

Interparty Dialogue Skills Training Module

New course promotes effective political party dialogue

What is interparty dialogue?

Multiparty politics is about balancing the competition for political power and seeking shared solutions that benefit a country and its citizens. Effective and inclusive dialogue between political parties is an essential element of democratic politics. Conflict and polarized relations between political parties can block development. Trust and cooperation between political parties is imperative to allow for reforms that are needed for peace, democracy and development to be achieved and sustained. Interparty dialogue platforms exist in many shapes and forms, including both formal (established) and informal mechanisms. Such platforms could be set up to either achieve a specific outcome (e.g. agreement on a new constitution) or with a broader objective of nurturing the spirit of tolerance and peaceful competition.

What are the benefits of dialogue training?

As much as political party dialogue starts with political will, dialogue is also a skill. Experience from the field shows that even where political will exists, interparty dialogues often fail to deliver results. Usually, either the dialogue process was not properly designed or managed or the actors involved lacked dialogue skills. This module helps bridge the gap that often exists between the 'will to dialogue' and actually realizing intended dialogue outcomes.

About this training course

As part of their long-standing partnership in support of political parties and interparty dialogue, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) have developed a joint training module to enhance skills of political party leaders and members in interparty dialogue. The training module, which can be customized, aims to strengthen participants' knowledge of key interparty dialogue design considerations, required skills and behavior of dialogue participants and facilitators.

Which topics does the training cover?

The module covers a wide range of important topics related to principles; process design and management; as well as required skills for interparty dialogue. These include:

INTERNAL PARTY PREPAREDNESS: Why is it important that each political party participating in an interparty dialogue process is well prepared internally? What steps does internal party preparedness entail?

POSITIONS, INTERESTS AND NEEDS: These three concepts are unpacked, and through practical exercises, participants are taken through a process of how to move from emotional positions to a zone of possible agreement.

CONSENSUS-BUILDING: Perhaps one of the crucial objectives of interparty dialogue is to reach consensus, usually on very complex policy issues. But what is the difference between consensus and related concepts such as unanimity and compromise? What are the crucial steps towards achieving consensus; and how do you know you have actually achieved it?

PERSONAL ATTITUDES AND CHARACTERISTICS: Attitudes and personality characteristics can make or break a dialogue process. But how are attitudes different from personal characteristics and how do they affect a dialogue?

THE ROLE OF THE INTERPARTY DIALOGUE FACILITATOR: Here, the concepts of impartiality and neutrality are explained and differentiated; and the role and qualities of a good facilitator clarified.

What are the implementation modalities?

The training can be implemented as a one-day, three-day or five-day course, depending on the audience and context.

ONE-DAY EXECUTIVE TRAINING COURSE

Overview	Who is it for?	Purpose
This course provides a snapshot of the module, highlighting key skills and interparty dialogue process design considerations.	Senior/high ranking participants such as Chairpersons and Secretaries-General of political parties.	To strengthen party leaders' political will and support to interparty dialogue processes in their country.

THREE-DAY EXPERTS TRAINING COURSE

Overview	Who is it for?	Purpose
This course provides an in-depth knowledge of key principles, process design and management as well as required skills and attitudes for an effective interparty dialogue process.	Mid-level leaders and technical staff of political parties, and representatives of other relevant institutions, who wish to deepen dialogue knowledge and skills.	To deepen knowledge and skills of current or future participants and/or facilitators of intra and interparty dialogue processes.

FIVE-DAY COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING COURSE

Overview	Who is it for?	Purpose
Similar to the three-day training course, this course covers all the key principles and skills of dialogue but allows for more detailed discussions.	All levels of party membership and staff.	To gain comprehensive knowledge and skills in this area.

How can my organization or political party access this module?

The training course has been designed to be delivered by experts from International IDEA and NIMD. However, the course content can also be used by other political party assistance organizations to improve the quality and effectiveness of interparty dialogue processes. Use of the content is subject to agreement on terms of use. It is highly recommended that implementers possess both the expertise in interparty dialogue and the knowledge of Building Resources for Democracy, Governance and Elections (BRIDGE) as it is designed based on BRIDGE methodology (www.bridge-project.org/en). The module is available in English and French languages.

How do I find out more?

For more information on the Interparty Dialogue Skills Training Module, please contact:

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The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization supporting democracy worldwide.

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) is a democracy assistance organization established by political parties in the Netherlands to support political parties in young democracies.