What is intercultural dialogue?

‘Dialogue’ in Active Citizens refers to conversations in which people with different beliefs and perspectives learn from and share with each other. This focus on learning and sharing makes dialogue different from some other forms of conversation, such as debate or negotiation.

Because dialogue is about learning, it is an approach that values different ideas and beliefs. The more perspectives involved the greater the opportunity for learning; and out of multiple perspectives greater collective wisdom can emerge.

It is based on the principles of participation and the belief that greater inclusion in dialogue not only contributes to learning but also builds mutual understanding and stronger communities. It helps develop our empathy with others, as we begin to see not just actions and words but the beliefs and motivations behind them. Through dialogue we aim to both reveal our differences and to find our common ground.

Dialogue may address questions which have no conclusive answers. It can also support us in developing and finding solutions with others.

Dialogue can be planned or spontaneous, structured or unstructured, formal or informal. It can emerge among people who are genuinely interested in each other’s perspectives, and in this sense some of the best dialogue happens in homes and public spaces.

In some cases though (for example where there are underlying conflicts), dialogue requires careful preparation, design and facilitation. Depending on the aims and the context of a dialogue, it might last for minutes, hours, days, or it could be a continuous process.

There are many skills, attitudes and behaviours which can support us in dialogue, for example listening and questioning skills. There are also useful methods and processes which can be used to organise conversations in a way which maximises effective learning and sharing. You’ll find several examples in this toolkit.

‘The encounter with the Other, with other people, has always been a universal and fundamental experience for our species.’

‘People thus had three choices when they encountered the Other: They could choose war, they could build a wall around themselves, or they could enter into dialogue’

Ryszard Kapusinski Polish Historian and Journalist 1932-2007
Why is it important?
Globalisation has led to people around the world increasingly encountering different perspectives and cultures at home. Global systems such as markets, media, finance, climate and faith have a significant influence and impact on local communities and lives. Some of the most pressing issues, such as climate change, are of global concern and can not be understood and addressed effectively without dialogue and cooperation.

Encounters with new cultures and diverse opinions can lead to more learning and opportunities but can also create a sense of disempowerment; challenge our sense of identity; create tension and make us feel captive to powerful outside forces. Dialogue builds trust and understanding and underpins participative approaches to conflict resolution (see Activity x.x). It is a need which is pervasive, required throughout the project cycle; in planning, implementation and evaluation and can be treated as part of the project development process or a social action output in itself. For the purposes of this manual it is treated as part of the learning on dialogue (rather than Module 4 Planning social action). It is a vital skill in any leader, working at any level in society.

When in dialogue you seek to question your assumptions, open yourself up to new ideas; increase your empathy with differing views; expand and possibly change someone’s point of view; find common ground and keep dialogue alive. It is a process that builds consensus, improves the viability of decision making and prepares the ground for sustainable action. In this way dialogue is a powerful tool of leadership and decision-making.

In summary dialogue can:

- Improve understanding of local context
- Improve decision making
- Increase cooperation
- Increase pride in one’s own identity
- Increase empathy, consideration for others, trust and understanding
- Generate innovation
- Increase inclusion and equality

An Active Citizen brings dialogue into their lives and not just their work.

**Learning Outcomes**

**Understand how dialogue can be used**

- What is dialogue
- Purpose of dialogue - community development
- Ability to learn and share through dialogue
- Confidence to learn and share through dialogue
- Principles of dialogue
- Approaches to dialogue - Listening skills, questioning skills, community development
Activity 2.1
Elephant and the blind men (10 minutes)

Learning outcomes
• Value different perspectives

Summary
The story introduces the idea that all of us have a piece of the puzzle and there is value in the many different ways we view the world.

Preparation and materials
None.

Approach 1
1. Share the story below with the group.

Once upon a time, there lived six blind men in a village. One day they heard that an elephant had entered the village. They had no idea what an elephant was and, although they would not be able to see it, they decided to go and know more about this animal. When they came across the elephant they all touched the elephant to explore it.

Diagram 25: The blind men and the elephant

The elephant is a pillar, said the first man, who touched its leg.

Oh, no! it is like a rope, said the second man, who touched the tail.

Oh, no! it is like a thick branch of a tree, said the third man, who touched the trunk of the elephant.

It is like a big hand fan said the fourth man, who touched the ear of the elephant.

It is like a huge wall, said the fifth man, who touched the belly of the elephant.

It is like a solid pipe, said the sixth man, who touched the tusk of the elephant.

They began to argue about what the elephant was like and every one of them insisted that he was right, each one began to shout out louder convinced that their perspective was the right one.

Debrief
• Begin by asking the group about the story.
  − Who was right? (Everyone? No-one?)
  − Who was telling the truth?
  − What is going on in this story?
• After allowing the group to share some answers and thoughts, introduce the concept of perspectives if it has not arisen. Draw out the fact that each blind man had his own perspective.
• Continue the discussion by asking, ‘how could they better understand what an elephant is?’
• Explore the value of different perspectives and how they might be revealed – by sharing knowledge and experience and asking questions of others. How that is done effectively is the subject of this module.
• Finally, ask: ‘what else could the elephant represent?’ Examples might be our community, an issue, or even me.
Case-study 5
Dialogue requires faith

‘Dialogue also requires an intense faith in human beings; their power to make and remake, to create and recreate; faith that the vocation to be fully human is the birthright of all people, not the privilege of the elite.

Founded on love, humility and faith, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of mutual trust. Trust is established by dialogue; it cannot exist unless the words of both parties coincide with their actions.

Nor can dialogue exist without hope. Hope is rooted in our human incompleteness, from which we move out in constant search, a search which can be carried out only in communion with other people.

Finally, true dialogue cannot exist unless it involves critical thinking, thinking which sees reality as a process, in transformation, thinking does not separate itself from action but constantly involves itself in the real struggle without fear of the risks involved.’

Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed
Activity 2.2
Four words (1 hour)

Learning outcomes
- Understand dialogue and when it can be used - purpose of dialogue
- Understand dialogue and when it can be used - principles of dialogue
- Understand dialogue and when it can be used - approaches to dialogue
- Understand Active Citizens

Summary
Illustrates challenges and opportunities of learning and sharing with other people. Using a Think-Pair-Share approach (on page 34) participants think on their own of the four major characteristics of an Active Citizen before engaging in dialogue and negotiation to agree the four words as a whole group. You may want to use a different statement to open up discussion about an issue. One that is more relevant to the specific group or context. For example “The biggest barriers to social inclusion are…”

Preparation and materials
Paper and pens for each participant.

Approach
1. Tell the group that we are going to explore the key characteristics of an Active Citizen. It is going to challenge us as individuals and as a group. We will reflect on these challenges after the exercise.

2. Ask the participants to, on their own, think of four words that are the ‘the four most important characteristics of an Active Citizen’. It is very important that the group do not use sentences or phrases. Each word should be a possible ending to the sentence: ‘A real Active Citizen should be…’

3. After the group have four words each, put the group into pairs and ask each pair to agree on just four words for ‘A real Active Citizen should be…’.

4. After the pairs have done this ask them to find another pair to form a group of four, again they must agree just four words between them.

5. Repeat this process until there are just two large groups in the room and each has just four words.

6. Now give these two large groups ten minutes to agree on the final four words that will represent the whole group’s judgement of the key characteristics of an Active Citizen. If the group can’t reach an agreement in ten minutes, stop the exercise.

Debrief
- Debrief in plenary. (Example answers in italics)
- Explain that the words the group has been discussing include some of the attitudes and skills that the Active Citizens programme wants to help build.
- Let us reflect on the challenges and opportunities of working with others. (Ask participants to help write up and record the answers to underlined questions)
  - How did you feel?
    E.g. pleased with the discussion, frustrated, proud, excluded.
  - Why do you think you felt like that?
    E.g. we needed a facilitator, the full process wasn’t explained at the beginning, we worked as a team, there wasn’t enough time, some people were speaking all the time, we ensured that everyone had an opportunity to speak. Not everyone able to participate equally.
  - What were you doing in this activity?
    E.g. negotiating, reflecting, making decisions, discovering different interpretations, coming to a consensus.
  - Were there things about this process or about the way you acted which supported dialogue?
    E.g. in this process, at the beginning everyone has the chance to think for themselves and speak. We found that by appointing a group facilitator we were able to manage the conversation so all voices were heard. I focussed on listening and trying to understand.
  - Were there things about this process and the way you acted that did not support dialogue?
    E.g. in this process, at the beginning everyone has the chance to think for themselves and speak. We found that by appointing a group facilitator we were able to manage the conversation so all voices were heard. I focussed on listening and trying to understand.
  - What could you do to make this process more effective for a dialogue? Were there things in the process which did not support dialogue?
    E.g. We did not know or agree the process in advance. The process needs more time. A facilitator could help to ensure quieter voices are heard. Arranging seats in a circle is better than sitting opposite each other in separate groups. We don’t have to achieve consensus, by focusing on learning from each other we could have a better dialogue. We should listen and respect each other’s opinion. We should avoid splitting the group into opposition groups as this creates tension.

Emphasise that this activity also shows how conflict arises at the individual, interpersonal and group level. Note that conflict is part of human interaction and can have creative and destructive potential.
When and where can you use dialogue in your work? How can you apply the principles of dialogue in your work?

You now have a shared list of things that support and put up barriers to dialogue.

Alternative Approach 2 Deeper

1. The debrief to Four Words can also support participants reflection about their own behaviour and that of others. Some questions to ask include:
   - Think about yourself and the way you acted. Did you support the process?
   - How was your behavior, body language and your questioning and support of others?
   - Is there a difference between what we say and what we do? During the discussion did we live up to our beliefs about dialogue?
   - The activity can also teach us about belonging. Did you become ‘attached to your words’? And how did this attachment shift to other words as the process developed, despite the fact you only had a few minutes to think of them? Why is this?

   - Who held on to one or more of ‘their words’ until the end, and who did not? Why? And how do people feel about both holding on and letting go of ‘their words’?
   - Did the final words really represent the whole group, and if not, why not?
Activity 2.3
Dialogue is not... (45 minutes)

Learning outcomes

• Understand dialogue and when it can be used - approaches to dialogue
• Understand dialogue and when it can be used - principles of dialogue

Summary
Participants share and discuss their experience of being involved in or witnessing different types of communication.

Preparation and Materials
Ask the group to source newspapers, video clips, etc to illustrate their experience.

Approach
1. Share with the group: in this activity you will be exploring all the different types of communication that happens between individuals and groups. We will also reflect on what we understand by the term dialogue through exploring what it is not.

2. Ask the group to get into smaller groups of three to five people and to share their experience of being involved in or watching different types of communication between individuals or groups. These could be either positive experiences, for example a negotiation that ended in agreement, or negative, for example, a televised political debate with the representatives shouting at each other.

3. When everyone has had a chance to tell their story, ask each group to pick one story and prepare to share it with the whole group that will demonstrate a particular type of communication. Encourage the groups to be creative, for example by acting out a drama, or drawing a cartoon strip. Where possible offer the groups access to the internet to find video clips. Each group will have two minutes to share.

4. Ask the group to return to plenary and give each group a chance to share their experience in turn.

5. After each presentation, ask the group to discuss:
   - What have they seen? What type of communication did we see?
   - Is this common? Who has been involved in or seen something similar.
   - What is the value and what are the issues of this approach to communication?
   - Does this approach support dialogue? If yes, then how?

Debrief
• What have we learnt through this activity?
• Were these common types of exchange? In what ways do these different types of exchanges have a positive or negative impact in our societies? Why?
• What have we learnt about dialogue? Write up the responses on a flip chart with two columns for what dialogue is and what it is not.
• Share with the group: the word dialogue means different things to different people. We also may not understand the same thing from the words we are using to describe the different approaches. It can help our understanding to think of dialogue in relation to other types of communication, it also helps us to use examples of our experience to describe what we mean, rather than relying just on words.
• The “Dialogue is not” box below may help you to support the discussion.
Case-Study 6
Dialogue is not...

Negotiation. A negotiation is a discussion intended to produce an agreement. Different sides bring their interests to the table and the negotiation has a transactional and bargaining character to it.

Debate. A debate is a discussion usually focused around two opposing sides, and held with the objective of one side winning. The winner is the one with the best articulations, ideas and arguments.

Advocacy. Advocacy is the act of pleading or arguing in favour of a certain cause, idea or policy.

Conference. A conference is a formal meeting for consultation or discussion.

Consultation. In a consultation, a party with the power to act consults another person or group for advice or input to a decision.

Discussion. A discussion is generally a rational and analytical consideration of a topic in a group, breaking a topic down into its parts in order to understand it.

Adapted from ‘Mapping Dialogue’ by Marianne “Mille” Bojer, Marianne Knuth, Colleen Magner
Activity 2.4
Listening at three levels (45 minutes)

Learning outcomes
• Ability to support, and learn and share through, dialogue - listening
• Value different perspectives

Summary
To enable participants to experience and practise listening in different ways. Participants share a story of an incident that didn’t turn out as they wanted it to. They are listened to in different ways, and different interpretations of the story emerge.

Preparation and materials
Paper, pens.

Approach
1. Share that in this activity we explore the idea and value of listening at three levels:
   - the facts
   - the feelings
   - the purpose.

2. This is also known as listening with the head (the facts), the heart (the feelings) and the feet (the purpose).

3. Split the group into groups of four. One person volunteers a story that they are comfortable to share an incident or situation that is not yet settled or where they would have wanted a different outcome. If the group is still trying to get to know each other, ask them to avoid deeply emotional experiences.

4. Ask the three remaining participants to choose one of the roles below and explain that they will be asked to share what they heard afterwards:
   - one person in the group should listen only for the facts (head)
   - one person should focus on listening for the feelings (heart)
   - one person should focus on listening for the purpose – why the storyteller is telling this story (feet).

5. Invite the storyteller to share their story.

6. Now ask the participants to share what they heard. Try to avoid them just re-telling the story and to focus on giving just the information related to their role (i.e. either the facts, feelings or the purpose behind why the storyteller shared their story).

Debrief
• Ask the group how they found the practice of listening at different levels? What was valuable about this process?
• Are there different ways the story can be interpreted? Has the storyteller learned anything through this process?
• Re-framing (re-interpreting stories or questions) is using different lenses to help people to move from a ‘point of view’ to ‘points of viewing’. Re-framing can be a useful tool to open up possibilities; allowing people to move on and facilitating change. The purpose of re-framing is to help people see that there could be multiple realities to their event.
• As Active Citizens how will you listen for more than the facts?
• Are there times when it would be useful to listen more for the facts the feelings or the purpose? For example: judges in a court of law try to ensure that attention is paid to the facts. When listening to someone who want to sell you something you may want to listen for the purpose – why is this person telling you a personal story is it just to encourage you to buy the product?
Alternative approach 2 Deeper

1. Introduce and or revisit the concept of frames, framing and reframing (see Module 1 Activity 1.10).

2. Re-framing (reinterpreting stories or questions) is using different lenses to help people to move from a ‘Point of view’ to ‘Points of viewing’. Reframing can be a useful tool to open up possibilities. The purpose of re-framing is to help people see that there could be multiple realities to an experience.

3. As we discovered in ‘Me and My Identity’, emphasising a part of our identity during a conversation can also influence the way we experience it. As Active Citizens, how will you listen for more than the facts?

Alternative approach 3

Diagram 26: Listening with four ears

1. (15 minutes) Introduce the four ears model, as one way of understanding communication (5 min). This model (see Diagram 26) shows that communication has four sides which need to be understood and interpreted using four ears:
   • Factual information - information, data
   • Self-revelation/self-disclosure - what the sender (i.e. speaker) discloses about him/herself (e.g. values, feelings, motives) either intentionally or unintentionally
   • Relationship – the relationship between the speaker and the receiver( i.e. The listener), including what the speaker thinks of the listener
   • Appeal – what the speaker would like to happen

2. Ask participants to consider this brief exchange, using the four ears approach from the perspective of the man and the woman.
3. Explain that there were alternative ways of interpreting what the man had said (five mins) e.g. he could been saying there is something green in my soup and I like it! In this case, maybe the woman was hearing the message mainly with the relationship ear. Our tendency in communication is to interpret aspects of messages in ways that are familiar to us, or which reinforce our assumptions, rather than to try and engage all four ears.

### Four ears in practice (15 minutes)

1. Split the group into groups of four. In each group of four, two people volunteer to act out a small exchange and the remaining two volunteer to observe the exchange and interpret it in terms of the four ears. The exchange and the interpretation should be no more than five minutes. The roles are then changed so that the pair who observed act out an exchange and the other pair observes. (Total time for small group work: 15min)

### Debrief (30 minutes)

- This model stresses the fact that there are always four layers in communication, which need to be heard using all four ears. Explore with the group reflections on using the four ears:

  - Did you have a tendency to listen with a particular ear?
  - What happens when we only hear the facts of a message? What does it feel like to communicate with people that only focus on the facts?
  - What happens when we interpret a message as a self-revelation? What does it feel like to communicate with people who interpret self-revelation when communicating? How can you adapt your communication for people to understand the other ears that you are communicating with?
  - What happens when we interpret communication with the relationship ear? In situations where there are poor relationships or conflict, what can this mean? How can communication be adapted so that people can hear with the other ears?
  - What happens when we interpret communication with the appeal ear? How do others tend to react to the appeal?
  - How did you find the practice of listening with four ears? What was useful about the process?
  - What might listening with four ears mean for Active Citizens?

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Man</th>
<th>Woman</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Facts</strong></td>
<td>There is something green in my soup.</td>
<td>There is something green in the soup.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-revelation</strong></td>
<td>I don’t know what the green stuff in the soup is.</td>
<td>He doesn’t know what the green stuff is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relationship</strong></td>
<td>You should know what the green stuff is.</td>
<td>He doesn’t like my cooking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You know I don’t like green stuff in my soup.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tell me what the green stuff in the soup is!</strong></td>
<td>He only wants to eat food that he is used to.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I should only cook what he likes.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Activity 2.7
The power of questions (30 minutes)

Learning outcomes
• Value different perspectives
• Ability to support, and learn and share through, dialogue - questioning skills

Summary
Introduces the skill of questioning as a tool for identifying a need for change. Encourage people to be curious and apply questioning skills in their work.

Preparation and materials
None.

Approach
1. Ask participants to think of a question which would make another person smile. Ask participants to move around the room, meet and ask people this question.
2. After 3 minutes, ask participants to change the question to a question which will make the people they ask feel proud. Repeat the process 2 or 3 times, each time participants should think of a question to trigger a particular emotion or reaction ie. make the other person think, make the other person feel motivated to take action.
3. Now ask the group if there were any powerful questions expressed. You may want to write them down.
4. Ask participants what they understand by the term 'powerful question?' For example: a question which makes me think deeply or differently or which triggers an emotional response.
5. Give the participants one or two minutes to think individually about a powerful question they’ve been asked and which they’re willing to share.
6. Ask participants to work in pairs to share this powerful question and what they think made it powerful.

Debrief
• In plenary, ask: what are your thoughts and insights on the power of the questions?
• Can a question change the way we think about something?
• What makes you want to ask questions? For example: curiosity, study, need, etc. Continue the conversation by asking what drives their curiosity and what it means to be curious.
• If we recognise that questions are powerful, then to change ourselves or our communities we can begin with the questions we ask.

‘Language is very powerful. Language does not just describe reality. Language creates the reality it describes.’

Archbishop Desmond Tutu
**Alternative approach 1 Creative**

1. ‘An important object’ This short activity can be used before The Power of Questions to get participants thinking, or afterwards as a way to reinforce the learning.
2. As a facilitator you will need to prepare by choosing an object which means something to you and that you are comfortable being questioned about.
3. The aim of the activity is to stimulate deeper questioning from the group, moving from simple questions such as, what is it? where is it from? what do you use it for?, to questions such as, what does it mean to you? why have you bought it to show us?, that will help reveal things about you. Some questions will ‘unlock’ deeper understanding.
4. Arrange everyone into a circle and place the object in the middle of the circle.
5. Encourage participants to ask questions to try and learn as much as possible from this object.
6. Only respond directly to the questions. Do not reveal any more information than is asked of you. Listen for good questions that reveal more and lead to deeper learning and insight.
7. Hopefully, you will begin to share more personal stories and information through the questions.
8. Stop after a few minutes. Ask the group: think about what kind of questions were powerful, and led to deeper learning? Which were they, why were they powerful?

**Alternative approach 2 Deeper**

1. This activity links well with Appreciative Inquiry. Asking powerful questions is core to Appreciative Inquiry and to continue the conversations started in this activity’s debrief you could move on to that activity.
2. See activity 2.16, page 102.
Activity 2.8
The questioner within (1 hour)

Learning outcomes
• Self-awareness
• Ability to support, and learn and share through, dialogue - questioning skills
• Value different perspectives

Summary
To encourage people to become more reflective and positive through examining the questions they ask themselves.

Preparation and materials
Personal Journals.

Approach
1. Invite participants to get seated comfortably, create a safe space for self-reflection (music may be helpful) and invite them to think about what kinds of questions they ask themselves.
2. Make sure that participants understand the notion of inner questions, by providing personal examples (‘Did I do something right?’ ‘How should I achieve this?’ etc.).
3. Ask participants to write their inner questions in their Journal.
4. The facilitator continues with grounding the knowledge:
   − questioning is a key ingredient for personal change
   − change starts with the individual through questioning
   − people need to pay attention to the kinds of questions they ask themselves. Language creates reality and questions create reality as well, the very way they are expressed frames the way we will respond
   − when we ask our questions we can either take a position of a judge or a position of a creator (inquiry and discovery)

Table 11: Judge and Creator

Judge
• Who’s to blame?
• What’s wrong with me?
• Why am I such a failure?
• How could I lose?
• How can I be in control?
• Why are they so clueless and frustrating?
• How did I get stuck with the worst team?
• Why bother?

Creator
• What happened?
• What’s useful about this?
• What do I want?
• What can I learn?
• What is the other person thinking, feeling, needing and wanting?
• How can this be a both-gain?
• What’s possible?
• What are my choices?
• What’s best to do now?

1 Change Your Questions, Change Your Life, Marilee G Adams
- in noticing the kinds of questions it’s important to shift the focus of questions from a problem mode to an affirmative inquiry mode – from judge to creator.

5. Explain that we are going to separate questions into two categories ‘judge’ questions and ‘creator’ questions. Give an example of a ‘judge’ and ‘creator’ question and ask participants to share what they understand by ‘judge’ question and ‘creator’ question.

- E.g a ‘judge’ question is judgemental of the person being asked the question. a ‘creator’ question demonstrates curiosity and is framed in a positive way.

6. Ask participants to think, pair, share a ‘judge’ question or ‘creator’ question they have been asked. Capture examples of these questions (the below table gives some possible examples).

7. Ask participants to think of two ‘creator’ questions to inspire motivation, commitment and creative thinking 1. for themselves 2. amongst other Active Citizens. The second question should be written down and collected by the facilitator.

8. Collect the ‘creator’ questions, choose a moment (either after the activity or later in the workshop) to randomly hand out the ‘creator’ questions amongst the group so that each person holds a new ‘creator’ question.