

CREATING A CHECKLIST FOR AN EFFECTIVE DIALOGUE

INTRODUCTION

A dialogue is not an end in and of itself. Working with a feminist lens a dialogue can be used to develop knowledge about oppressive systems in society and a space to understand how individuals reproduce these oppressive systems

It is important to keep in mind that change cannot happen with one dialogue. Dialogues can let loose a process or a set of actions but it is only with continuous dialoguing that we are able to reflect on our actions, plan new actions, grow ongoing trust and build relationships.

WHEN AND HOW TO USE THE TOOL

Having a single dialogue with a call for a common programme of action can have very limited results and lead to demoralisation on the part of the people and groups participating in the dialogue.

A dialogue that is preceded by careful planning, that focusses on sharing ideas and building collaborative relationships and that opens space for ongoing reflection to inform planning – is more likely to succeed than one where a person or group decides on the outcomes beforehand and uses the dialogue to get their outcomes rubber stamped.

If you are using a feminist lens to design your dialogue, your focus will be on a collaborative experience aimed at creating knowledge and practices that focusses on equity and justice and addresses oppression and exploitation.

The first step in preparing for a dialogue is recognising your own power and privilege and well as the relative power and privilege of the groups coming into the dialogue. Acknowledging this, even writing it down and then being conscious of this in your planning for the dialogue – is key to choosing the methods you use in the design of the dialogue.

Members of the different groups that you are inviting to the dialogue might have different levels of knowledge or experience in using concepts related to Just Transition e.g. social protection, decent jobs, equitable redistribution of resources etc.

One way of working with this could be to share resources speaking to these concepts before the time. This would need to use accessible language and have concrete and relatable examples. The resources could take many forms e.g. pamphlets, whatsapp clips, video clips etc.

Some design issues include: Shared intention setting, safe space, timing, open ended questions, encouraging the telling of personal stories

TOOL

Creating a Checklist for an effective dialogue. Can start the exercise with a discussion on what a failed dialogue looks and feels like

What does a failed dialogue look and feel like? *"I didn't take the other persons' experiences and feelings seriously, nor did I create an opportunity for them to actively participate in the conversation. Instead, I was more interested in convincing them to change their minds and arguing against their points. Consequently, the people I was attempting to dialogue with felt belittled, attacked and closed off to new ideas while I ended up frustrated, angry*

and deflated because they just wouldn't "get it." Because my dialogue had been ineffective, I wasn't changing minds. And when I spoke up later, I'd see eyes roll and heads shake that implied, "Well, here we go again."

Activity1 : Brainstorm- Think of 1 example of a dialogue that that has not been very successful.

In plenary:

- i. Describe what happened: what was the issue, who was involved, where did it take place, when and how did it all go wrong.
- ii. Describe what people thought and felt like at the end of the dialogue.

To consider:

There is a difference between dialogue and an explanation. We often mistake explaining for dialoguing. Explaining can be used as a tool to silence – when it not about sharing ideas and a collaborative relationship.

Dialogue is a mutual exchange of knowledge based on one's experiences where people are able to transform their lived experiences into knowledge.

Being conscious of power and privilege: Privileged groups reproduce their prejudicial ideas and systems that benefit them while marginalizing others.

Activity 2- Part 1: Think of a dialogue you are busy planning

- i. Who are the groups or individuals who will enter into your dialogue with more privilege?
- ii. What will that privilege and power look and feel like?

Activity2 - Part 2: Individual reflection

- i. What of your own privilege and power are you most likely to feel uncomfortable with going into a this dialogue?

Activity 3: Plenary Discussion: An example - bringing a trade union into the dialogue space

You might find that a trade union will carry relative power and privilege in a dialogue with community groups but experience less power and privilege in a group with "climate change" experts or representatives from Government Departments.

- i. What assumptions can you make about the relative power and privilege the trade union holds when coming into the dialogue?
- ii. What assumptions can you make about how the union will engage in the dialogue.
- iii. What have you learnt from previous engagements?
- iv. What can you do differently this time?

Plenary discussion – key learnings about bringing a trade union into a dialogue space.

Reference: [How To Practice Effective Feminist Dialogue – Lipstick & Politics](#)