanmar. The rapid spread of misinformation and hate speech online has only made clashes worse.

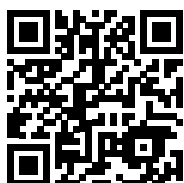
Monk Ashin Mandalarlankara recruited more than 25 young adults from greater Mandalay's Buddhist, Christian, Hindu and Muslim communities to take part in 10 weekend sessions of interreligious training, intercultural dialogue and sacred site visits to local mosques, temples and churches. Interreligious dialogue training and activities for novice monks at his monastery were organised in partnership with other organizations working for peace.²⁵

The monk described the purpose of his action thus: "To achieve conflict transformation, we need trauma healing. When people do not understand other religions, this is very hard to achieve. Trauma healing needs to be part of the interreligious dialogue process, just as we need interreligious dialogue to end conflicts."



ORGANISING INTERCULTURAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES: A TOOLKIT FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The purpose of the toolkit developed by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe is to encourage local and regional authorities to promote a more inclusive society. The toolkit includes guidelines on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level and outlines 12 principles for interfaith dialogue at the local level.



www.congress-intercultural.eu/

Example 3:

A BROADLY STABLE SOCIETY WITH SOME INTER-GROUP TENSION

NEED:

- to keep the peace, foster enduring social cohesion and strong relationships between groups.

JOINT ACTIONS FOR CROSSING BRIDGES THROUGH DIALOGUE:

- facilitate contact between different stakeholders, such as religious leaders, institutions of different faiths and policymakers;
- create platforms for networking and knowledge sharing;
- work together on concrete projects with dialogue and interreligious dialogue at their core.



TOOLKIT: PROJECT INTEGRATION THROUGH DIALOGUE

This toolkit equips people seeking refuge in Europe to approach their integration process proactively and from a place of empowerment. It is an example of how dialogue can be used to strengthen social inclusion processes.

The toolkit is helpful for organizations that work towards the capacity building of recently arrived people seeking refuge. It includes many practical activities aiming to improve social cohesion and dialogue skills.



www.kaiciid.org/content/project-integration-through-dialogue



Interreligious dialogue enhances social inclusion of refugees and migrants in Europe

The annual European Policy Dialogue Forum on Refugees and Migrants was established in 2019 for faith-based and secular institutions to meet on issues of social inclusion of refugees and migrants and to enhance social cohesion in Europe.

Bringing together religious leaders and academics from every part of Europe to engage with policymakers, participants get a chance to discuss issues such as inclusive education, building trust, and how cooperation across institutional or religious boundaries can contribute to upholding the fundamental dignity and rights of people seeking refuge in Europe.

The conversations are dialogical and guided by the question of how interreligious and intercultural dialogue can contribute to and strengthen the social inclusion of refugees and migrants.²⁶

The European Policy Dialogue Forum also promotes dialogue through policy briefs on the inclusion of refugees in Europe.



Example 4:

A SOCIETY IN A SEVERE HEALTH CRISIS

NEEDS:

- to maintain peace and prevent escalation of community tensions or violence;
- to advance societal resilience.

JOINT ACTIONS FOR CROSSING BRIDGES THROUGH DIALOGUE:

- use existing (interreligious) dialogue networks for cooperative crisis management;
- contribute practically with aid and relief in vulnerable communities;
- collaborate with public institutions and authorities to provide marginalised groups with healthcare and information.



COVID-19 INTERFAITH GUIDE

The COVID-19 Interfaith Guide provides practical examples and recommendations that spur the growth of existing interfaith initiatives, and the establishment of new ones, to address some of the many challenges related to COVID-19. It also emphasises the development and strengthening of cross-community relations through dialogue.

The guide highlights ways in which interreligious dialogue strengthens initiatives that foster joint open communication and diversity and prevents further community disconnection, isolation, wastage of resources and deeper distrust.



[www.kaiciid.org/
publications-resources/
covid-19-interfaith-guide](http://www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/covid-19-interfaith-guide)



Interreligious dialogue as a response to COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated poverty, famine and difficult living conditions for many groups of people around the globe, particularly in developing countries. The role of religious leaders in interfaith groups has been shown to be critical in handling the crisis.

Interfaith groups that had already established trusting relationships through interreligious dialogue initiatives have been able to work together to address the crisis. Religious leaders have spread information and healthcare advice.

A group of young graduates in the Arab region used their dialogue skills to raise awareness of COVID-19, provide fact-checking as a means to counter misinformation, and support local religious leaders in their efforts to encourage their followers to adhere to government health guidelines. They emphasised the importance of checking facts before sharing news and of getting information from reliable sources.

A young Iraqi man, Meron Akram Kacho, uses social media to address issues such as discrimination and violence online. He and his initiative Hope Makers (Sunaa Alamal) raise awareness about COVID-19 and advocate for equal access to healthcare and social support without discrimination.²⁷

Five guiding principles to start interreligious dialogue initiatives

These five principles can serve as inspiration for promoting or starting dialogue initiatives to address issues of importance in individual contexts.

These principles should be understood as points of awareness rather than a strict recipe. They are applicable at the individual, institutional and societal level. Asking these basic questions is a solid entry point for starting a new dialogue initiative.

PRINCIPLE 1: **Purpose**

WHY ARE YOU STARTING YOUR INITIATIVE?

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

PRINCIPLE 2: **People**

WHO IS CALLED?

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

PRINCIPLE 3: **Place**

WHERE ARE YOU?

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

PRINCIPLE 4: **Plan**

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

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

PRINCIPLE 5: **Patience**

HOW WILL YOU STAY RESILIENT?

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





6

**Starting
interreligious
dialogue
initiatives
together**

An interreligious dialogue initiative, like any action for positive change, is nurtured by some basic principles that increase the likeliness of reaching the intended outcome.

THE LOCAL SITUATION, THE ISSUE(S) YOU WANT TO ADDRESS, AND THE SOCIETAL, CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS SHOULD DETERMINE WHERE TO START. THE IDEA IS TO SELECT ACTIVITIES WITH INTENTION AND TO BE CLEAR ABOUT HOW TO BEST WORK TOWARDS THE GOAL.

Planning

The first step is to clarify the purpose – the “why.” Gaining basic knowledge about the theories and methods of interreligious dialogue should come next. Thirdly, make a plan by defining a clear common goal, an outline of the expected results, and some milestones to serve as routes for action in practice.

Planning is about making choices. A structured dialogue process is an effective way to ensure appropriate choices are made. In general, the more conscious the choices, the better the outcome.

A well-known framework for this approach is the **theory of change**. This theory assumes that reality is ever changing, and that circumstances and humans are unpredictable – preparing a plan is recommended, but we should be aware that different systems around

Using dialogic approaches and principles to design, implement and monitor the initiative will help achieve intended goals and contribute to building sustainable relationships.



us hold an inherent complexity that affects the possibilities of reaching our goals.

The theory of change supports the process of deciding where to start, the steps to take, and in which order, by beginning with the expected result. We then work backwards until we land at the starting point, and from there actions can be selected for moving forward.

The theory of change enables an integrated approach to project and programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and communication.

When developing a theory of change, a variety of stakeholders should be involved, including other programme colleagues, beneficiaries and partners. The process of developing a theory of change together – and the dialogue that accompanies it – is often as important as the diagram it produces.

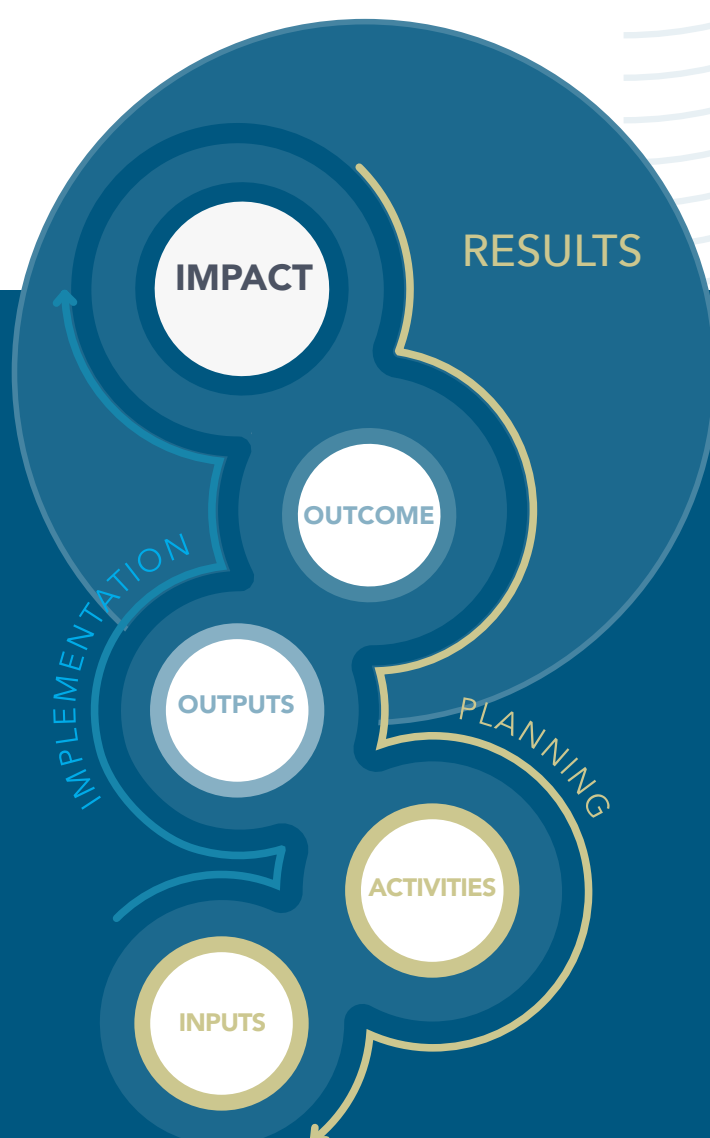
The theory of change is directly linked to a results-based management approach to development, change and social intervention projects. Results-based management focuses more on the need for sustainable benefits (the results) and how to achieve the intended outcomes and impact rather than on the activities themselves.

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

African proverb

The theory of change is a:²⁸

- process of reflection that leads to a rationale for how an initiative or project is expected to have an impact on people through a given intervention (action);
- practical model that allows us to articulate how we will achieve our aims, and what assumptions are being made in the planning process;
- diagram reflecting the complex links between different parts of the project - namely the problem and causes and the desired results and indicators pointing to the expected effects or goals.



Planning an initiative or a project

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

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

Monitoring, evaluating and learning

One way to stay on track – to learn from mistakes and successes and make adjustments when needed – is to consciously track how the project is going.

This practice, also known as monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), goes hand in hand with the theory of change and results-based management. It adds to a project by clarifying the approach, rationale and goal and it requires a keen awareness of how to evaluate, including what methods to use and which indicators to monitor.

“Do not judge me by my successes; judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again.”

Nelson Mandela (1918–2013), Anti-Apartheid Revolutionary, Political Leader and Former President of South Africa

MEL in short

MONITORING is a continuing function that aims to provide the management and main stakeholders of an ongoing initiative or project with early indicators of progress, or lack thereof, in the achievement of results.

EVALUATION is a selective exercise that attempts to systematically and objectively assess progress and an outcome’s achievement. Evaluation is not a one-time event. It involves several assessments of differing scope and depth being carried out at several points in time in response to evolving needs.

LEARNING acknowledges that mistakes and errors are unavoidable and should be understood as opportunities to improve. The important point is not to avoid mistakes but to implement a clear structure on how to learn from them. It is therefore vital to feed the lessons learned back into the leading structures that can adjust the project and improve the process.

Evaluating the success of interreligious dialogue

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

- » **results may be difficult to concretise and slower to emerge;**
- » **initiatives often involve a variety of parties, with dispersed accountability and multiple monitoring points;**
- » **to be effective, monitoring must capture change at different levels, including the:**
 - **activities implemented (the process)**
 - **effectiveness of the activities (performance)**
 - **outcomes**
 - **impact**

Higher-level change from substantive partnerships between different individuals, organizations and institutions may be difficult to track in real time at another level without relevant, effective monitoring and adequate resources. This can make it difficult to recognise the effects of a certain activity or the initiative as a whole.

Despite these difficulties, the evaluation process should not be skipped. Rather, we should acknowledge the challenges of MEL and use qualitative and quantitative methods to measure results, both tangible and intangible.

Interreligious dialogue can lead to numerous concrete outcomes. In a peacebuilding initiative, for example, the outcome could be the creation of new material or the improvement of existing material for peace-centred religious education, or the building of houses, shelters and schools or fresh research or literature.

Activities that have the potential to contribute to peacebuilding and lead to tangible outcomes include joint interreligious work to counter hate speech, respond to health issues, reduce poverty and tackle climate change.

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

Key qualitative criteria for evaluating successes include focusing on changes in relationships, perceptions and beliefs while using narratives, stories and open-ended enquiries.

To verify the cause and effect of such peacebuilding initiatives, it is necessary to have a plan and dedicated resources for monitoring and evaluation processes. This could include, for example, in-depth interviews with the target groups experiencing the changes.

Such processes should consider monitoring, over time, the external factors that are not directly part of the dialogue process, such as activities by individuals, groups or organizations that may impact the political or peacebuilding context. Since there is no limit to how many of these factors there might be, monitoring should focus on key performance indicators that are integral to the success of the intervention, such as shifts in public opinion and media coverage of the issue.

Considerations when planning and working with MEL

“Not everything that can be counted counts ... not everything that counts can be counted.”

William Bruce Cameron,
Sociologist²⁹

The following points should be considered when planning and monitoring an interreligious dialogue initiative:

- Consciously choose the approach and methods for monitoring and evaluation and adjust them to the initiative at hand.
- Assess both the short- and the long-term impacts and deep changes that resulted from your initiative at the individual, organizational and societal level.
- Develop baseline measures using questionnaires about the attitudes, knowledge and beliefs a community has about other religions; information on the frequency and quality of interreligious interaction between communities; and attitudes towards peaceful engagement with members of other groups.
- Include a gender perspective in every phase of planning, conducting and evaluating to combat gender inequality.
- Incorporate a plan for evaluation and monitoring early on by using the theory of change and results-based management approaches.
- Consider whether monitoring and evaluating the chosen criteria is possible under the practical, economic and resource circumstances. Decide how findings can be looped back into the ongoing planning process to make the necessary adjustments at the responsible management level.

In addition to these general points, several important considerations should be kept in mind when outlining a comprehensive evaluation framework that defines different goals and methods of measuring success. This framework could be looking for:

- changes such as new learning, attitude changes, problem-solving, improved communication or different use of language;
- changes in relations, such as empathy, improvements in relational climate, validation and reconceptualisation of identity, or peaceful coexistence;
- foundations for transferring ideas and knowledge, such as artefacts, structures for implementation, perceptions of possibility, empowerment, new leadership or influential participants;
- foundations for outcomes or implementation, such as networks, reforms in political structures, new political input and processes, or increased capacity for jointly facing future challenge.



Measuring the impact of an interreligious dialogue training programme



Immediate responses from participants in a training programme typically only reveal their level of satisfaction on the actual experience of the sessions and do not say much about whether the training will lead to the expected outcome (and change) for the participant.

To better assess how the training impacted the work of participants in the KAICIID International Fellows Programme (KIFP), the monitoring and evaluation tracked feedback for months and years afterwards.

A survey and interviews were conducted with 64 participants. Open-ended questions were used to elicit responses in participants' own words on the four areas of the Kirkpatrick Model, such as whether the training had been applicable when they led their own interreligious dialogue or training workshop. To analyse the extensive data, a matrix was developed to sort and visualise the responses in relation to one another.

All respondents reported they were able to incorporate aspects of their learning into

practice, and 92% made statements such as the one expressed by Rabbi Jeff Berger from Rambam Sephardi Synagogue: "The initiative has given me greater confidence to carry on working both within and outside my community. The next aim is to begin working more collaboratively on joint projects with KIFP graduates."

This evaluation provided evidence of change in the participants' perception of their own roles in their community and the positive feedback they received on their "new dialogic behaviour." The survey also illuminated areas where improvements could be made to the programme. For instance, participants said they needed more practical facilitation skills, which led to the creation of new opportunities for Fellows to gain experience in facilitating interreligious dialogue and workshops.³²



MONITORING AND EVALUATION GUIDELINES



www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/monitoring-and-evaluation-guidelines

These guidelines have evolved from work undertaken during the KAICIID monitoring and evaluation policy framework. They are based on substantive engagement with monitoring and evaluation policies and practices within United Nations system agencies in general and various international organizations. They provide an overall context for understanding results-based monitoring and evaluation language, and they review tools and techniques for planning and managing monitoring and evaluation activities.





Epilogue

We live in a world facing severe challenges. But it is also a world where people show compassion, solidarity and resilience, and who have an earnest desire to make positive change.

We need to unite efforts to point the world in a more sustainable direction. This is a highly complex challenge, not least because our global communities are so diverse. We have a choice of whether we want to widen the gaps between people, polarising the differences among us, or try to handle them using peaceful means.

Dialogue has proven itself to be a transformative framework that is valuable and efficient to all kinds of organizational and societal development. By promoting cooperation and inclusion instead of polarisation, dialogue facilitates our ability to discover common interests and values beyond opposing viewpoints, and motivates us to build trusting relationships.

Interreligious dialogue is effective in managing problems, involving various stakeholders and contributing to positive change. This type of dialogue is especially relevant in contexts where a religious identity is highly valued, or when the issues at stake are related to differences in religious beliefs or culture.

Interreligious dialogue holds the power to flip the perspective and support us in seeing religious and cultural differences as starting points for finding sustainable solutions for the common good.

If this guide has inspired and encouraged you to invest more in the dialogic approach in whichever context you work, it has fulfilled its goal. We hope you will feel empowered to reach out to others and initiate cooperation across religious, cultural and social boundaries.

“How wonderful it is that nobody needs to wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

Anne Frank (1929–1945), German-Dutch Diarist of Jewish Heritage

“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. I can hear her breathing.”

Arundhati Roy (1961), Indian Author, Political and Human Rights Activist

RESOURCES

PEACE MAP



[peacemap.kaiciid.org/](https://www.kaiciid.org/peacemap)

KAICIID is not the only organization dedicated to interreligious dialogue, interfaith cooperation and bridgebuilding between different stakeholders to work towards peace and social cohesion.

The KAICIID Peace Map is an online directory of organizations promoting interreligious dialogue internationally. The Peace Map includes several search functions and simplifies getting an overview of the breadth of interreligious dialogue activities promoted by international organizations. Although the majority of organizations working in interreligious dialogue on an international level are headquartered in the global north, interreligious dialogue is used worldwide.

DIALOGUE KNOWLEDGE HUB



[https://www.kaiciid.org/
dialogue-knowledge-hub/e-
learning-courses](https://www.kaiciid.org/dialogue-knowledge-hub/e-learning-courses)

The KAICIID Dialogue Knowledge Hub offers e-learning courses, webinars and resources on the key thematic areas covered by the KAICIID strategy and mission.

The **e-learning courses** are of different lengths and depths. Some are one to two weeks long and self-paced; others are facilitated or instructor-led and span up to two months and eight modules. The courses are highly interactive, gamified and fully compatible with mobile devices to meet internationally recognised quality standards. Participants come from diverse backgrounds and a range of education; they include national, local and city-level government officials, United Nations agencies, international non-governmental organization programme staff, religious leaders, leaders of faith-based organizations, KAICIID Fellows, university and training centre professors and students, and interreligious and intercultural dialogue practitioners and experts.



[www.kaiciid.org/dialogue-
knowledge-hub/webinars](https://www.kaiciid.org/dialogue-knowledge-hub/webinars)

Thematic webinars on interreligious dialogue themes and topics jointly or in close collaboration with key partner organizations are regularly convened by the KAICIID Dialogue Knowledge Hub. The webinars are offered to KAICIID stakeholders and the wider interreligious dialogue community. Examples of recent webinar topics include Faith and COVID-19; Empowering Youth;

Integration through Education: Creating Opportunities for Refugees and Migrants; and Environmental Justice and Climate Change.



www.kaiciid.org

SOURCES

Much of the text in this guide has been synthesised from material available on the KAICIID website, in KAICIID publications and through interviews with staff members.

Other sources are:

Development Dialogue (2019). Dialogue in peacebuilding: Understanding different perspectives. *Development Dialogue*, vol. 64, <https://www.daghammarskjold.se/publication/dialogue-in-peacebuilding/>

Larbi Djacta et al. (2020). *Promoting Peace, Human Rights and Dialogue among Civilizations* (San Jose, Costa Rica, University for Peace), <https://www.ucepeace.org/files/Publications/Promoting%20peace,%20human%20rights%20and%20dialogue%20among%20civilizations.pdf>

Paul McKenna (2020). *Interfaith Dialogue: 200 Quotations* (Toronto, Scarboro Missions), https://www.scarboromissions.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Quotation-document_Dec14.pdf

Michael A. Peters and Tina Besley (2019). *Models of dialogue. Educational Philosophy and Theory*, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00131857.2019.1684801>

LITERATURE

The following resources are recommended for readers interested in exploring the information and messages conveyed in this guide:

Dialogue

David Bohm (1996). *On Dialogue* (London, Routledge).

Frances Sleap, Omer Sener and Paul Weller (eds) (2013). *Dialogue Theories* (London, Dialogue Society).

Frances Sleap, Omer Sener and Paul Weller (eds) (2016). *Dialogue Theories II* (London, Dialogue Society).

Interreligious dialogue

Catherine Cornille (ed.) (2013). *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Interreligious Dialogue* (Hoboken, NJ, Wiley & Sons).

Catherine Cornille and Jillian Maxey (eds) (2013). *Women and Interreligious Dialogue* (Eugene, OR, Cascade Books).

Christoffer H. Grundmann (ed.) (2015). *Interreligious Dialogue: An Anthology of Voices Bridging Cultural and Religious Divides* (Winona, MN, Anselm Academic).

- Anna Kors, Wolfram Weisse and Jean-Paul Willaime (eds) (2020). *Religious Diversity and Interreligious Dialogue* (Cham, Springer).
- Vladimir Latinovic, Gerard Mannion and Peter C. Phan (eds) (2015). *Pathways for Interreligious Dialogue in the Twenty-first Century* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan).
- Kizito Chinedu Nweke (2017). *Dialogues and Conflicts among Religious People: Addressing the Relevance of Interreligious Dialogue to the Common Public* (Frankfurt, Peter Lang).
- Eboo Patel, Jennifer Howe Peace and Noah J. Silverman (eds) (2018). *Interreligious/Interfaith Studies: Defining a New Field* (Boston, MA, Beacon Press).

Peacebuilding, conflict resolution and social cohesion

- John Burton (1990). *Conflict: Basic Human Needs Theory* (New York, Palgrave).
- Fletcher D. Cox and Timothy D. Sisk (eds) (2017). *Peacebuilding in Deeply Divided Societies: Toward Social Cohesion?* (New York, Palgrave).
- Michelle Garred and Mohammed Abu-Nimer (eds) (2018). *Making Peace with Faith: The Challenges of Religion and Peacebuilding* (New York, Rowman and Littlefield, 2018).
- Jeffrey Haynes (ed.) (2020). *Peace, Politics, and Religion* (MDPI).
- Paul Hedges (2020). *Conceptualising social cohesion in relation to religious diversity: sketching a pathway in a globalised world*. *Interreligious Relations*, No. 16.
- John Paul Lederach (1997). *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace).
- David Little (ed.) (2007). *Peacemakers in Action: Profiles of Religion in Conflict Resolution* (New York, Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding).
- Susan Allen Nan, Zachariah Cherian Mampilly and Andrea Bartolli (eds) (2011). *Peacemaking: From Practice to Theory* (Westport, CT, Praeger).

Monitoring and evaluation

- Shireen T. Hunter (2018). *How effective is interfaith dialogue as an instrument for bridging international differences and achieving conflict resolution?* *Review of Faith and International Affairs*, vol. 16, No. 3, pp. 102-113.
- United States Institute of Peace (2004). *What Works? Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue Programs*. Special report 123 (Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace).

NOTES

1 KAICIID has a dual governance structure – a Council of Parties made up of States and a Board of Directors made up of religious leaders. KAICIID brings together followers of different religious traditions, religious leaders and policymakers. The Advisory Forum, with over 60 religious leaders from the world’s major faith and cultural traditions, allows KAICIID to connect and network with communities all over the world. The Member States Austria, Spain, Saudi Arabia, and the Holy See as a founding Observer, and the Board of Directors stand as guarantors of the independence of the programmes from the interests of any one country or any one religious nomination. KAICIID serves as a convenor and facilitator, bringing religious leaders, policymakers and experts to the dialogue table to find common solutions to shared problems.

2 A Pew Research Center study forecasts that numbers of religious adherents will continue to grow significantly into 2050. The projected numbers of Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Muslims will reach 6.5 billion by 2030, 7.1 billion by 2040, and 7.5 billion by 2050 (<https://www.pewforum.org/2015/04/02/religious-projections-2010-2050/>). If these projections hold even partially true, the number of people belonging even nominally to religious groups will continue to grow or in some cases hold steady. The number of people identified as “unaffiliated” is projected to increase very slightly, representing a change from 1.19 billion people in 2020 to 1.2 billion in 2050 (<https://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>).

3 Source: <https://www.kaiciid.org/faith4sdgs>

4 Source: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/dsgsm1481.doc.htm>

5, 6 & 7 Source: <https://www.upeace.org/files/Publications/Promoting%20peace,%20human%20rights%20and%20dialogue%20among%20civilizations.pdf>

8 Sources: <https://www.kaiciid.org/news-events/news/kaiciid-launches-%E2%80%9Cfaith4sdgs%E2%80%9D-project-showcasing-contributions-faith-communities>
<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-07-18/secretary-generals-remarks-role-religious-leaders-peacebuilding>

9 Dialogue is a research area of many different scientific fields. See the annex for the sources from which the KAICIID definition of dialogue is synthesised and other resources that inspired this section and relevant for exploring the concept.

When defining a concept such as dialogue, we need to be aware of the purpose and the context that shape it, including the research tradition that gave birth to it. The literature on dialogue is abundant, as are the many different definitions of dialogue. Our own perception of dialogue is influenced by personal experiences, worldview and educational background, among other things. Celebrating the diversity of how dialogue can be understood – rather than sticking to one definition – might be the most inclusive way to start a dialogue. This is especially recommended in a multicultural context, where we can not take for granted that others understand the world exactly the same way as we do. The KAICIID definitions of dialogue and interreligious dialogue are available on the KAICIID website (<https://www.kaiciid.org/frequently-asked-questions>).

10 See also the KAICIID Peace Map (<https://www.kaiciid.org/node/6621>).

11 For examples of organizations working actively with interreligious dialogue, see <https://www.kaiciid.org/who-we-are/our-partners>

For examples of initiatives and interreligious dialogue projects, see <https://www.kaiciid.org/what-we-do>

12 Source: <https://www.kaiciid.org/news-events/features/women-faith-our-voices-must-be-heard>

13 Source: <https://www.upeace.org/files/Publications/Promoting%20peace,%20human%20rights%20and%20dialogue%20among%20civilizations.pdf>

14 The 10 principles of dialogue are based on the 7 principles of dialogue introduced in 1993 by the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, adapted, developed and adjusted by KAICIID throughout its practice in interreligious dialogue programmes.

The six phases of dialogue are adapted from studies related to the development of coexistence education programmes.

Both models are explained in more detail in the Interreligious Dialogue Resource Guide of the KAICIID International Fellows Programme, where additional references can be found (<https://www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/fellows-interreligious-dialogue-resource-guide>).

15 Source: <https://www.kaiciid.org/news-events/features/heart-head-and-hands>

16 Source: <https://www.daghammarskjold.se/publication/dialogue-in-peacebuilding/>

17 Conflict dynamics and the notion of the use of dialogue in conflict management form a broad area of research in many academic disciplines. See the annex for resources elaborating on the notion of conflict dynamics and conflict resolution.

18 Establishing a culture of peace and sustainable development is at the heart of UNESCO's mandate (<https://en.unesco.org/themes/building-peace-programmes>). Training and research in sustainable development are among the priorities, along with human rights education, skills for peaceful relations, good governance, Holocaust remembrance, prevention of conflict and peacebuilding.

19 The notion of a conflict-habituated system and the transformation to a culture of peace is explained more thoroughly with references to academic sources in *Building Bridges: Guide for Dialogue Ambassadors* (<https://www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/dialogue-peace-manual-guide-dialogue-ambassadors>). See also the resources in the annex.

20 Source: <https://www.upeace.org/files/Publications/Promoting%20peace,%20human%20rights%20and%20dialogue%20among%20civilizations.pdf>

21 Source: <https://www.daghammarskjold.se/publication/dialogue-in-peacebuilding/>

22 Source: <https://www.kaiciid.org/news-events/features/bold-push-peace-central-african-republic>

23 Quotes extracted from two unpublished interviews by Eustache Michael Mounzatela, Coordinator of the Network of Journalists Sensitive to Conflict, RJSC, conducted in January 2021.

24 Quote addressing the French President (<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1a6s6l>).

25 Source: <https://www.kaiciid.org/ashin-mandalarlankara>

26 Source: www.kaiciid.org

27 Source: <https://www.kaiciid.org/news-events/features/young-leaders-arab-region-take-covid-19-through-social-media>

28 The theory of change is essentially a comprehensive description and illustration of how and why a desired change is expected to happen in a particular context. It is focused on mapping out or filling in what has been described as the "missing middle" between what a programme or change initiative does (its activities or interventions) and how these lead to desired goals being achieved. It first identifies the desired long-term goals and then works back from these to identify all the conditions (outcomes) that must be in place (and how these relate to one another causally) for the goals to occur. These are then mapped out in an outcomes framework (<https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/>).

29 Quoted from the website that inspired this section (<https://www.imainternational.com/what-we-do/monitoring-evaluation-learning>).

30 Source: d'Estrée et al. (2000), quoted in United States Institute of Peace (2004). *What works? Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue Programs*. Special report 123 (Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace).

31 The Kirkpatrick model is a framework aiming to evaluate the outcomes and actual results of training programmes designed for behavioural change. It consists of four levels around which the evaluation can be focused (<https://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/Our-Philosophy/The-Kirkpatrick-Model>):

- Level 1: reaction - the degree to which participants find the training favourable, engaging and relevant to their jobs
 - Level 2: learning - the degree to which participants acquire the intended knowledge, skills, attitude, confidence and commitment based on their participation in the training.
 - Level 3: behaviour - the degree to which participants apply what they learned during training when they are back on the job.
 - Level 4: results - the degree to which targeted outcomes occur as a result of the training and the support and accountability package.
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32 Source: interviews with KAICIID staff responsible for MEL of the KAICIID International Fellows Programme (<https://www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/international-fellows-programme>).







This guide to interreligious dialogue is to be seen as a gift from the International Dialogue Centre (KAICIID) to everybody dedicated to pivoting the world towards a more peaceful, inclusive and sustainable future - a future in which policymakers and religious actors have a certain responsibility and opportunity to create together.

To succeed, it is crucial to build bridges across religious and cultural differences to bring people and institutions from diverse backgrounds and sectors closer together. Despite all the challenges that exist when working in the global dynamics of our time, KAICIID believes it is possible to create positive change for the benefit of all. We believe that putting dialogue and interreligious dialogue at the core of efforts - both to build the bridges and in the actual processes of transformation - will increase the chances of succeeding.

We will continue to convene dialogic spaces that build the bridges necessary to include all stakeholders, leaving no one behind, and we will keep on facilitating the processes needed to put ideas into actions.

We hope this guide will inspire many to walk on the dialogic pathway together with others towards a more peaceful, socially cohesive and sustainable future.