

Module 1: Basic Facilitation Training

Duration: 5 weeks * Start date: Oct 17

The goal of the facilitation training is to enable fellows to learn active listening and how to ask good questions, and to help them recognize their own biases and uncover other people's biases.

We will modify the basic facilitation training to suit these needs. We see this as a chance to start building strong community ties between the new fellows.

Learning Components

1. **Live sessions** are 3-hour sessions held once a week using our video conferencing application.
2. Our **tutorials / online library** includes online articles and/ or videos that can teach certain skills or concepts (ie: a video showing how to use a camera or an article about different types of mediations).
3. **Multimedia features** are videos or multimedia-components that Soliya produces, giving fellows insights and access to professionals in the field (ie: a Q&A feature interview with Dr. Hicks). Soliya will produce at least one video for each training module (ie: one for basic facilitation skills and one for the media training).
4. **Assignments** are activities that help fellows practice the skills they are learning through the training (ie: interviews, filming, asking good questions).
5. **Mentors** are professionals who work in conflict resolution, media or related NGOS and are willing to spend asynchronous time answering questions from fellows and/ or replying to threads. The proposal is to make mentorship less rigid by providing a "pool of experts" to our fellows who are available for a certain number of inquiries per month.



Weekly Breakdown

Please note:

Things to tell or ask trainees explicitly will be written in blue text.

Each section has a minimum and a maximum allocated timing. This is simply to take into account time taken for unplanned issues.

Week 1: Introduction and Basic Facilitation Skills

Goals: Introductions; expectations; philosophy of facilitation; exploring identities

Live session:

- **20-30 min: Introductions and Icebreakers**
 - Brief reminder of the tech features in the room:
 - Talk button (remind them to click on the lock icon to make it on “locked” position – remind them that if their camera is up it means that they have the floor or that if there is an orange dot next to their names, it means they are the next in line to speak, etc.)
 - Tech support box
 - What the main chat is, how to private chat
 - Safe mode button: what it does, how to use it
 - Presentation of trainer
 - History with Soliya / Network (ex Terana)
 - Location
 - Activity
 - Presentation of guide
 - History with Soliya / Network (ex Terana)
 - Location
 - Activity
 - Specific Role:
 - Assist the trainer
 - Share experiences from the Pilot Fellowship
 - Being a “liaison” person between Fellows and Soliya
 - Remind Fellows about assignments and other information
 - Where in the world are you and name activity.
 - Do a round in which each person introduces themselves by giving their name, and then slowly moving their webcam around the room so that everyone can see where they are. Then they have to say a story about your name (meaning, story behind it, whether you like your name or not, etc.)

- **15-20 min: Expectations on Terana**
 - Let's do a round and answer those questions [Type in the chat box]
 - Why did you want to be a Terana fellow?
 - What would you like to bring to the program?
 - What do you want to get out of it?

- **10-15min: Description of the training**
 - This is the first of four modules:
 - 1. "Dialogue Facilitation" (Oct – Nov 2011): Reflecting on Identity issues and on our own blindspots, communication values; Exploring the role of facilitators and its tools (asking good questions, listening actively), understanding how to handle difficult group dynamics and practicing facilitation.
 - 2. "Capturing local voices" (Nov – Dec 2011): Choosing characters, setting up interviews, selecting sound bites, and editing.
 - 3. "Engaging Diverse Constituents" (Jan – Feb 2012): Building a constituency, tactics for getting people involved over a long period of time, planning for community engagement.
 - 4. "Social media engagement" (Feb – Mar 2012): Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of social media tools/trends, the different levels of engagement, presenting alternative perspectives, facilitating a deeper conversation, dealing with conflict...
 - The first module is a basic training which will deal with facilitation skills applied to the Network's focus and program.
 - For this first module, we will meet over 5 weeks:
 - 1st week, we will talk about the philosophy of facilitation and the role of identity in dialogue.
 - 2nd week, we will talk about the main tool kit of all facilitators: active listening skills. We will also talk about Soliya's communication values and how they can help in fostering a constructive engagement.
 - 3rd week, we will explore our respective life experiences and how they have shaped our world views. We will also talk more about the importance of good questions and the issue of bias.
 - 4th week, we will see how we can overcome conflict avoidance and tackle conflicted conversation.
 - 5th week, we will finish by practicing the role of facilitator.
 - This module has two objectives:
 - Teach basic facilitation skills
 - Get to know ourselves and each other better - which can only reinforce the first objective.
 - As a result, the conversations we will have will be both very personal and a way to learn more about dialogue facilitation. We will learn through a genuine dialogue between each other.

- **25-30 min: Facilitation and the role of facilitators**
 - Ask: What is facilitation? What comes to mind when you hear that word? [open discussion]
 - Ideas include:
 - To facilitate, is to help something (usually a process) move along. The word derives from "facile" which is Latin for "easy". To facilitate, then, is literally to make something easier.
 - Facilitation is the *process* of enabling groups to work cooperatively and effectively.
 - Facilitation does not mean "solving a problem" or "doing it for someone". It means doing something that makes a process, like dialogue, run a little better & smoother.
 - Facilitation keeps things focused, allows everyone a chance to participate, and helps individuals and groups get tasks accomplished and decisions made.
 - Ask: Why would you need a facilitator in a group? What could happen if there was no facilitation / facilitator in an intercultural group discussion? [open discussion]
 - Ideas include:
 - If group meetings are not facilitated, most likely they will be filled with tangents and side conversations – it is difficult to stay on topic and progress with the discussion.
 - Furthermore, two or three people may end up dominating the discussion, leaving the group open for power imbalances. For example!
 - What is the role of the facilitator? You can also ask the trainees to provide examples of situations when they have been in a group that has been facilitated by someone, or if they have been in that role themselves.
 - Ideas include:
 - Facilitators are process leaders only -- they have no decision-making authority, nor do they contribute to the substance of the discussion. The facilitator's job is to lead the group process; to help them improve the way they communicate, examine and solve problems, and be more self-reflective. Good facilitators can help groups stay on task, be more creative, efficient, and productive than they would be without such help.
 - Facilitators are neutral – or multipartial.
 - What does being neutral and being multi-partial mean? Why would these concepts be so important for Soliya (where the groups discuss also some very sensitive issues)? [open discussion]
 - Ideas include:
 - Multipartiality means that you are providing support (mostly through your listening and attention) to all those present in the room – and even to some extent to a group of people who would not be present in the room but who's opinions could enrich the discussion.
 - Soliya facilitators should be neutral in the sense that they should not play the role of a participant and contribute to the content of the discussions by

expressing their own views. Soliya facilitators should be multi-partial in the sense that they should be curious about and pay attention to all opinions expressed – and what are not present in the room.

- Those of you who have experienced Soliya dialogue, do you have any examples on discussions where facilitator neutrality and multipartiality was very important to you? [open discussion]
- You can also follow up by asking: **What characteristics do you look for in an effective facilitator?** [open discussion]

- **10 min: Break**

- **25-30 min: Identity activity part 1**

- Ask each student to write 7 aspects of their self-identity: **“The most important elements that make you who you are- the elements of yourself that are MOST important to you. You might include things like what you like to do, key relationships you have, gender, or nationality- really- think about things that make you who you are.”** [you can type this]
- Give them 5-10 minutes to make this list. Ask them to type “done” or “ready” in the chat box when they are done.
- Tell them that they now need to get rid of the two elements of their identity that are least important to them- the parts that they could get rid of and still maintain their sense of self. Tell them to go ahead and cross them out. They will almost certainly complain. Tell them this is just for the purpose of the exercise, and that we understand that on a different day they might “give up” different parts.
- Ask them to get rid of 2 more components of their identity, so they are left with 3 things.
- Ask each person to present to the group: 1) All 7 identity elements. 2) To explain why they kept the elements that they kept, and what those top 3 things mean to them. 3) To talk about how it felt to cross things out. After each person goes, ask the group if they have any questions for them.
- While they are doing this, the trainer should keep a written record of what each person says. You should at least put the top 3 things for each person up on the chat section (if not all 7). In order to get people to answer the above questions fully, it will probably be important to ask follow up questions, at least for the first few people, to provide a model for the group.

- **35-40 min: Identity activity part 2**

- Open discussions. Possible questions include [do not try to ask all those questions!]:
 - **What did you give up or keep?**
 - **What did you keep and what did you leave out? Why? Are there aspects of your identity that only become apparent when you are around people who are different from you? Can you give an example? Why do you think that is?**
 - **Did anyone include their national identity? If so, why? If not, why not?**

- Did anybody put “European?” (rather than Belgian, etc..) Why did you choose to include or not include this category?
 - Did anyone include “Arab” in their self-description? Muslim? Middle Eastern? Asian? Do those students feel part of a larger Arab or Muslim World? Is there such a thing?
 - What about a “Western identity?” Are there identity-based similarities between Europeans and North Americans? More-so than between either of these regions and people from North Africa and the Middle East?
 - Do the Turkish students feel more European or more Middle Eastern?(or belong more to the “Western” or “Muslim” world?) Do they feel that they have to choose? Is it possible (for them and others) to claim multiple identities?
 - Did anybody privilege an ethnic identity over a national or regional identity? (for example, Flemish or Berber?) Did anybody list a hyphenated identity? (for example, African-American or Italian-American) What were the reasons for this choice? Were students from particular regions more likely to list these type of identities?
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- What feelings or emotions are tied to your identity?
 - How did it feel to ‘give up’ parts of yourself? Conversely, what feelings led you to keep the parts that you did?
 - Are there certain parts of your identity that you feel particularly proud of? Any aspects that you don’t like?
 - Many of you included certain things (i.e. religion, family, home) what is it about that that is so important to you?
 - Have you ever experienced situations when external forces (people from your daily life such as family, friends or larger entities such as authority figures, media, society as a whole) have threatened part of your identity, or made you feel that you had to give up parts of yourself? *[If you feel that the students do not understand the question, feel free to jump in with an example].*
 - If and when a part of your identity is threatened, does this make you more likely to give it up or to hold it tighter?
 - Do you ever feel that you are pressured to privilege one part of your identity over another? When or why?

The questions asked in this section are intended to help students explore the idea of “identity threat”. This is the idea that when we feel that a part of our identity is threatened it tends to makes us (us human beings) feel defensive and insecure. It also tends to make us cling more tightly to that aspect of our identity- and to feel that that part is extremely important. In fact some theorists actually say that any time we have a really strong emotion it means that we perceive that some part of our identity is being threatened. If it feels appropriate you can tell the group about the idea of “identity threat” and ask them to try to notice – both in the group and outside of the group- when they feel that their identity is under threat, and how it makes them feel. Then if



there are moments of anger or frustration in the group in later weeks you can ask them if they think their feelings are related to their identity.

Another thing that happens when we feel that our identity is threatened is our lens on the world tends to narrow, so that we see other people in very simplistic terms. It is important to remember the complexity of every person's identity- they are not only American or only Arab. If they find themselves, later in the process, forgetting how complex each and every participant is, it may be because they feel that they are under threat in some way. Again, you can point this out to the group.

- Were there any patterns in student responses?
- What patterns did you see in what people gave up and what they kept?
- Do you see any particular patterns or differences in the ways that students from different regions understood their identity? Between males and females? *(if the group does not point out similarities and differences, we highly recommend you point out any trends that you see..)*
- Why do you think there are these differences?
- What are similarities/differences you've noticed between you and others in the group?
- [Looking at a specific term that has been used by more than one student] Do you think that this same word means the same thing to each of you?
- One pattern that may have occurred is nationality. For example, many of you put "American," "Palestinian", "Lebanese" What does your nationality mean to you? (sometimes the Palestinian participant will put Palestine- not just Palestinian- it's important to ask specifically what that means to them) Are there major differences between those who listed the same nationality?
- Was there anything you heard that you strongly related to, didn't relate to at all?

The questions in this section COULD help the group explore the idea that often majority groups, or groups with greater power, do not list their majority group or high-power identity as an important part of their identity. Majority group / high power identities are more likely to be composed of personality traits (funny, loving etc.), while minority group/ lower power identities are more likely to be composed of identity categories (nationality, gender, race etc). One way to understand this is that majority groups aren't aware of their identities because they are the "norm". In a dominant white society, for example, white people rarely think about being white, while black people have no choice but to think about being black. If, for example, as often happens, Americans do not include "American" as one of their identities- facilitators can ask Why? Wait until a couple people answer the question- because the most intelligent answer may not be given first. You can also say "often groups with greater power or who are in the majority do not include that part of their identity in this activity- for example, women often include "female"



as a key part of their identity, but men rarely include “male”. Why do you think this is?” Another alternative is to simply observe this fact in closing comments, and say that as they have discussed, they really noticed certain parts of their identity when they were threatened- likewise, people who live in circumstances where parts of their identity are under threat because they have less power or are a minority (or both) are more likely to consider these parts of their identity as important, and that in this group, you may become aware of parts of their identity that they did not recognize before. This is an important conversation, because it can get them to start thinking about the way that power operates not only in the world, but in how they interact and in how they conceptualize themselves.

- What are the implications?
 - What do we mean when we talk about “Western Societies” or “Predominantly Muslim Societies”? Does today’s conversation change how you understand these terms? Which terms do we want to use in this group, when we refer to the identities that are present?
 - How do you think the differences we uncovered affect the way we speak and see the world? How do they affect the way we are seen?
 - What things do we need in this group or in the real world because of these identities?
 - How will today’s discussion relate to the kinds of conversations we are going to have in here? Looking at all of the different identities in this world, what conversations are likely to be difficult?
 - Why do you think we did that activity? [open conversation]
- **5-10min: Closing round**
- How was today for you? [round]

Assignment: Think about Soliya’s four communication values: Respect, Curiosity, Self Awareness and Authenticity. Think of what they mean to you and what their purpose might be.

Readings:

Required:

- Trainees Guide PP 2-7

Multimedia features:

- Evelin: How is conflict originated? (Part 1)

Week 2: Basic Facilitation Skills

Goals: Values discussion, Active listening > Creating a different culture of engagement

Live session:

- **10-15 min: Introductions and Icebreakers**
 - Say something surprising about yourself [round]

- **15-20 min: values discussion part 1**
 - Since 2003, Soliya has connected thousands of young people around the world in tens of thousands of online dialogue sessions. One of the most important take-aways from our dialogue groups is that the way we communicate matters. Therefore, here are what we at Soliya think are the 4 core communication values for a constructive engagement on difficult issues. The 4 values are respect, curiosity, authenticity, and self-awareness.
 - We want to promote those values in the network through interviews and through the **mediations**, Soliya's Social Engagement program.
 - What is your definition of Empathy / Curiosity / Self Awareness / Authenticity? [round]
 - Our definitions [if they don't come up with those themselves]:
 - Respect. Being respectful of those we admire or agree with is easy. But recognizing the basic human dignity in everyone even when we strongly disagree with them or feel they are doing something to harm us can be very difficult. What we ask is that each of you aspire to be respectful of everyone you interact with as part of this fellowship – and focus on the common human dignity we all deserve - even if we don't agree with what they're saying.
 - Curiosity. Being curious sends a very simple but powerful message – it tells the person you're interacting with that their perspective matters. All too often we try to convince people of our perspective before we genuinely understand the other's. If we seek to understand first, then we as individuals are enriched with a deeper awareness regarding the topic AND more often than not, we earn the trust of the person we're talking to and raise the likelihood that they will invite us in to share our perspective with them.
 - Authenticity. Being Authentic at its most basic level means of course to be honest - being careful not to misrepresent something that happened or speak for more than you know. But it also means representing what you truly feel and standing your ground in regards to those feelings. It means not saying something just because you think it's what they want to hear, or avoiding saying anything at all because you don't want to upset someone. Being authentic, genuinely authentic requires us to look inside ourselves and understand how we feel and then have the skill and the courage to express it.

- Self-Awareness. In order for us to be successful in affecting change in our communities, we need to understand how we are perceived and what impact we have on those around us. Very often, we have blindspots – characteristics that are painfully obvious to our peers, but totally absent from our own awareness. As part of our fellowship, we are going to be giving each other a lot of feedback in the hopes that we as individuals can begin to develop awareness of our blindspots and if we so choose take steps to address them.

- **20-30 min: Values discussion part 2**
 - How do you think those values can be articulated (are there potential contradictions for instance and how to mitigate those?) [open discussion]
 - Would you add other values? [open discussion]
 - Are there other rules of engagement that we want to adopt for our sessions together? [open discussion]
 - Suggestions:
 - Respect
 - Confidentiality
 - No judgment
 - No conflict avoidance

- **10 min: Break**

- **25-30 min: Asking good questions**
 - What are the kinds of questions that we are trying to ask when helping a person or a group express themselves with depth, authenticity and in a way that assumptions can be dispelled? [open discussion]
 - As a facilitator, you want to try to ask questions that push the conversation to a deeper level. The three most significant things that we usually try to achieve when asking questions are:
 - 1) To push the conversation to the personal- to get people to think not only about WHAT they believe, but WHY they hold that belief, how they feel about it, and how that relates to their identity.
 - 2) To help people recognize the assumptions they are making. In almost any conversation, there are assumptions being made about what words mean, that certain things are good or bad etc. For example, a group can easily have an entire conversation about terrorism, without defining what terrorism means. We try to ask questions that push a group to recognize their assumptions and confront them face-on.
 - 3) To help people connect the conversation with larger themes or values. For example, a conversation that often happens is one in which students argue about whether the US should now leave Iraq. It can end up being a really detailed conversation that goes in circles. The key as a facilitator is help people to recognize what the larger themes and values are that are bound up

in the conversation, for example “What role should the US play globally? In the Middle East?” “What values should countries strive to follow in their foreign policy? Did the US follow these values in Iraq? Did other Arab Nations? (vis-à-vis Iraq) Why or why not?” “Is intervention or invasion ever justified? When? Who should decide?”

- Possible types of questions:
 - 1: Yes/No questions: "Do you think...?"
 - 2: Cross-examination: "Don't you think that...?" "When you said ... didn't you mean?"
 - 3: Points of clarification: "What do you mean when you say...?"
 - 4: Open-ended questions: "Tell me more about your view..." "What lead you to that..."
 - Generally as a facilitator you strive to avoid asking questions 1 and 2, and to focus on asking questions 3 and 4, as the first two types tend to close down the conversation, and the second two to open things up.
 - As a facilitator, it is also really important to try to avoid asking questions that reveal bias, or to ensure that there is balance in your “biased” questions. As will be discussed later, it is important as a facilitator that you try to be “multi-partial” providing others a space to fully express their opinions and ideas. If you consistently reveal bias in one direction, it will be difficult for certain people to feel safe fully expressing themselves in the environment that you create. Thus ideally your questions will avoid revealing bias, or, you will make sure that you ask questions that are biased in all directions, that is – ask some questions that are really challenging to some people in the group, and other questions that are really challenging to other people in the group. We try to keep track of our questions and ensure that they are pushing all sides equally. It is also important to be aware of your own possible biases and how they might affect the questions you formulate.
 - We will talk more on the role of bias later.
- Other tips on asking good questions:
 - Formulating questions in advance: In advance of a dialogue session, it's a good idea to formulate not only opening questions but a variety of follow-up questions.
 - Breadth of a question: As a facilitator, it is often a challenge to figure out how broad and/ or how narrow to make your questions. One way to test a question, to see if it is too narrow or too broad is to simply try to answer it yourself. See if you feel boxed in. See if you find it difficult to focus your answer or to provide an interesting, thought-provoking answer because the question is so broad. In our experience it's generally better to err on the side of making your question too broad, as opposed to too narrow, because you can always ask follow-up questions if you find that the answers are all over the place. For example, if you ask “why is the US in Iraq?” You can follow up

by saying “I’m hearing that there is some disagreement about whether the US is promoting democracy in Iraq, what do you think?” If you start with “Is the US in Iraq to build democracy” you will box people in, and make it harder for them to express all that they think, you’ll also make the group think that you have an agenda.

- Question length: Ideally, facilitator interventions will be quite short, and will not interrupt the flow of conversation. It is important to try to make questions as concise and to the point as possible.
- Providing alternatives: It is often tempting to not only ask a question, but to offer a menu of possible responses. “Why is this happening, is it x? Is it y? Is it z?” In general we find that it is much better to simply ask the question, and to allow the group to define the scope of the answer. If you put out a range of possible options, it often makes it seem as if you are offering your own opinion, and it can lessen the creativity of the answers provided.

- **10-15 min: Active Listening tools**

- What does active listening mean? What “tools” can you use to demonstrate that you are listening actively? [open discussion]
- Examples of tools:
 - Mirroring content – repeating back to an individual in the group what he or she said.
 - Mirroring emotions – reflecting the emotions that we perceive from the other.
 - Summarizing - summarizing a number of key points in a conversation, and tying them together into a more coherent whole.
- Remember to always mirror and summarize in a way that is not imposed. Your perceptions are yours only. Always ask the person you are mirroring or summarizing if you perceived what he/she expressed accurately and let them correct or complete as needed.

- **35-40 min: Listening labs (pair activity)**

- **Note:** In order to send participants from your group to breakout rooms, please follow the procedure below:
 - Ask all the participants to remain in the Main Meeting Room until you provide them with all the instructions.
 - Assign participants to different breakout rooms as needed.
 - Read out and/ or paste these instructions in the main Chat box:
 - Close the Main Meeting Room.
 - If you are using Internet Explorer, please close your browser entirely and open a new internet explorer widow and re-login to the website
 - Go to the home page
 - Click on the breakout room that you were assigned (right below the Main Meeting Room link). A new tab or window will open.
 - When prompted, allow Flash to access your webcam and headset.
 - If one or several of your participants are having trouble accessing their assigned breakout room(s), please contact the Soliya staff person on duty.

- 5 min: explain activity
 - Now we will do a pair exercise.
 - We are going to now break out into pairs and go in different rooms.
 - Please think of a problem that you have. An issue that is or has been bothering you and that you have not completely resolved (or not resolved at all). Think of something that you would be comfortable sharing with someone else. Remember we have an agreement of confidentiality!
 - Let's take a minute to think about that.
 - When you go to your room, you will have to take turns in telling your story to the other. Each of you will be speaker and listener one after the other.
 - There will be four stages of 2 minutes each:
 - 1st stage: speaker tells his/her story – listener remains silent and takes notes (mentally or in writing)
 - 2nd stage: listener asks questions that can help the speaker clarify or deepen his/her story – speaker answers the questions
 - 3rd stage: listener summarizes what the speaker has been saying so far.
 - 4th stage: listener and speaker try to come to some kind of conclusion through questions – IMPORTANT: listener should not try to solve the speaker's problem nor give advice but only be a sounding board: just facilitate the thinking process of the speaker without losing your neutrality but with a lot of empathy and facilitation skills. It is the speaker who should try to come up with a conclusion, not the listener.
 - Then switch turns and do the same: listeners become speakers and speakers become listeners.
 - Then come back to the main room.
 - Everyone should be back in the main room after 20 min.
 - Then we will debrief this exercise.
 - Let's go!
- 20 min: Activity [Decide pairs and assign them to rooms. Then jump in and out of the room to check that they are not having any problem. A good idea would be to post the 4 stages in the chat box in each room as a reminder.]
- 10-15 min: Debrief [open discussion]
 - As speakers, how was this activity for you? Was this exercise helpful? How?
 - Listeners, how was it for you? Any challenges in listening? In being a sounding board without giving advice? (round)
 - Potential take-aways:
 - We often think the best way to “help” people is to decide for them and so it seems unnatural to “just” facilitate their own problem solving capacities. But this facilitation is often the most powerful way to empower people to come up with a solution that will be authentic, appropriate and sustainable.
 - Mirroring emotions can help a lot in uncovering all the stakes of an issue for a person. Often, people are unaware of their own emotions.

A facilitator can help raising this awareness in order for the person to understand the deep roots of the situation and the impact on them.

- Empathy is not sympathy. You can genuinely feel what your counterpart is feeling without necessarily agreeing with them, thus keeping your neutrality.
 - How do you think you could use these skills and approach in the Soliya network? [If they don't come up with it, you can point out that this way of engaging a conversation can be used when they interview people and also when they facilitate group discussions]
- **5-10 min: Active listening tips:**
- **How can we listen better?** [open discussion]
 - Ideas include:
 - Notice when your mind wanders away and remind yourself to focus back on the conversation
 - Summarize what is being said in your head or in writing
 - Encourage yourself to be curious
 - Ask yourself why someone has a certain opinion, and constantly try to understand underlying assumptions/ feelings etc.
 - Watch for nonverbal communication (facial expression) for clues about genuine thoughts and feelings.
- **5-10 min: Closing round**
- How was today for you? [round]

Assignment:

- Think of your own opinions about the relationship between the “East” and the “West” (or Middle East, US, Europe... however the group is framing the issues). and how you formed those opinions.

Readings:

Required:

- Public Conversation Project - Distinguishing Debate from Dialogue

Recommended:

- Zena & Zumeta – Styles of Mediation

Multimedia features:

- Donna Hicks: The Dignity Model

Week 3: Basic Facilitation Skills

Goals: Learn to ask the right questions; Mirroring and Summarizing (making people feel heard) uncovering assumptions and exploring life stories

Live session:

- **5-10 min: Ice breaker**
 - Common / useful / funny phrases in one's language: have a round where everyone shares a sentence, proverb, expression that is useful or funny in one's language and give the meaning.

- **15-20 min: Personal opinions**
 - How would you characterize the relationship between the “West” and the “East”? What is your general opinion about the nature of this relationship? [round] [try to take notes about the opinions expressed in order to prepare the debrief of the next sections].

- **50-60 min: Life stories 1**
 - Take 5 minutes to think of three events in your life, or three influences in your life, that have affected/ determined the way that you understand the relationship between “Western Societies” & “Predominantly Muslim Societies” (*again, please use the terminology that the group has chosen in naming the identity groups*). Try to think about not only what the events were, but how it affected you, and why you think it affected you so deeply.
 - Have each person share their stories (5 min max each). Make sure that they tell not only the facts, but how they felt about it. Ask the group if they have any questions. If they don't, the facilitator can model by asking questions like “what was that like for you?” or “how did you feel when that happened” or “why do you think that was so important for you?”- the key is to try to bring it down to a personal level, so it's not just a theoretical or a cognitive exercise.

- **10min: Break**

- **35-40 min: Life stories 2 – Debrief [open discussions]**
 - What was this activity like for you? Do you want to share any of the thoughts or reflections you had while we were doing it? (this can provide an opportunity for people to say empathetic things)
 - What similarities/ differences did you notice between stories? Were there any trends in terms of the kinds of stories shared by students from specific regions or countries? Why do you think?
 - Were the influences mostly a product of “personal experience” (an interaction with another person?) or something that was learned (for instance, a book or movie)? What were the differences between how these might have influenced you?

- How do you think the differences/ similarities affect the way we view the relationship between the “Western Societies” and “Predominantly Muslim Societies” (*again, please use the terminology that the group has chosen in naming the identity groups*)
 - How do you think the fact that we have had these experiences will affect the discussion or the process as a group?
 - You can highlight something that many people had in their stories: relationships with family members, death, war etc. And just notice that the same thing affected many people. You can ask why they think it affected them all so deeply. You can also ask if other people have been affected by the same thing.(for more on this, see the note on 9/11 below)
 - At the end of the activity, it’s a good idea to go around and have each person share one thought/ reflection about what they learned from the activity and if there is anything they want to say to one another. (This is particularly important if people were really open and painful stuff was shared in the exercise- this can provide some kind of closure.)
 - Why is this activity useful? [open discussion]
 - Ideas include:
 - Connecting at a human level
 - Empathizing
- **25-30 min: Questions, Bias and Neutrality**
- How can you avoid bias in asking questions? [open discussion]
 - Ideas include:
 - Prepare question before –and follow up questions as well
 - Ask questions that are broad enough
 - Start with broad and narrow down
 - Don’t provide alternatives
 - Think beforehand how you feel about the subject and how that could affect you as a facilitator
 - Be aware of your own bias
 - Formulate follow up questions that push the issue from a number of different perspectives
 - Is it always important to avoid bias? [open discussion]
 - Ideas include:
 - It is not necessary or possible for facilitators to be completely neutral. It is NOT always important that questions be un-biased. Sometimes, in order to provoke a good discussion (particularly in a “politically correct” group) asking controversial questions will be essential. The best that we can do is be aware of our biases so that we can do our best to make sure that we don’t let our bias affect the tone of the conversation or jeopardize the safety of the space for participants. The key is to NOTICE that you are asking biased questions, so that you can then follow up with other questions that are biased in a different direction. Remember that your goal is to make EVERYONE in the group to think whatever their perspective.
 - Please revisit the idea of neutrality vs. multi-partiality!

- **5-10 min: Closing round**
 - How was today for you? [round]

Assignment: After hearing each other's personal stories and sense of identity, what would you like/need to know about each other? For next time, come up with the kind of questions that would be useful in eliciting the kind of information that would help with mutual understanding and personal connections. Think about the kind of questions you would like to ask to the people who are in this but try to come up with questions which would be useful in other contexts as well. Come up with 1 or 2 questions for individuals and 1 or 2 questions for the whole group.

Readings:

Required:

- Trainees Guide PP 8-14
- Agbaria & Cohen -Power Dynamics in Groups

Recommended:

- Samuel Huntington - The Coming Clash of Civilization

Multimedia features:

- Evelin: "Them" and "Us" (Part 2)

Week 4: Basic Facilitation Skills

Goals: Learn how to overcome conflict avoidance; learn to facilitate a difficult conversation in difficult circumstances

Live session:

- **5-10 min: Questions**
 - Any question or comment from the previous weeks? [open discussion]
- **10-20 min: Creating a positive environment**
 - What can you do to create a safe and positive environment with the person you are talking to or the group you are facilitating? [open discussion]
 - Ideas include:
 - Small talk and breaking the ice
 - Set ground rules with the group
 - Define expectations and goals of the engagement
- **25-30 min: Dealing with conflict avoidant or PC groups**

- What effect can conflict avoidance have for the group process? [open discussion]
- Ideas include:
 - Some groups consistently avoid conflict and/ or simply agree on almost everything. This can lead to a very bland conversation. It is important that the trainees understand that avoiding conflict – and avoiding being open and honest – can be the biggest obstacle for the group to move forward with the group process. It is very, very important for the facilitators to recognise this dynamic, and help the group to move forward from this.
- What can we do to avoid conflict avoidance or political correctness with a person and a group? [open discussion]
- Ideas include:
 - Ask: “what are we not saying?”
 - Ask: “do you feel that you are being fully open and honest? Which of your opinions are you not sharing because you are worried they might be too controversial, or un-PC?” One way to do this is to pose the question, and ask everyone in the group to spend a few minutes thinking about what they are NOT sharing and why. Before they begin thinking, tell them that they will not HAVE to share these thoughts – that you simply want them to think about the question. After they think for a couple minutes you can ask if anyone DOES want to share the ideas that they have been holding back and/ or to talk about why they think they are refraining from being fully open and honest.
 - Bring alternative perspectives.
 - If you have a group where everyone is agreeing all the time, and you feel like they really trust you as facilitators, you may be able to shift the boundaries of your role a bit and play “devil’s advocate.” It’s important to *acknowledge* that you are doing this – and to say “It seems like there is lots of agreement, so I’m going to push you.” You can then ask some questions or express some ideas that are not being expressed by the group saying for example: “many argue x, y, or z, what do you think?” Or if someone makes a really strong statement and everyone in the group just agrees with them, you can be the one to push them by asking hard questions that might show up the gaps in their thinking or the contrasts between different peoples’ statements. Keep in mind the following: If the group then starts arguing with YOU, rather than with the idea you suggest, it’s important not to get drawn in. You want to make clear that this isn’t your position- you simply want to get them to explore a range of opinions. Also make sure that you push EVERYONE in the group and not just a few individuals.
 - Use this as an opportunity for reflection on group process (honesty, representativeness of their views)
 - Try to draw out differences of opinion from group members by conducting a poll for instance (answers are anonymous) to show that there might be differences in the group even though they are not seen in the discussions

- Break into uni-regional groups since this often helps individual to feel safer to express themselves fully. Then encourage them to share what they expressed with the others.
 - Move the discussion to a more personal level. Have them talk about their experiences.
 - Ask if their communities share their views: if their parents, relatives, town or country would have the same views.
 - Ask what each side (predominantly Muslims societies & Western societies) stereotypically think about the issue and why this group might not share the stereotypes.
- **25-30 min: Exploring the unsaid:**
- Is there anything we have not said to each other? What are we not saying? [open discussion]
- **10 min: Break**
- **25-30 min: Dealing with conflict**
- What is conflict? [open discussion]
 - Ideas include:
 - Not just disagreement but also emotional escalation
 - Usually triggers poor listening and lack of acknowledgement
 - How can we deal with a conflictive engagement? [open discussion]
 - Ideas include:
 - Remember that conflict is a positive thing – a real possibility to learn – when it is constructive and no one is hurt by it. Thus, facilitators should not try to figure how to avoid conflict, but how to *work with* it. Sometimes the facilitator’s comfort with anger is lower than his or her group. Often it is OK to let the group continue to vent their anger. This is particularly true midway through the group process.(around session 4, 5 or 6) Often group members need to go through a period where they are really frustrated and feel totally angry and stuck, before they are able to move onto a new and more productive way of interacting.
 - Continue the conversation. Ask questions that brings the conversation forward
 - Move the conversation towards the personal: WHY they think this issue is heated; ‘What is it about this issue that makes it so important to you?’ –find out their personal connections to the issue. The facilitator can reflect that “People obviously really care about this issue. What is it about this issue that makes it so important to you? What experiences have you had, or what parts of your identity are affected by this issue?” This can often change the tone of the conversation and shift the focus onto past experiences and influences.

- Reflect what you hear. Sometimes it is hard for participants to listen to one another when they are really angry or frustrated. Thus sometimes it will help the group move forward to have you accurately summarize all the key points that you have heard people make and if you acknowledge emotions as well.
- Make sure that one side is not getting hurt, or that no-one is not threatened. Keep acknowledging emotions.
- Normalize the experience. Reflect to group members that they are acting out of a global conflict, and if there weren't feelings of anger it would be strange
- Remind the group of the guidelines, rules and norms that they agreed to
- Remind the group on the purpose of these discussions. Remind them that the goal is to try to understand where others' perspectives are coming from.
- Refer to the teaching tools in Online Curriculum. The Online Curriculum provides a variety of interactive teaching tools, which you will probably use at the beginning of your dialogue sessions. Referring back to the lessons learned through these tools about Identity Threat, Active Listening/ Noticing the Internal Voice, Partisan Perceptions, Escalation, Trigger Words, Multiple Truths, or Stages of Group Processes can be a helpful way to move the conversation forward when it is stuck.
- Take a breather.

- **35-40 min: Open Section**

[Use this time to cover whatever you feel is appropriate for your group needs. Use your instincts.]

- **5-10 min: Closing round**

- How was today for you? [round]

Assignment: Next time, we will take turns to practice facilitating the group on a conversation that will focus on “the relationship between the East and the West”. Please come up with the kinds of questions that this group would be interested in answering.

Readings:

Required:

- Trainees Guide: PP 15-19

Recommended:

- Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser Al-Missned - West-Islamic Dialogue
- Rami Khouri - Why is the Legacy of Confrontation so Strong

Multimedia features:

- Coleman: What makes conflicts intractable? (Part 1)

Week 5: Basic Facilitation Skills

Goals: Practice facilitation

Live session:

- **5-10 min: Set up**
 - For this last session, we will take turns to practice facilitating this group.
 - Who would like to start?
 - Who would like to go 2nd? 3rd? 4th? 5th? 6th? 7th? 8th? 9th? 10th? [take notes of who goes after who and type it in the chat box]
 - Each of you will have 10min to facilitate. Please keep track of time.
 - So we will start with the 1st person. Then the 2nd person will have to take over the facilitation. Try to make the transition as smooth as possible. The person starting should decide of a question to explore and try to reach some kind of temporary closure by the end of the 10 min. The person taking over should:
 - 1. Summarize the previous discussion
 - 2. Make a choice on whether to pursue the conversation that was already engaged or start a new topic. Only start a new topic if you feel the previous one is going nowhere. But the general idea is to try to spend the next couple of hours having one conversation, with each of you taking turns to facilitate neutrally and multi partially. Remember the general theme of the conversation should be on “the relationship between the East and the West”.
 - Let’s go!
- **100-110 min: Group Facilitation** [take notes on how each one is doing and get a mini feedback ready to send after the module]
- **10 min: Break**
- **25-30 min: debrief [open discussion]**
 - How did it go?
 - How did you feel as participants? Was the conversation well run?
 - How was it to facilitate?
- **15-20 min: Closing rounds**
 - How was this first module for you?
 - Did it make sense?
 - How do you think you might be using it as fellows or in general?

Multimedia features:

- Coleman: Simplification and Attractors (Part 2)