

# STORYTELLING DIALOGUE

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## PREFACE

This manual deals with a dynamic and unique dialogue methodology introduced in Rakhine State, Myanmar by the Peace and Development Initiative (PDI)-Kinthia. Combining tools of peace education and biographical narration, the dialogue sessions aim to create empathy, trust and resilience against violence in conflict affected communities. It is an approach intended to create a better understanding between diverse people living in Rakhine State. In 2020 we successfully adapted it to an online dialogue format.

The aims of the manual are threefold: a) Supporting dialogue facilitators in Myanmar with a guide and encouraging them to host more successful dialogue sessions (online and face-to-face), b) Inspiring other actors to explore the storytelling method in their work and c) Supplementing our more detailed narrative training manual.

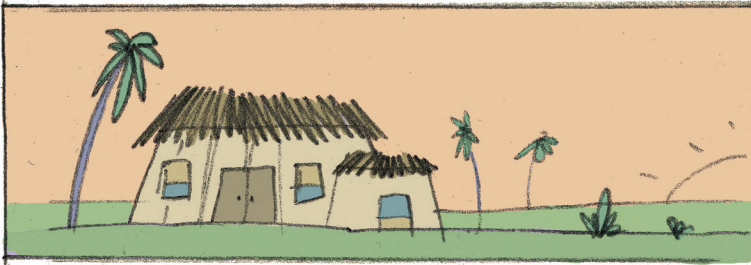
We sincerely thank our project team for their contribution and strong commitment. The project “Shared Experience – Common Values in Rakhine State” is supported by ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) – zivik with funds from the German Federal Foreign Office. We are grateful for their trust and support.

There is still a lot to do. Let us intensify our efforts to restore and improve relations within and between communities in Rakhine State.

Kyaw Hsan Hlaing  
Executive Director, PDI  
Kinthia

Raphael Vergin,  
Director CfP and Project  
Lead



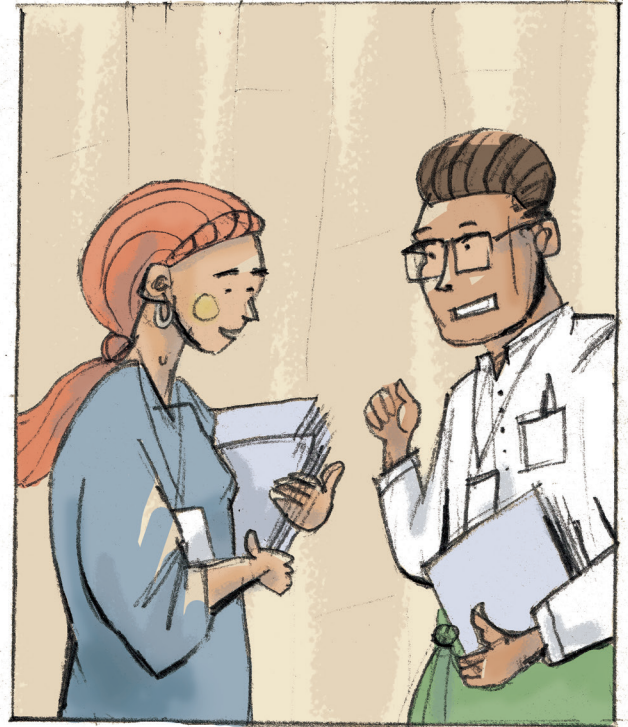
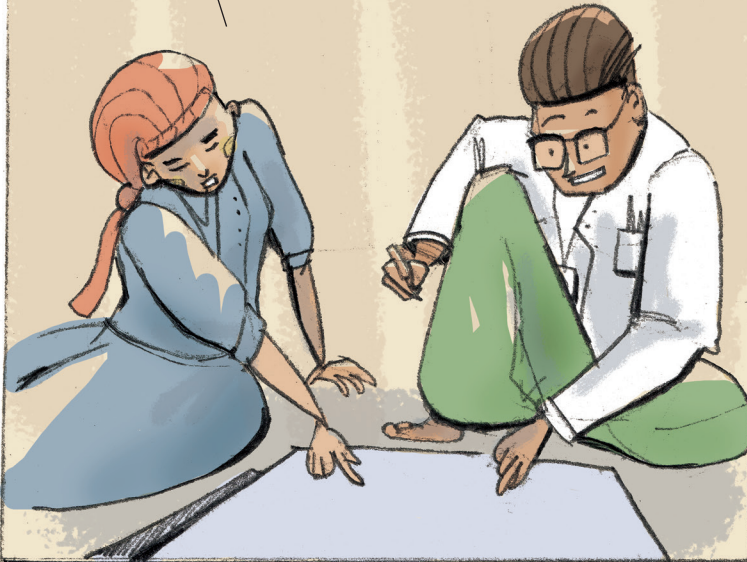


YOU DO THE INTRODUCTION AND I  
CONDUCT THE EXERCISE.

WHILE YOU ARE LEADING THE  
EXERCISE, I TAKE NOTES ON THE  
FLIPCHART.

PERFECT. AND THEN YOU DO THE  
FEEDBACK AND REFLECTION  
SESSION AFTER THE EXERCISE AND I  
END THE WORKSHOP. OK?

SURE. OK. I THINK WE ARE DONE, NOW.



OK, THE MARKERS ARE HERE.

NOW THERE ARE ENOUGH  
CARDS FOR EVERYBODY.

I AM REALLY EXCITED AND  
LOOKING FORWARD TO  
MEETING THE GROUP.



LAST TIME, ONE OF THE PARTICIPANTS  
CAME TO TALK TO ME AFTER THE  
SESSION. HE SAID IT WAS A RELIEF, TO  
TALK ABOUT HIS FEELINGS AND SHARE  
HIS EXPERIENCES. THAT FELT GREAT.

YES, I NOTED THAT, TOO. THERE  
IS A NEED TO TALK ABOUT THE  
CONFLICT. USUALLY EVERYBODY IS  
SO BUSY WITH THEIR OWN LIVES  
BUT IN THE SESSIONS, PEOPLE CAN  
REALLY LISTEN TO EACH OTHER.



I THINK I CAN HEAR THEM COMING.







WELCOME, MY NAME IS SEIN SEIN TUN. I AM A FACILITATOR IN THE PDI STORYTELLING PROJECT. DURING OUR STORYTELLING SESSIONS, PEOPLE FROM COMMUNITIES IN CONFLICT SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES, LEARN FROM AND ABOUT EACH OTHER AND BUILD FRIENDSHIPS. I JOINED THE PROJECT IN 2018, BECAUSE I AM FED UP WITH THE CONFLICT AND I REALLY WANT PEOPLE IN RAKHINE TO FIND A MORE PEACEFUL WAY OF LIVING TOGETHER.

MY NAME IS HLA NU SEIN, GREAT TO SEE YOU ALL. I AM FACILITATING WITH SEIN SEIN TUN, TODAY. I JOINED THE PROJECT, BECAUSE I LIKE WORKING IN A TEAM WITH OTHER YOUTH.

BEFORE I STARTED WORKING HERE, I THOUGHT ONLY OUR COMMUNITY HAD SUFFERED FROM THE CONFLICT. AFTER GETTING TO KNOW MY COLLEAGUES' STORIES, CONDUCTING INTERVIEWS AND TALKING TO PARTICIPANTS, I LEARNED, THAT THE OTHER COMMUNITIES ALSO HAD A VERY HARD TIME DURING THE CONFLICT. I UNDERSTAND THEM BETTER NOW.



### WHAT IS STORYTELLING?

BETWEEN COMMUNITIES IN CONFLICT, PEOPLE ARE OFTEN ISOLATED FROM EACH OTHER AND EXPERIENCE ANGER TOWARDS EACH OTHER. IN BIOGRAPHICAL STORYTELLING THEY TALK TO EACH OTHER ABOUT THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES. LISTENING TO EACH OTHER AND SHARING THEIR STORIES HELPS THEM TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER, OVERCOME PREJUDICE, BUILD TRUST AND FEEL EMPATHY. ROOTS OF THE CONFLICT BECOME VISIBLE AND CAN BE USED TO FIND SOLUTIONS. BY SHARING STORIES BETWEEN THE COMMUNITIES, THE CONFLICT SIDES BECOME CLOSER AND UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER BETTER.

### WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THIS WORK?

- SUPPORT SOCIAL COHESION
- BUILD TRUST BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS
- SENSITIZE PEOPLE AND WORK AGAINST HATESPEECH
- ADVOCACY
- PREVENT VIOLENCE
- TEACH ABOUT CONFLICT SOLUTION
- SUPPORT TOLERANCE
- BUILD SUSTAINABLE NETWORKS BETWEEN YOUTH

### WHAT DO WE MEAN BY STORIES?

A STORY HAS A BEGINNING, A DEVELOPMENT AND AN END. LISTENING TO A STORY, WE GET TO KNOW THE STORYTELLER AND HIS/HER FEELINGS AND LEARN HOW THE EXPERIENCE CHANGED THEM.

### WHAT DO WE DO IN THE PROJECT?

- CONDUCT STORYTELLING AND LISTENING SESSIONS
- TALK ABOUT EXPERIENCES, MOTIVES, HOPES, FEARS AND NEEDS IN THE STORIES
- CONDUCT EXERCISES TO BETTER UNDERSTAND AND ANALYSE THE STORIES
- CONDUCT INTERVIEWS AND RECORD STORIES
- EXCHANGE STORIES BETWEEN COMMUNITIES IN CONFLICT





## ACTIVE LISTENING

IN ORDER TO SUPPORT A PERSON IN TELLING A STORY IT IS IMPORTANT TO LISTEN ATTENTIVELY. TO LISTEN MEANS TO CONCENTRATE AND MAKE AN EFFORT TO REALLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THE PERSON IS SAYING. ACTIVE LISTENING IS A TECHNIQUE THAT MUST BE USED IN INTERVIEWS AND DURING FACILITATION.

BE REALLY INTERESTED AND TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE SPEAKER'S EMOTIONS WITHOUT JUDGING

PLEASE TELL ME MORE ABOUT THE SITUATION IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

AFTER THAT DAY, THE NEIGHBOUR DIDN'T SPEAK TO ME ANY MORE

I SEE, THAT MUST HAVE BEEN DIFFICULT FOR YOU



IF A PERSON BRIEFLY MENTIONS AN INTERESTING EVENT, PLEASE ASK MORE INDEPTH QUESTIONS

I TRIED TO ASK HER WHAT HAPPENED, BUT SHE WOULDN'T TELL ME...

YOU TALKED ABOUT YOUR BUDDHIST FRIEND WHO HELPED YOU, PLEASE TELL ME MORE ABOUT HER, WHAT DID SHE DO?

HMM, I SEE. THEN WHAT HAPPENED?



DURING SESSIONS AND INTERVIEWS WE ASK OPEN QUESTIONS, THAT DO NOT ANTICIPATE THE ANSWER AND CANNOT BE ANSWERED WITH YES OR NO. THE PERSON IS FREE TO CHOOSE WHERE TO BEGIN AND WHAT TO SAY ABOUT A SITUATION:

SHOW AN OPEN BODY POSTURE, MAKE SUPPORTIVE GESTURES LIKE NODDING AND USE AFFIRMATIVE SOUNDS SUCH AS HM OR AH.





## PARAPHRASING

PARAPHRASING MEANS TO SUBSUME THE CONTENT AND MIRROR THE EMOTIONS YOU HAVE HEARD. IT CREATES A PLEASANT ATMOSPHERE AND SHOWS YOUR RESPONDENT, THAT YOU ARE REALLY LISTENING AND TRYING TO GRASP HIS OR HER MESSAGE.



THE FOLLOWING FORMULATIONS HELP YOU TO SUMMARIZE.

- "IF I UNDERSTOOD YOU CORRECTLY, YOU SAID... IS THAT RIGHT?"
- "I HAVE THE IMPRESSION/FEELING THAT... IS THAT CORRECT?"
- "I HEAR YOU SAYING THAT ...?"
- "FOR YOU IT IS IMPORTANT/ DIFFICULT/ ANNOYING THAT ...?"
- "YOUR POINT IS... IS THAT RIGHT?"



AND WHEN THE UNREST HAPPENED, ALL OF US WERE BLAMED OF BEING TROUBLEMAKERS. EVEN THOUGH MOST PEOPLE HADN'T DONE ANYTHING.



YEAH, BUT THE BAD GUYS WERE FROM YOUR COMMUNITY, WEREN'T THEY? AND WHY DIDN'T ANYBODY STOP THEM?

I HEAR TWO DIFFERENT POINTS HERE. FOR YOU IT IS IMPORTANT, THAT PEOPLE ARE NOT JUDGED FOR WHAT THEY HAVEN'T DONE. YOU FEEL TREATED UNFAIRLY.

AND YOU FELT UNSAFE AND WISHED FOR SOMEBODY TO PROTECT YOU AND STOP THE VIOLENCE. WHAT DO THE OTHERS THINK ABOUT THIS SITUATION?

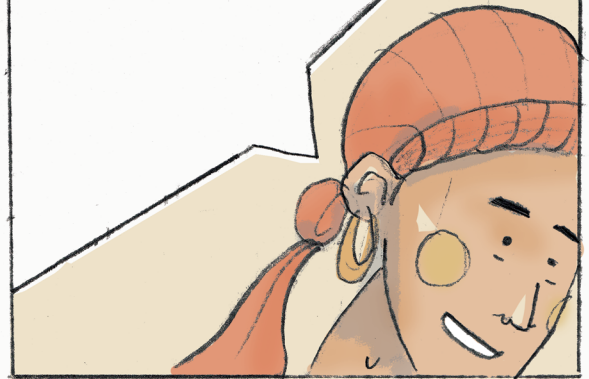


TO WORK TOGETHER TRUSTFULLY AND COMFORTABLY, PARTICIPANTS AND FACILITATORS MUST BE WELL INTRODUCED TO EACH OTHER. WE CONDUCT FUN INTRODUCTION ACTIVITIES TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER.



## GAME 1: THE STORY OF MY NAME (30 MIN)

TO WORK TOGETHER TRUSTFULLY AND COMFORTABLY, PARTICIPANTS AND FACILITATORS MUST BE WELL INTRODUCED TO EACH OTHER. WE CONDUCT FUN INTRODUCTION ACTIVITIES TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER BETTER.



BUT I DON'T KNOW THE STORY OF MY NAME. CAN I USE A NICKNAME?

SURE, ANY NAME THAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU!

WHEN I WAS BORN, MY GRANDFATHER LOOKED AT ME AND SAID I REMINDED HIM OF...BUT MY MOM...



## GAME 2: MY LIFE IN NUMBERS (30 MIN)

OUR LIVES ARE FULL OF NUMBERS, THAT ARE MEANINGFUL TO US: THE NUMBER OF OUR SIBLINGS, THE YEAR WE TOOK OUR MATRICULATION EXAM OR HOW MANY TIMES WE HAVE SEEN OUR FAVOURITE MOVIE...

IN OUR INTRODUCTION GAME, EACH OF YOU WILL WRITE DOWN THEIR NAME AND 3 NUMBERS ON A PAPER AND THE GROUP WILL TRY TO GUESS WHAT THEY STAND FOR. LET'S GO!





### 3. INTRODUCTION EXERCISE: LIFE IS A RIVER (90 MINS)

THIS EXERCISE IS GOOD FOR BUILDING TRUST IN DIVERSE GROUPS. IT GOES DEEPER AND YOU NEED MORE TIME THAN FOR AN INTRODUCTION GAME.

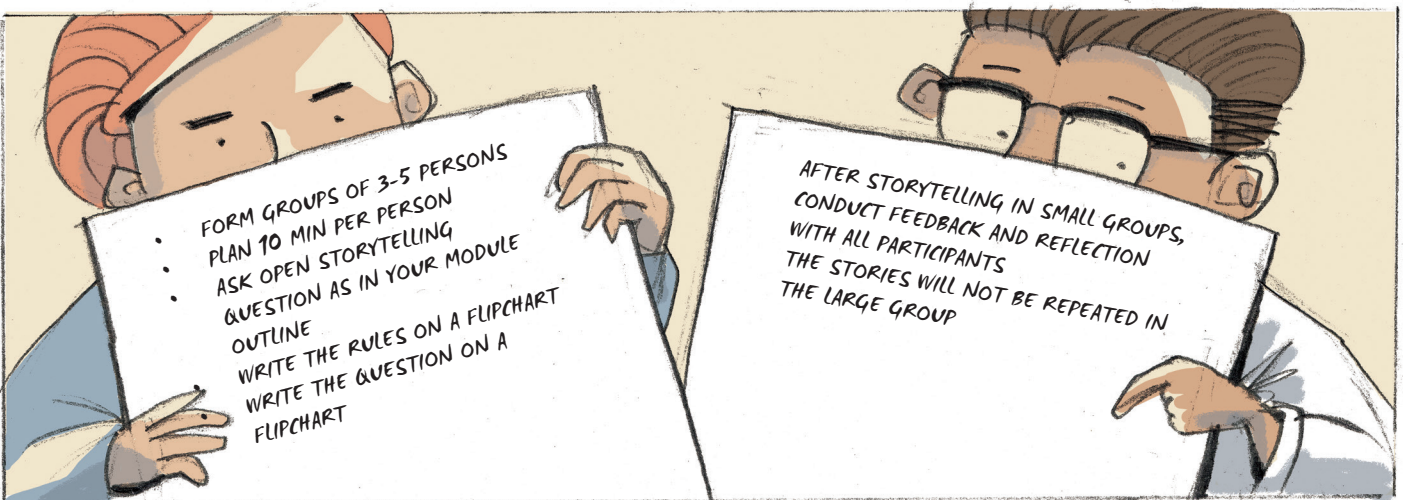
PLEASE TAKE 10 MIN AND DRAW YOUR LIFE AS A RIVER, SHOWING CHANGES OF DIRECTION, ROUGH AS WELL AS PEACEFUL, QUIET TIMES.

FIND A QUIET PLACE AND SIT DOWN TOGETHER. FIRST, ONE PARTNER SHOWS HER/ HIS PICTURE AND TELLS THE STORY OF HIS/HER LIFE. THE SECOND PARTNER LISTENS CAREFULLY, AND ASKS QUESTIONS AFTER THE STORY HAS BEEN TOLD. THEN IT IS THE OTHER PARTNER'S TURN. EACH PARTNER HAS 10 MINS FOLLOWED BY FIVE MINS FOR QUESTIONS.



### STORYTELLING GROUPS & GROUND RULES

AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR WORK ARE THE STORYTELLING GROUPS. PARTICIPANTS SIT TOGETHER IN SMALL GROUPS AND TELL EACH OTHER ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES, BUILDING TRUST AND LEARNING ABOUT EACH OTHER'S SITUATION. AFTERWARDS, THEY SHARE THEIR FEELINGS IN A FEEDBACK SESSION AND REFLECT ON WHAT THEY HEARD TOGETHER. WE INTRODUCE GROUND RULES, SO THE STORYTELLERS CAN SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES IN A SAFE, SECURE ENVIRONMENT.





## GROUND RULES:

1. LISTEN CAREFULLY AND RESPECTFULLY TO EACH OTHER.
2. DO NOT INTERRUPT. ASK QUESTIONS AFTER THE STORY IS FINISHED.
3. DO NOT TAKE MORE TIME THAN OTHER STORYTELLERS.
4. RESPECT EACH OTHER AND TRY TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER'S EMOTIONS.
5. DO NOT JUDGE AND LECTURE.
6. TO UNDERSTAND DOES NOT MEAN TO AGREE.
7. FACILITATORS CAN INTERRUPT WHEN SOMEBODY MIGHT FEEL OFFENDED.
8. KEEP PERSONAL INFORMATION CONFIDENTIAL.

PLEASE TELL EACH OTHER ABOUT A CONFLICT THAT YOU YOURSELF HAVE EXPERIENCED AND COULD NOT SOLVE.

I CAN START, I HAVE A GOOD EXAMPLE. LAST YEAR, I HAD A CONFLICT WITH MY BROTHER. HE WAS IN MALAYSIA. AT THE TIME, HE WAS EARNING MONEY AND SUPPORTING OUR FAMILY, WHO LIVES IN THE CAMP. THEN ONE DAY HE CALLED...

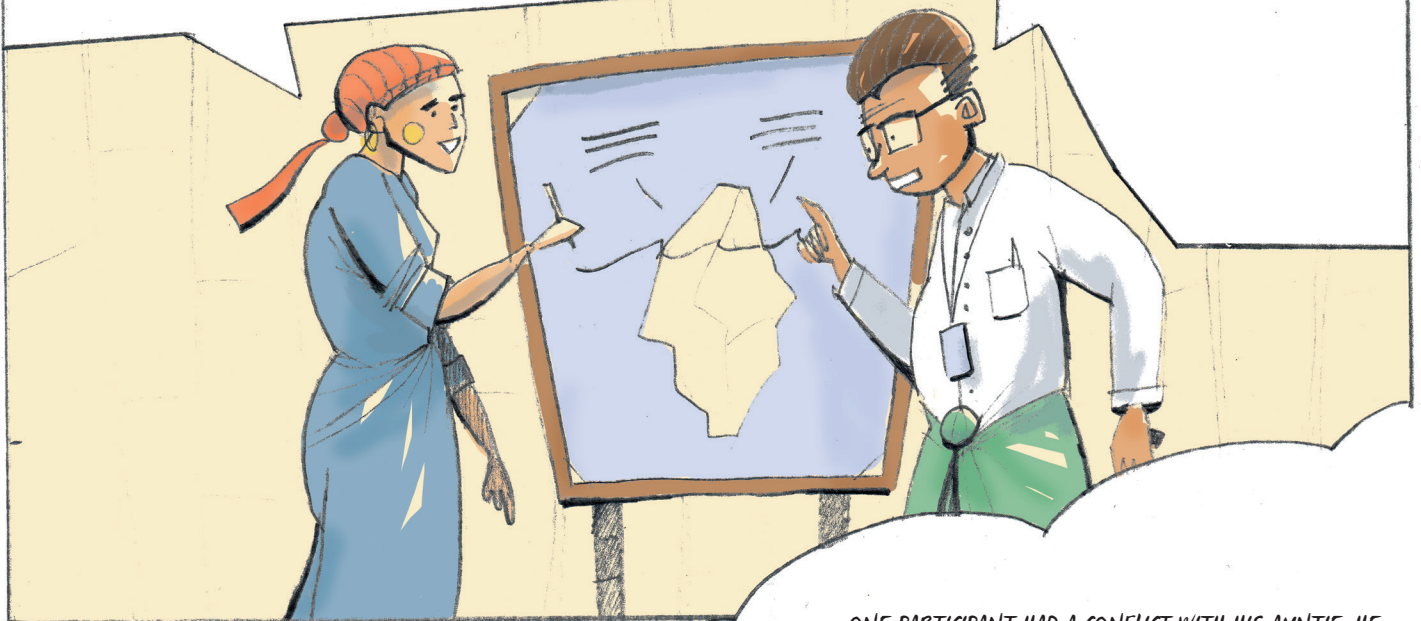
SO, YOU SAY, HE WANTED TO GO TO BANGLADESH TO GET MARRIED? THAT MEANS THAT HE COULDN'T GIVE YOU ANY MORE SUPPORT. I HEAR YOU FELT ABANDONED BY HIM IS THAT RIGHT?



## CONFLICT ANALYSIS

WHEN AN ICEBERG SWIMS IN THE SEA, THE BIGGEST PART IS UNDER THE WATER, WE SEE ONLY THE TIP. WITH A CONFLICT, IT'S THE SAME. WE SEE THE FIGHTING, BUT THE REASONS, MOTIVES AND FEELINGS ARE HIDDEN. TO UNDERSTAND THEM, WE MUST ANALYSE THE SITUATION.

IN AN ICEBERG ANALYSIS, WE WRITE DOWN THE FEELINGS, FEARS AND HOPES OF BOTH CONFLICT SIDES AND LOOK FOR „COMMON GROUND“, THAT MEANS, THINGS BOTH SIDES HAVE IN COMMON. LET'S LOOK AT ONE EXAMPLE!

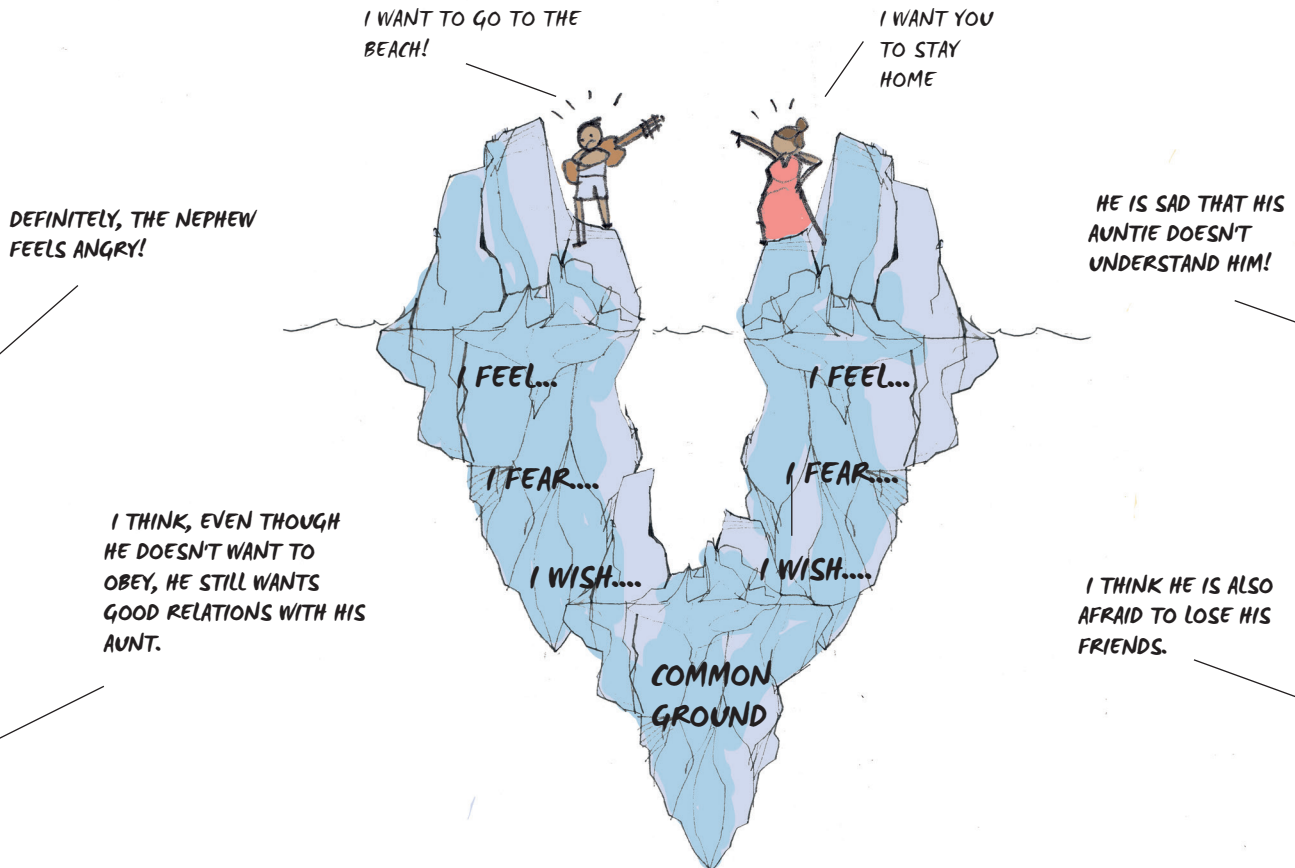


ONE PARTICIPANT HAD A CONFLICT WITH HIS AUNTIE. HE LIVED WITH HER AND WAS STUDYING AT THE TIME. HE WAS A GOOD STUDENT BUT WHEN HE WANTED TO GO TO THE BEACH WITH HIS FRIENDS TO RELAX AND PLAY THE GUITAR...





LET'S GET A CLOSER LOOK AT THIS SITUATION AND TRY TO UNDERSTAND BOTH SIDES BETTER. LET'S START WITH THE NEPHEW. PLEASE TELL ME: WHAT DOES HE FEEL IN THIS SITUATION?



AFTER THE FEELINGS, FEARS AND WISHES OF THE NEPHEW HAVE BEEN NOTED, THE GROUP DOES THE SAME FOR THE SIDE OF THE AUNTIE. IN THE END, THEY LOOK, WHAT BOTH SIDES HAVE IN COMMON.

## FEEDBACK VS REFLECTION



FEEDBACK IS A SHORT EXCHANGE OF THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS, NOT A DISCUSSION. DIFFERENT OPINIONS CAN STAND NEXT TO EACH OTHER. THE FACILITATORS SEE THE EFFECT OF THEIR WORK AND UNDERSTAND HOW THE GROUP IS FEELING.

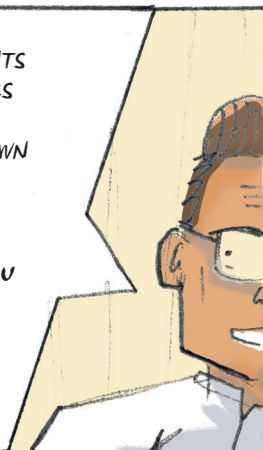
### FEEDBACK QUESTIONS

- HOW DO YOU FEEL?
- HOW DID THE GROUP WORK GO? WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO LISTEN?
- WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO TELL YOUR STORY?

DURING A REFLECTION SESSION PARTICIPANTS LEARN FROM EACH OTHER. THE FACILITATORS SHOULD NOT GIVE ANSWERS! MOTIVATE PARTICIPANTS TO THINK AND FIND THEIR OWN ANSWERS.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND WHEN YOU SEE/HEAR...?
- WHAT ARE POSSIBLE WIN-WIN SOLUTIONS?



PRACTICAL ADVICE ON REFLECTION ROUNDS:

- USE A BALL
- ASK QUESTIONS THAT LEAD IN THE DIRECTION YOU WANT THE DISCUSSION TO GO
- LISTEN CAREFULLY AND SUMMARIZE WHAT YOU HEAR
- MAKE SURE EVERYBODY GETS THE OPPORTUNITY TO SAY SOMETHING



YES, THEY ARE ANGRY, BUT THEY HAVE A LOT OF OTHER FEELINGS, TOO. BOTH OF THEM WANT TO GET ON WITH EACH OTHER.

I WOULD LIKE US TO REFLECT ON OUR WORK TOGETHER: WHEN YOU LOOK AT THE FLIPCHART WITH OUR ICEBERG ANALYSIS, WHAT COMES TO YOUR MIND?

I SEE, THAT NEPHEW AND AUNT ARE BOTH VERY ANGRY, BUT FOR DIFFERENT REASONS.

THERE ARE A LOT OF FEELINGS INVOLVED

ARE YOU SAYING, THAT THERE IS ANGER BUT THERE ARE ALSO POSITIVE FEELINGS INVOLVED?

OUR SESSION IS FINISHED FOR TODAY. BEFORE WE LEAVE, I WOULD LIKE YOU TO STAND IN A CIRCLE AND MAKE ONE GESTURE, THAT SHOWS HOW YOU FEEL NOW."

### PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR ENDING THE SESSION

- NEVER END WITH DIFFICULT TOPICS
- TRY TO END ON A POSITIVE NOTE
- ASK THE PARTICIPANTS FOR A SHORT FEEDBACK
- MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NEXT SESSION
- THANK YOUR PARTICIPANTS FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION
- IF THERE ARE VERY INTENSE OR NEGATIVE FEELINGS EXPRESSED DURING THE FINAL ROUND, TALK TO YOUR PARTICIPANT AFTERWARDS

**For further information about our project and methodology, see:**

Zemskov-Zuege, Andrea (2019): Shared experience common values. Training Manual. Edited by: PDI Kintha & Culture for Peace, Sittwe/Berlin. Available online: [http://culture-for-peace.org/sites/default/files/pdi\\_cfp\\_storytelling\\_dialogue\\_manual\\_narrative\\_version.pdf](http://culture-for-peace.org/sites/default/files/pdi_cfp_storytelling_dialogue_manual_narrative_version.pdf)

**In our trainings and in this manual we use the “iceberg-exercise“ and paraphrasing advice from:**

Wuestehube, Ljubjana; Splinter, Dirk (2017): From shared truths to joint responsibility (sha:re) Training Manual for Mediators and Dialogue Facilitators. Edited by: inmedio berlin, Berlin.

**The instructions for dialogue facilitation are inspired by:**

Zemskov-Zuege, Andrea; Wolleh, Oliver (2018): „Changing the Past in our Heads.“ A facilitator’s guide to listening workshops. Edited by: Berghof Foundation, Berlin. Available online: <https://berghof-foundation.org/library/changing-the-past-in-our-heads-a-facilitators-guide-to-listening-workshops>

**For further reading we recommend:**

GlZ and inmedio berlin (2013): Shimgelina under the shade: Merging Ethiopian Wise-Counsel Mediation and Facilitative Mediation. A Training Manual. Berlin. Available online: <https://www.inmedio.de/sites/default/files/Shimgelina%20under%20the%20shade%20-%20merging%20ethiopian%20wise-counsel-mediation%20and%20facilitative%20mediation.pdf>

Ropers, Norbert (2018): Basics of Dialogue Facilitation. Berghof Foundation, Berlin. Available online: <https://berghof-foundation.org/library/basics-of-dialogue-facilitation>

Zemskov-Zuege, Andrea (2020): How to transform zipper-shaped conflict-narratives: a methodological approach in a nutshell. Fri-Ent TJ Blog, Berlin. Available online: <https://www.frient.de/en/blogdata/tj-blog/how-to-transform-zipper-shaped-conflict-narratives-a-methodological-approach-in-a-nutshell>

# STORYTELLING DIALOGUE

In Storytelling Dialogue, people from communities in conflict come together and share their experiences. They learn about each other and build trust. This manual shows basic techniques of this work. In our project, we have heard about difficult and painful situations. Along with these stories, many people also shared messages of peace:

“ When Muslim celebrated their new year, Rakhine people went to Muslims' houses and had snacks. When Rakhine celebrated their new year, Muslims came to Rakhine's houses and had snacks.

“ I really want all the discrimination against ethnicities, the attitude of not seeing people as human, in Rakhine State to end.

“ Rakhine people who have different faith and are ethnically different helped the Muslim people. They helped us with material for building houses and basic needs

“ In 2010, conflict between Muslim and Rakhine broke out. Therefore, all Muslims in our area ran away. We didn't run anywhere. One of our neighbours said to us: 'You don't have to run. No one can kill you while we are here'. Other neighbours also said [...] we are here to protect you if anything happens

