A Trainer’s Guide to Inter-faith Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka
This publication is made possible by the generous support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID.) The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the Karuna Center for Peacebuilding and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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Introduction

This manual was developed over the course of implementing a program of inter-faith peacebuilding, titled Inter-religious Cooperation for Community Development and Social Empowerment in Trincomalee and Batticaloa Districts, and Padaviya Division. With funding from USAID and the collaboration of Tetra Tech, Sarvodaya and the US-based organization, Karuna Center for Peacebuilding, worked intensively with a core group 80 Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian religious leaders and additional 80 young religious committee members, offering peacebuilding trainings and intensive inter-faith dialogues aimed at promoting mutual understanding and reconciliation. The religious leaders worked in inter-faith teams to lead over 50 community-based inter-faith projects. They also created district level inter-faith councils that can provide rapid response to emerging conflicts and continue to build inter-religious tolerance and cooperation. The training exercises in this manual were essential to building the skills necessary to carry this work forward. It is hoped that they can serve inter-faith peacebuilding efforts throughout the country.

Notes on Use of the Manual

We recommend that the exercises in this manual be used with judicious restraint and careful preparation. Trainings should be rooted in the goals of a particular inter-faith peacebuilding program and based on the stated needs of the communities that will be served. While exercises are important for experiential learning, make sure the exercises used really serve the objectives. Do not simply string exercises together, and be certain to allow ample time to process each exercise for maximum group learning. Too frequently trainers, especially those with fewer years of experience, use exercises as the anchor of their program, rather than as aids in teaching. We offer these materials as tools to be applied with wisdom, in the hope that their use will increase inter-faith understanding, tolerance, and reconciliation.

The manual includes models that give an overview of inter-faith peacebuilding and its role in social reconstruction, as well as sections on conflict analysis; social healing and dialogue; peacebuilding interventions; guidelines for training; and group-building exercises. Trainers can select from these sections to best serve the needs of a particular group, keeping in mind that less is usually more.
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PART I

INTER-FAITH PEACEBUILDING

While religions have developed different belief systems over the course of time, all religions advocate tolerance, kindness towards others, and non-violence. Religious leaders have a high degree of respect and influence in their communities. If religious leaders can operate out of shared values, they can play a major role in healing the divides left by civil war. These first models explore the essential components of inter-faith peacebuilding, its role in social reconstruction, and the indivisible link between peace and social justice for all faith groups.
An Overview of Inter-faith Peacebuilding

Training Activity

Objective: To give participants an overview of the value and essential components of inter-faith peacebuilding.

Method:

1. Discuss in small groups and plenary why each component is important and how one builds upon another.
2. Have religious leaders speak in same-faith or inter-faith pairs (depending on the circumstances) about why they are interested in peacebuilding.
3. Have each faith group draw up a list of the principles of their faith that most contribute to inter-faith tolerance and reconciliation. The lists can be presented in plenary.
Three Types of Power

**Vertical Power** is *power over others.*
Vertical power can be used to make improvements in the lives of many, but through, force, punishment, and manipulation it can be used to make people do things that they would not otherwise choose.

**Horizontal Power** is *power with others.*
With horizontal power we use cooperation and influence to make joint decisions and take action with others.

**Internal Power** is *power from within.*
By getting in touch with our internal, spiritual power we develop clear vision and the courage to act according to our convictions.

“The spirit of democracy cannot be imposed from without. It has to come from within.” - Mahatma Gandhi

Training Activity

**Objective:** To review in simple and accessible form the ways power is used.

**Method:** Discuss the ways these types of power are used at all levels of society. What are the contributions and dangers of each? How can religious leaders most effectively use the power that is vested in them? Why and how do they have influence?
Peacebuilding as a Threefold Process

Training Activity

**Objective**: To demonstrate that after violent conflict social, economic, and political peacebuilding are all required to build sustainable peace and all three are interrelated.

**Method**: Discuss the role of inter-faith peacebuilding as a type of social peacebuilding. Where it can have the most impact?
Role of Human Needs and Rights in Peacebuilding

Training Activity

Objective: To illustrate that religious freedom is among a core set of human needs and rights that must be met to secure a sustainable peace, and the fact that human needs and rights are indivisible.

Activity: Divide plenary into 3 groups, one for each core set of needs/rights. Each group speaks for the necessity of those needs/rights and the dangers of ignoring them.
PART II

CONFLICT ANALYSIS: UNDERSTANDING THE ROOT CAUSES OF INTER-FAITH CONFLICT OR TENSION

To successfully intervene in a conflict, we need to understand its sources and patterns of escalation. The causes of conflict are complex and multi-layered, and are perceived differently by different groups. Joint analysis deepens mutual understanding and can lead to more sustainable solutions. This section offers a variety of tools for mapping conflicts. In any given training, one might select one to three exercises, depending on which aspects of the conflict one hopes to address.
About Conflict

Conflict
Conflict is part of human existence. It can arise from many overlapping sources, including: competing needs or values; political, economic, or social injustice; denial of human rights; unequal access to resources; and cycles of revenge. Religion in of itself is rarely the source of conflict.

Violence
Violence is the expression of conflict in a way that threatens human life or the quality of human life. Forms of violence include physical, verbal, psychological, sexual, economic, political, and institutional violence.

LEVELS OF CONFLICT

INTRA-PERSONAL: Conflict within oneself about values, choices, commitments, feelings, relationships, etc.

INTER-PERSONAL: Conflict between individuals or family members.

INTRA-GROUP/COMMUNAL: Conflict within a group, organization, or community.

INTER-GROUP or INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL: Conflict between groups, which may hold relatively equal power or vastly different power, such as an advocacy group and a government, two NGOs, or two government agencies.

INTER-COMMUNAL: Conflict between two or more large identity groups who are allied with each other by territory and/or shared political history, such as: Tamils, Sinhalese, and Muslims in Sri Lanka; Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle-East; Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland; or blacks and whites in the USA.

INTERNATIONAL: Conflict between or among nations.

Training Activity

Objective: To recognize that conflict is not the problem, but how it is managed, and to explore the many different levels at which conflict manifests.

Method:

1. Write the word conflict in the center of a flip chart paper and have participants speak out associated words. Most of them will be negative. Ask the question is conflict always negative? When is it negative and why?

2. Divide into small groups and ask participants to reflect on their experiences of conflict at different levels, noting similar issues and themes across levels.
The iceberg represents the visible and hidden causes of inter-faith conflicts. The positions and assertions that are at the surface of a given conflict are only the tip of the iceberg, while deeply held values, wounds, assumptions, etc. remain underneath. Like an iceberg, the deepest and most dangerous sources of inter-faith conflict are not visible.

**Training Activity**

**Objective:** To understand the visible, hidden, and interconnected causes of inter-faith conflict.

**Method:** Draw a blank iceberg on a flip chart. Explain why conflict is like an iceberg. Ask participants to suggest visible and invisible causes of a particular inter-faith conflict. Write all suggestions on the iceberg. Ask participants to reflect on the connections between causes, and what this diagram implies about the effectiveness of different approaches to resolving conflicts. Explore sweeping and incorrect generalizations such as “religion causes conflict” and encourage more in-depth examination.
Training Activity

**Objective:** To examine the roots (causes) and impact (consequences) of a particular conflict or problem.

**Method:** Plenary or small groups identify the many roots of a particular conflict or problem and then explore all the effects that arise from the roots. Write these on branches, then drawing twigs and leaves to show the further ramifications of those effects. The group can talk about how the effects/leaves drop from the tree and feed the roots of the conflict, demonstrating the cyclical nature of causes and consequences of violent conflict.
The Spiral of Unmanaged Conflict

Training Activity

Objective: To understand the dynamics of conflict escalation.

Method: Draw the diagram on a flip chart and explain how small conflicts escalate and intensify through their own momentum, using a local example of a problem between faith groups. Ask participants to work in small groups to illustrate how a conflict they have experienced moved through the seven stages. These examples can then be presented to the large group. The model and the examples will make clear why early intervention is so important.
Dividers and Connectors

In all societies, communities are connected through common needs and interests while simultaneously divided by competition to satisfy these concerns. Inter-faith peacebuilders hope to increase connections for the sake of cooperation and mutual understanding, while decreasing attitudes and behaviors that undermine good will and further escalate tensions.

Training Activity

Objective: To create participant awareness that an effective inter-faith program should be designed to focus on strengthening connectors and weakening dividers between different faith groups. Further work would then consider possible activities and programs that achieve this.

Method: Divide participants into small groups. Ask groups to discover those connectors that currently exist between faith groups, and to then name dividers that weaken intergroup ties. Explore which groups in society might be most amenable to building connections and which groups would find this most difficult. Next, lead a plenary brainstorm of specific interventions that could be implemented by participants’ own organizations to build on the connectors and minimize the dividers. Draw on participants’ resources from their own life and work experiences, and offer stories from other parts of the country.

NOTE: The concept of connectors and dividers was adapted from “Do no harm: how aid can support peace – or war,” by M. Anderson, 1999. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
Needs and Fears Mapping

Training Activity

**Objective:** To understand the needs and fears of all sides of a conflict from the perspective of each side, in order to determine viable solutions.

**Method:** Demonstrate on a flip chart how to develop a “Needs and Fears Map” as shown above. The map can be drawn for 2-5 sides, or actors, and the shape of the map can be changed accordingly. The facilitator should map a conflict as an example. Break into groups of 4 – 6 to create needs and fears maps around a particular inter-faith conflict or tension. (Allow 45 to 60 minutes for group work.) The group should just discuss their understanding of the needs and fears of each side and then develop the map after reaching some consensus. Warn the groups that they must make every effort to “walk in the shoes” of each side to understand the needs and fears from each perspective. Reflect with the group on their learning from the exercise. Often, groups notice that, while the positions of the sides are very different, many of the needs and fears are similar. A solution is more likely to be acceptable to all sides if it addresses each group’s needs and fears.
PART III

Social Healing and Dialogue Practices to Promote Inter-faith Understanding and Cooperation

Civil war can tear the social fabric of community life. It leaves behind deep wounds and undermines inter-group trust. The exercises in this section explore the impact of violence on identity, the importance of developing cross-cutting identities such as that of a “religious leader,” and steps towards replacing prejudice with genuine tolerance and appreciation of difference. In our experience, carefully facilitated inter-faith dialogues are one of the most-powerful tools for developing mutual understanding, especially if combined with joint projects.
Impact of Violence on Identity

Training Activity

Objective: To understand that our religious or ethnic identity is only one of many identities that we carry. When this identity is “wounded” through threat or violence it can become distorted and dominant.

Method: Ask participants to draw their own wheel of identity showing all the identities that are important to them. They may discuss their wheels in pairs. Then discuss what happens when an identity is “wounded.” Discuss in small groups the role that “wounded identities” has played in local conflicts, and how building on cross cutting identities (such as religious leader) can restore relations.
Training Activity

Objective: To understand that intolerance and prejudice are learned attitudes that are transmitted through institutions of socialization. These attitudes can also be changed through exposure and moral development.

Method: After the diagram is presented, participants identify and discuss in small groups their own learning and development process. Role-plays can be used to demonstrate institutional influences.
Ladder of Tolerance

Training Activity

Objective: To demonstrate how intolerance and the denial of rights can lead to mass violence and to explore what is required to build a truly tolerant society.

Method: This model may be used to stimulate group dialogue and generate ideas for developing programs that could address and change harmful behaviors. As a plenary activity, the group may discuss where they believe their community is on the ladder and what interventions could move it up a step, focusing especially on inter-faith understanding and tolerance. Note that coexistence is only a mid-point. Conflict prevention requires the effort and willingness to climb up the upper half of the ladder. Participants may also reflect on their own evolution through the positions on this ladder in small groups.
Inter-faith Dialogue: An Invitation to a New Conversation

Inter-faith dialogue can be a very helpful tool for building mutual understanding, but is best used after a group has already worked together, developed some degree of comfort and trust, and discovered some common goals. Sharing the values of respective faith traditions on tolerance and peace, joint conflict or problem analysis, and the previous exercises on issues of identity can all provide a valuable foundation.

Successful dialogue requires a structured approach, using carefully crafted questions so that participants feel safe speaking openly. Trust and understanding can then build slowly and steadily. Comfort with the dialogue process can be developed by starting in pairs and then working in smaller and larger groups, and then in plenary. Initial dialogue questions should not be too provocative, but as trust builds, dialogue questions can gradually touch on painful past experiences and real concerns for the future. Participants are always asked to speak from their own experience and from the heart. This avoids decent into political debate. Careful review of ground rules and the difference between debate and dialogue are essential preparation.

Facilitators should apply no pressure toward achieving reconciliation, but be content with small steps of acknowledgement, recognition, apology, and taking responsibility for one’s own behaviors. Reconciliation is a long process that takes place over many years and comes with continued testing of trust and understanding. The results of dialogue are always enhanced if participants have the opportunity to engage in joint projects. Mutual understanding is important, but actions speak louder than words. Joint action also models inter-faith cooperation to the broader community.

Dialogue avoids:
- Predictable debates on contentious issues
- The polarization and hardening of fixed positions
- Premature solutions

Dialogue invites:
- Genuine inquiry
- Developing the discipline to hear perspectives very different from one’s own
- Expanding one’s capacity for tolerance
- Participants to be changed by the process

Dialogue develops:
- A deepening of human relationships
- New insights and understanding through tolerating difference
- New and unexpected responses to complex problems

Training Activity

*Objective:* To help group members understand the unique value of dialogue and to feel reassured that the risks of dialogue lead to positive outcomes.

*Method:* Use when introducing dialogue procedures. Review with group, respond to questions and concerns.
## Debate versus Dialogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEBATE</th>
<th>DIALOGUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Goal is to win</td>
<td>• Goal is to discover common ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involves listening to find the opponent’s weak points</td>
<td>• Involves listening to understand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Involves criticizing other points of view</td>
<td>• Involves openly considering all points of view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assumes one right answer to a question or problem</td>
<td>• Assumes that many different ideas can contribute to a fuller solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Comes from a position which one defends</td>
<td>• Expresses feelings, concerns, fears, and uncertainties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Exposes faults in the positions of others</td>
<td>• Demonstrates strengths on all sides of an issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Looks to strengthen a predetermined position</td>
<td>• Uncovers brand new possibilities and opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Further polarizes antagonistic positions</td>
<td>• Builds bridges of understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Promotes competition</td>
<td>• Promotes collaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Training Activity

**Objective:** To give participants an actual experience of these two forms of communication so that they can appreciate the distinction.

**Method:** Before sharing this handout, divide participants into small groups, and assign them an issue that is controversial but not too sensitive. Within the group one half argues for the topic and one half against. After 5 minutes, stop the debate and ask the groups to switch to a dialogue. Bring participants back to plenary to reflect on the differing aims of debate and dialogue, and review handout.
Fostering Dialogue through Good Communication

The dialogue process is about practicing a new kind of speaking and a new kind of listening.

Active Listening: *Hearing and understanding the truth of the experience of others*

- Give the speaker your full and undivided attention
- Listen to learn, not to verify existing assumptions or expectations
- Listen with empathy, to see the problem from the other person’s point of view, to walk in their shoes
- Ask question to clarify or expand your understanding, not to challenge or engage in debate

Authentic Speaking: *Telling the truth of your own experience*

- Speak for yourself, not for a group or position
- Speak to communicate your own experience, not to persuade others
- Distinguish your opinion or belief from fact or ‘truth’
- Acknowledge the experiences and assumptions that have shaped your views and opinion
- Speak from your heart

Training Activity

**Objective:** To develop participants’ capacity for active listening and authentic speaking.

**Method:** Divide the group into small groups of three. Participants then take turns speaking about an important experience or problem as authentically as possible, listening as actively as possible, and observing the interaction. After everyone has had a turn at each role, reconvene in the large group and discuss what was experienced and observed about good communication. Also discuss what it feels like to be fully listened to or not listened to. In a further exercise one might want to have the group divide into pairs and recall times they were listened to and times they were not and what the impact was.
Guidelines for Dialogues

Before beginning a dialogue the group should establish guidelines. These will create and protect a safe space for honest communication. Group members should generate and, as much as possible, take responsibility for their own guidelines. The facilitator makes sure there is agreement, the list is complete, and the guidelines are followed.

Basic guidelines may include:

- Respect differences in experience and perspective
- Speak as an individual, not as a representative of a group
- Speak truthfully and from your own experience
- Do not try to persuade or change others
- Listen openly, respectfully, and without interruption
- Allow time for those who are more quiet
- Honor confidentiality
- Avoid using negative stereotypes or generalizations
- Be willing to learn and be changed by the experience

Crafting Dialogue Questions

After some initial dialogue practice and the setting of ground rules, the core of a dialogue is launched with a question. The nature of the question and how it is phrased will profoundly affect the tone and shape of the ensuing dialogue.

A question designed for a debate helps to sharpen and differentiate positions. A question designed for a dialogue will allow for difference, but also helps illumine unexplored common ground. A good dialogue question:

- Is open-ended and cannot be answered with a yes or no, I agree or disagree, response
- Takes participants deeper than the level of opinion or position
- Encourages participants to delve into their experience and to explore their thinking in a fresh manner
- Allows for ambiguity or ambivalence
- Calls forth new, unrehearsed responses

Depending on the time allotted, there can be a series of dialogue questions, each building upon the last.
**Phases of Dialogue**

1. **Opening Phase**

   **Goal:** Build trust and safety
   - Establish ground rules
   - Find common ground
   - Surface expectations
   - Practice communication skills
   - Explore what a dialogue is and is not

   **Challenges:** Inadequate trust may lead to:
   - Superficality
   - Reverting to debate, argument, or problem solving

2. **Heart of the Dialogue**

   **Goal:** Reach new understanding of self and other in relation to a conflict or tension
   - Focus dialogue with carefully crafted questions
   - Encourage expression of personal feeling and experience
   - Allow participants to tell relevant aspects of own story
   - Cultivate the kind of listening that enables participants to develop new understandings of different perspectives
   - Provide opportunity for personal reflection

   **Challenges:** Incomplete shifts in understanding may lead to:
   - Dominance by single perspective or “silencing” of minority views
   - Pressure to conform to group norms/ discomfort with differences
   - Move to debate, problem-solving, or action to avoid difficult issues or emotions

3. **Closing Phase**

   **Goal:** Consolidate learning and experience
   - Engage head, heart, and hand in integrating experience of dialogue
   - Articulate new vision and insight
   - Plan how to put new learning into action
   - Evaluation of dialogue process
   - Prepare for re-entry into own community

   **Challenges:** Incomplete consolidation may lead to:
   - Pressure to conform to group decisions
   - Move toward actions that are unrealistic or premature
   - Too many ideas/loss of focus
The Essentials of Dialogue Facilitation

The main responsibility of a facilitator is to create, protect, and maintain a safe space for open communication throughout the phases of a dialogue or workshop.

This can be achieved by attending to the following:

1. Setting the stage
   - Clarify purpose of workshop or dialogue
   - Describe agenda and time schedule

2. Establish and monitor ground rules
   - Help group to develop and follow ground rules
   - Model observance of ground rules through own behavior

3. Model effective group behavior and communication
   - Respect all perspectives
   - Provide verbal and non-verbal support
   - Listen actively and empathetically
   - Learn and use participants’ names
   - Encourage hesitant members
   - Work smoothly with co-facilitator

4. Oversee Process
   - Manage the time; monitor individual speaking time and the overall schedule
   - Keep group focused on the topic
   - Encourage full participation
   - Attend to stages of group process and what is needed in each stage
   - Monitor emotional tone; challenge if too safe/protect if too intense
   - Watch for power dynamics within group; prevent dominance of a single view or faction

For optimal management of the process, we recommend working with a co-facilitator, ideally in a bi-communal pair.
PART IV

Peacebuilding Interventions to Address Inter-faith Conflicts

The first models and exercises in this section explore how inter-faith peacebuilding efforts can operate strategically for maximum influence. This section also includes practical skill-building exercises for resolving community conflicts.
**Training Activity**

**Objective:** To understand the influence religious leaders can have at various levels of society

**Method:** Draw the triangle with its three sections on a flip chart. Ask participants where they would place themselves. Note if participants are operating at the middle level they can influence the grassroots through inter-faith awareness sessions and joint projects. They can strengthen cooperation among themselves through inter-faith dialogues and councils. They can influence the leadership through advocacy. The impact of inter-faith work is increased through strategic horizontal and vertical linkages.
Intervention Check List

1. Know Your Place in the System
   - Inside Partial or Outside Neutral
   - Advocate, bridge builder, or skills trainer

2. Do No Harm
   - Consider how your activities might increase tensions, put people at risk, or otherwise add to the conflict situation

3. Define Your Focus
   - Know the intention of your intervention, how it will build inter-faith understanding and cooperation, what it will add or change in the life of the community or region

4. Build for Sustainability
   - Build Capacity – skills and wisdom
   - Build Relationships – individually, inter-faith, inter-organization, etc.
   - Build Institutions – develop inter-faith infrastructure: joint councils, alliances, networks
   - Build Evaluation Mechanisms – document best practices and lessons learned; and disseminate
What Underlies Positions: The Onion Model

Training Activity

Objective: To learn to differentiate between positions, interests and needs.

Methods: Draw the onion model on a flip chart and use an example to demonstrate the difference between positions, interests and needs. Explain that conflicts can never be constructively solved at the level of positions, which are almost always in opposition; conflicts are usually solved by negotiating between interests. Basic needs cannot be negotiated away.

Variation: Ask some members of the group to develop a role-play depicting a typical community conflict. The rest of the group divides into four groups. Group #1 notes the positions of each party, Group #2 the interests of each party, Group #3 the needs of each party and the Group #4 observes the patterns of escalation of the conflict. After the role-play, each group discusses among themselves what they observed. The role-play actors meet and discuss how the conflict would have gone differently if the basic needs and interests of each actor had been understood. The observations of all groups are then shared in the larger group.
The Wonder Fruit Exercise

Divide the group into groups of four for the following role-play. Each group has a vendor, a hospital owner, a perfume company owner, and an observer. The market is closing in 10 minutes. The vendor wants to sell his very valuable but perishable Wonder Fruit, and both the hospital owner and the perfume company owner want them, but for different reasons; one only needs the fruit and the other only needs the skin. Pass out the role-play assignments, but tell participants that they should not share what is written. Ask the participants to see if they can come up with a negotiated solution that satisfies all three parties. After all groups have reached an agreement discuss in plenary and see who was able to discover that the two buyers wanted different parts of the fruit and could therefore arrive at a win-win solution. Note that finding win-win solutions requires asking questions to go beneath positions and learn about the real interests and needs of the other.

A: VENDOR

You own a market stall. You have 17 Wonder Fruit for sale at $10 each. The fruit are very ripe and by tomorrow will not be fit to sell.

You paid $80 for the fruit. You are worried because the market is about to close and you will not be able to conduct business after closing time. You need to sell your fruit now.

B: HOSPITAL OWNER

You run a hospital for sick children. You are in desperate need of the rare Wonder Fruit because its fruit juice can be made into a medicine that is vital to prevent the children in your care from dying. You need to buy the fruit now.

Just before the market is due to close, you finally find a stall with 17 Wonder fruit for sale at $10 each. You need all 17 because it takes at least 17 to make the medicine, but because you had to buy many other important supplies, you can only afford $120. As money is in short supply, you would like to pay as little as possible.

C: PERFUME COMPANY OWNER

You run a perfume company. You urgently need to buy the rare Wonder Fruit, as a tourist ship is docking in 2 days. The skin of the Wonder Fruit contains a vital ingredient in making an expensive perfume, which you hope to sell to the tourists. If you do not get this business, your company might go bankrupt and your ten local workers will lose their jobs. You need to buy the fruit now as the manufacturing process takes two days.

Just before the market is due to close, you finally find a stall with 17 Wonder Fruit for sale at $10 each. You need all 17 because it takes at least 17 to make the special ingredient, but because you had to buy many other important supplies, you can only afford $150. As money is in short supply, you would like to pay as little as possible.
Steps for Resolving Community Conflicts

1. Acknowledge the Conflict

Each party must recognize or admit they are in conflict. If one of the parties is denying that there is a conflict, then there can be no progress on mutual resolution.

**Mediators:** Acknowledge conflict resolution is difficult and can take time. Address reasons for denial. Be patient.

2. Agree to Try to Resolve

Accomplishing this step requires some trust; both parties must believe they are better off in dialogue than in debate; both must have some sense that a win-win outcome is possible; and most importantly both must want to resolve the conflict.

**Mediators:** Ask each party to join the effort. Don’t push someone into agreement. If a party resists, remind them that it is their choice whether to remain in conflict or to look for a mutually satisfactory solution.

3. Each Party Tells Their Story

Both parties take turns explaining what has happened from their point of view. This can take time, if people have strong feelings. It is an opportunity to understand each other.

**Mediators:** Make sure this is a safe process. Stick to dealing with only one conflict at a time, preferably the original one. Get parties to agree to firm ground rules. Keep encouraging active listening. Go past positions into interests. Do not move on until the parties involved understand each other well.

4. Brainstorm Solutions

The parties list all the solutions they can think of. All ideas are written down, no matter how inadequate or far-fetched they seem.

**Mediators:** Keep ideas flowing. Be encouraging. Make a list. No idea should be dismissed at this stage.

5. Choose Solutions

The parties decide together which solutions to try out. Either side can veto an idea. Throw out the unacceptable ones. Refine the best ones. Design an implementation plan for solutions that includes: who does what, how they are held accountable, and a time frame for checking back to see how the solution is working.

**Mediators:** Watch for impractical plans. Encourage parties to work together on this step. Write down agreements if necessary.
6. Implement Solutions

Both parties must follow through on their responsibilities. Keep working on trust, as that will set a good foundation for resolving future conflicts. If the agreement falls apart, cycle back to the beginning of the process.

Training Activity

**Objective:** To learn basic steps for conflict resolution.

**Method:** Go over each step in the large group, emphasizing the importance of completing one step before moving onto the next. A rush to solutions will produce unsatisfactory results. Divide into groups of 6 – 7 to practice. Three or four participants in each group develop a role-play of a conflict. Two participants act as mediators, moving through the 6 steps as outlined, and one participant acts as an observer. The mediators should let the conflict unfold for at least 5 – 10 minutes before offering their assistance. Once the mediators start the process, the observer may call for a “time-out” once or twice to offer feedback to the mediators. At the end of the exercise, role players, mediators, and observers report back to the large group as to what worked well and what posed challenges. The facilitators can derive further lessons about conflict resolution from these reports.
Principles for Mediators

These principles are relevant whenever religious leaders are asked to assist in resolving a conflict or de-escalating inter-group tensions.

Be objective - validate both sides, even if privately you favor one point of view, or even when only one party is present.

Be supportive - use caring language, demonstrating that you are interested in the concerns of all sides. Provide a trusting environment, where people feel safe to open up.

Be non-judging - actively discourage judgments about who was right and who was wrong. Don’t ask “Why did you?” Ask “What happened?” and “How do you feel?”

Use open-ended questions - encourage suggestions from participants. Resist advising. If necessary, offer options, not directives.

Use a win/win approach - work towards wins for both sides. Turn opponents into problem-solving partners.
PART V

BECOMING AN INTER-FAITH
PEACEBUILDING TRAINER AND FACILITATOR

These pages describe the value of experiential learning and offer essential tips for the inter-
faith peacebuilding trainer or facilitator. Facilitation is an art and best learned through the
process of doing. Remember that the most important learning will come from what
participants discover for themselves. The job of the trainer is not so much to teach, as to
create a safe environment for learning, one in which all can participate and feel respected.
## How Adults Learn

**ADULTS REMEMBER**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>80% of what they discover for themselves</th>
<th>40% of what they hear and see</th>
<th>20% of what they hear</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taught</td>
<td>Told</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taught</td>
<td>Shown</td>
<td>72%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Taught</td>
<td>Told/Shown</td>
<td>85%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learned</td>
<td>Told/Shown/Applied (With Feedback)</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned</td>
<td>Continuous Application</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>95%</td>
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The Experiential Learning Cycle

The most effective inter-faith peacebuilding trainings are based on experiential learning. Participants develop new ideas through reflecting on actual experiences during the training or by analyzing real life problems. When new concepts or new skills are taught, they should be applied and practiced.

If there is a series of trainings, participants should have opportunities to practice new skills between trainings so that they can then reflect together on the challenges they encounter implementing them.
Facilitators must manage both content and process. A facilitator needs two sets of eyes and ears: one to manage process and another to manage content.

Process consists of “how” things are communicated and experienced: what lies beneath the surface. It includes:

- relationships
- feelings
- body language
- group dynamics
- group flow

Content consists of “what” is communicated: what surfaces from the process. It includes:

- presentations on topics
- discussion
- sharing of experiences
Elements of Good Training Design

Base Design on Clearly Defined Goals:
Always start with a clear definition of the specific goals of each new workshop. These will and should vary with the particular context and target group.

Build Design around Experiential Learning:
Overall design should incorporate an experiential, interactive approach to learning. Include ample exercises and opportunity for group discussion and interaction.

Make Each Design Unique:
Avoid recipes. Each workshop should be individually tailored to meet specific goals, community needs, and skill and experiential level of the participants.

Create Responsive Designs:
Training designs are never more than tentative drafts which should be continuously adapted to meet changing needs and interests.

Important Design Elements:

- **Determining the content**: What skills, concepts, and information would help the participants address the issues? What are the sensitive issues and how directly can they be addressed?

- **Deciding on the structure**: Determine appropriate length, continuity (single or series), location and size.

- **How to use exercises**: While exercises are important for experiential learning, make sure the exercises used really serve the objectives. Do not simply string exercises together, and be sure to allow ample time to process each exercise for maximum group learning.

- **Building on traditional practices**: Be sure to find out about, and if appropriate, build upon traditional or established practices for addressing the problem.

- **Training materials**: Develop pertinent training materials to help participants visualize key concepts and remember skills.

- **Creating a learning community**:
  - Bring each voice into the room through introductions
  - Create ground rules with the group
  - Get agreement for agenda
  - Do group building activities that build trust and establish common ground
  - Collectively clarify the problems, issues, and major challenges to be addressed
Best Practices for the Facilitation of Inter-faith Peacebuilding Workshops

Building the Group

- Attending to introductions
- Sharing the agenda
- Developing the ground rules
- Preparing the group for experiential, participatory learning

Managing Group Process

- Paying simultaneous attention to content and process
- Varying methodology, format, and group discussion techniques
- Keeping flexible and re-designing to accommodate changing group needs

Stages of Group Life

- Working with the daily bio-rhythms of groups
- Being sensitive to group dynamics and the changing concerns of groups over time

Roles and Functions of Facilitators

- Overseeing the logistics for smooth functioning
- Maintaining neutrality (or multi-partiality) as group moderators
- Modeling of respectful behavior
- Managing time
- Developing a good working relationship with co-facilitator
- Encouraging new learning

Working with Challenging Group Dynamics

- Managing dominating behavior
- Encouraging equal participation from everyone
- Maintaining full attendance
- Keeping the material relevant to all group members
PART VI

Additional Group Building Exercises

This section includes some useful group-building exercises, geared toward different phases of training. Many such exercises exist in the peacebuilding field, and inter-faith peacebuilding trainers can always find or invent new ones to add to their repertoire.
Exercise 1: Discussing Fears

*This is an exercise for the opening day of a workshop.*

**Objective:** To raise issues of fear in an anonymous way and discuss them openly.

**Activity:** Ask everyone to write the sentence: “My worst fear about being in this group is...” Each participant should complete the sentence on his or her sheet of paper, fold it in half and place it in a hat or a bowl.

Pass this hat around the circle. Ask each person to take any piece of paper, read the sentence aloud, and then pass the hat to the next person.

**Discussion:** After all the papers have been read, ask for responses. Discuss the fears mentioned. Many will be relieved to discover that their fears are similar to those of others. It may also become clear that the fears are similar for all faith groups. Invite participants to make suggestions to help each other in dealing with the fears that have been raised.
Exercise 2: Obstacles to Action

Training Activity

Objective: To recognize the obstacles to taking action.

Materials: Markers, pieces of paper shaped like bricks (3 per person) or large paper on the wall with empty bricks drawn on it, tape or pins.

Activity: Draw a brick wall on a large piece of paper or give each participant two or three “bricks” drawn on paper. Ask participants to think about the obstacles that prevent or hinder them from taking action to promote inter-faith cooperation. Ask them to write those obstacles on the wall, one per brick.

Discussion: The brick wall soon fills up. It becomes clear why it can be so difficult to move a group or community into action. Discussion helps the group to understand the obstacles and to see where and whether action is possible. Naming the obstacles is also a first step towards thinking of ways to remove them or cope with them creatively.
Exercise 3: Spectrum Activity

Asking participants to move around the training space to indicate their beliefs provides a welcome opportunity for physical activity as well as for an illustration of the group’s diversity.

Training Activity

**Objective:** To illustrate the range of perspectives within the group, to highlight the learning opportunities from diversity, to inject movement and liveliness into the group process.

**Method:** Ask participants to imagine a line running down the middle of the room. One wall represents total agreement with a statement and the other wall represents total disagreement. In response to a question, participants will stand in the spot along the spectrum where they feel they belong.

Then pose questions such as, “in our district, we have achieved total inter-faith understanding and harmony.” Participants are then invited to explain why they chose a particular spot along the spectrum between “agree” and “disagree.” Some faith groups may have similar perspectives; others may have divergent ones. Exploring the reasons can lead to deeper understanding. This exercise is not recommended until a group has already established trust and engaged in dialogue. It can then be used to deepen the discussion and highlight differences that still exist.
Exercise 4: Going Home

**Objective:** To help participants anticipate factors that might work to hinder or support their work as they return home.

**Activity:** Ask participants to discuss together in small groups the following questions.

1. How much of what you have experienced or learned during this seminar will you share with your colleagues, family, friends, and others?

2. Are there any particular events or ideas that you would feel reluctant to share?

3. If you have drawn up a personal plan of action, how would it seem to them? How will this negatively or positively affect your ability to pursue it?

4. How can you work to involve your colleagues, family, and friends in supporting you? Are there people whom you can trust to support you?

5. How will you keep in touch with people from the program for support?