

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FOR CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

This training module is one of four prepared on developing skills for conflict management in sub-Saharan Africa. The modules are intended to enhance Governments' capacities to anticipate and respond to conflicts and crises by formulating policies and strategies for the early mitigation and on-going management of conflicts before they become violent.

WORKSHOP THEME

This training workshop has been formulated on the premise that conflict is not invariably bad and should not in itself be the aim of prevention or resolution. Rather, it is overt violence or unsuccessfully managed conflict (lack of participation and exclusion) that needs to be averted and that can be prevented or transformed. Conflict is a natural part of public life. It is inherent in every society and is an inevitable consequence of clashing interests, needs and values. As such, managing conflict requires certain competencies in analysis, understanding, inter-personal and institutional skills so that contentious issues can be channeled into non-violent, and even productive, forms. This training module seeks to assist government officials and their civil society partners in developing skills in mediation and negotiation appropriate to their own needs and situations so that they will have the competency to manage disputes and conflicts more effectively and constructively in the future.

This ***skills development for conflict transformation*** training workshop will provide a conceptual overview of conflict transformation, as well as provide participants with hands-on skills in dispute resolution, principled negotiation and mediation. The theoretical overview will be complemented by analysis of recent practices and case studies from the continent. The format of the workshop combines presentations and reflections by skilled negotiators and mediators; theory of conflict analysis; conflict resolution processes; and skills development. There is a major emphasis on the skills and processes necessary for creative conflict resolution and transformation. Thus, participants will leave the course having had the opportunity to employ the theories and actually negotiate and mediate.

OBJECTIVES

The ***skills development for conflict transformation*** training workshop will:

- Raise awareness about and enhance confidence in the possibility of the peaceful transformation of conflict;
- Equip participants with knowledge and basic conflict transformation skills;
- Stimulate collaboration and improved relationships between participants;
- Assess and enhance existing conflict resolution practices;
- Create an awareness of a wider spectrum of conflict transformation options; and
- Identify potential linkages and partnerships for multiplying the training outreach and the impact of the skills development.

GOAL

It is hoped that developing awareness and skills in mediation, negotiation and the peaceful transformation of conflict will enhance interactions within government, between government and civil society, as well as in bilateral and multilateral relations. Such skills can help improve decision-making and coordination among ministries, resolve policy issues between branches of government and smooth out implementation problems between central, regional and local government levels. They can assist government officials to improve their negotiating capacity with civil society, organized labour, the public sector, and in commercial, economic and geo-political negotiations, as well as with bilateral donors and intergovernmental agencies.

PARTICIPANTS AND DURATION

The target participant group includes individuals from central and local government, academic and management institutions, international agency staff, private sector, NGOs and other civil society actors strategically located and able to exert an impact on conflict situations.

The training will be delivered in five days. While a five-day workshop does not produce full-fledged negotiators and mediators, it will give participants a keen sense of what it takes to use conflict resolution mechanisms such as negotiation and mediation. What does it take? Negotiation/mediation requires a special combination of good understanding and skills, which can be learned, and a personal commitment to and choice for peace. It is hoped that this training course can help develop both.

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