



## Lesson 11

# Organising Multi-Stakeholder Processes

### Learning Objectives:

At the end of the lesson, participants will be able to:

- Identify the stages of organising a multi-stakeholder process
- Identify three considerations in choosing which stakeholders to include in the process
- Identify key principles of holding a multi-stakeholder security dialogue.

This lesson provides civil society, military and police leaders with practical advice on how to design and carry out a multi-stakeholder security dialogue at the local, regional or national level. The security sector and/or civil society can use a multi-stakeholder process (MSP) to conduct a joint conflict assessment process to identify security challenges; to jointly plan and implement a programme to improve human security; or to jointly monitor and evaluate security governance, accountability and performance.

This lesson is based on a more detailed manual titled *Multi-stakeholder Processes for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding* written by the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC).<sup>46</sup>

### 1. Deciding to Use a Multi-Stakeholder Process (MSP)

This lesson outlines some key steps and phases for deliberately designing and implementing a multi-stakeholder security dialogue at the local, regional or national level. At the local level, a multi-stakeholder security dialogue could take place between police, local government, and male and female community

members (making sure to include women's unique perspective and experience of safety concerns). At the regional level, military, police, regional government and regional civil society organisations, including women's organisations, might be included in a security dialogue focused on border security or a regional security issue. At the national level, a security dialogue might include all major stakeholders and identify diverse definitions and approaches to national security.

When considering these steps, it should be noted that, in reality, these steps are never linear. Even in a planned and deliberate process, participants may need to take a step back to re-strategise or redefine roles—for example, when some participants leave and new ones join. The context itself might change drastically during the course of the process, requiring participants to go back to the drawing board. The different steps presented on designing and implementing an MSP can respectively take weeks, months or years, and do not refer to a set number of meetings or events. Rather, they describe the general progression of a process that can take many shapes depending on the situation.

It is a rare luxury to have all the conducive conditions line up for a multi-stakeholder process. It can therefore be more useful to be clear on your own position, and what the parameters and non-negotiables are for your organisation. In deciding to initiate or join an MSP, bear in mind the opportunities, timing, resources, competencies and support structures available for the task ahead.

#### **Key questions for initiators<sup>47</sup>**

- Is a multi-stakeholder approach necessary, or would other approaches such as advocacy and lobbying strategies, be less risky and equally (or possibly more) effective?
- Are there good reasons to believe stakeholders of substantial influence will join in a collective approach?
- What factors could make the process unmanageable and ultimately unproductive, and could they be mitigated?
- Is sufficient funding available to sustain the process? Do people view the funding source as biased, neutral, with/without an agenda? Will the resources still be available once the process has taken off (for example to implement planned joint activities)? If not, are there fundraising capacities or connections within the group?
- How might the MSP cause unintended negative consequences, especially with respect to conflict dynamics? How might these effects be prevented or minimised?

#### **Key questions for potential participants**

- How might the multi-stakeholder process meet your organisational interests and goals?
- Does the process have institutional support from your organisation?
- What will be your exit strategy—when will your organisation consider the MSP to have fulfilled its objectives and when will it be seen to be underperforming or failing and what does it mean for your participation?
- Does the process encompass the personal needs of the individuals directly involved, taking into account personal capacities, skill development, support and encouragement?
- What are the benefits of joining, as compared to an alternative outsider strategy?

## **2. Initiating the Process**

There are various options for getting an MSP started, depending on the context and opportunities at hand. The first step in initiating a process is getting a core group of committed individuals and organisations involved in considering the process design and feasibility.

Process champions: CSOs can approach their respective networks to get an MSP started, and take advantage of established relationships with other key stakeholders. It helps to identify counterparts in other agencies that can champion the idea of an MSP, for example within a local UN agency or other international/multilateral organisations, a regional organisation, a government department or mechanism, and other key CSOs.

Initiator, convener, host: The convener is the official face of the process, and should be seen as impartial and have enough authority in the context to convince the right parties to get involved. Where CSOs do not enjoy such a position, they can instigate the process by convincing a key agency to play this role, and can partner with them as co-initiators, supporting the process through their organisation's skills and networks. Another way of involving additional partners can be to get them to co-host meetings and to rotate the host function among different agencies, to appeal to different groups.

**Core group:** Ideally, the core group of initiators is already multi-stakeholder in composition. CSOs and their identified counterparts should start by comparing objectives and expectations, and clarify the level of investment (time, capacities, and other resources) they are prepared to contribute, as well as discussing potential roles. A Memorandum of Understanding between the key partners can help formalise this commitment.

**Facilitation resources:** A skilled facilitator or facilitation team, who may or may not be the convener, is necessary to provide careful process design and guidance. Facilitation is a specific set of skills, and requires specialised training, as described in Lesson 21.

**Reality check:** start calculating the cost of the process and to explore whether sufficient funding, institutional resources and competencies can realistically be secured to see the process through. Make contingency plans for how to proceed should expected resources fall short. The resource considerations can also be explored through consultations with potential participants as described in the steps below.

**Legitimacy:** Legitimacy is usually linked to the credibility of the convener, the participants and the process itself. One of the most important ingredients in an MSP, from the moment that it is first convened and throughout, is the sense of trust that people have in the fairness of the process, and in the intentions of the conveners and participants.

### 3. Designing and Preparing the Process

The process design must rely on sound knowledge about the context and the various stakeholders. Self-awareness and sensitivity to conflict dynamics are also important before taking the steps of approaching process participants. Perhaps the most challenging and most important part of this phase is identifying and approaching the potential participants. This phase focuses on mapping, analysis and consultation that can gradually help build trust in the lead up to the official start of the process.

**Preliminary context analysis:** The initiators should have sufficient knowledge about the context to recognise possible signs or triggers of conflict. Based on this, initiators can formulate their own preliminary objectives of what they are seeking to achieve.

**Stakeholder mapping:** To start identifying potential participants, initiators should consider power dynamics, interests and relationships of the groups and individuals that play a role in either exacerbating or deterring the conflict. (See Lesson 1)

**Criteria for selecting participant stakeholders:** The context and stakeholder analysis can help define a set of criteria for selecting the participant institutions and individuals. Whether this is done in a formal process or not, documenting such criteria can strengthen the legitimacy of the process, as it may be questioned or examined by other stakeholders at any stage during the process. In politically sensitive situations, it can be prudent to involve the potential stakeholders in formulating the criteria in a phased process.

**Do No Harm and self-assessment:** Initiators should consider their own capacity to facilitate the intended process, and assess the possibility of the process affecting the participants or the conflict dynamics negatively.

**Formulating the idea:** As a basis for future internal and external communications, it can be useful to document the key points of the analyses and the preliminary purpose and objectives of the process in an accessible format, such as a summary sheet or concept note. This document should also make the initiators' intentions and role explicit. This can form part of a process proposal that participants can validate or revise in initial meetings.

## Participant Selection Criteria

- What balance and diversity do you need to consider in the composition of the group, including gender, age, social or geographic considerations?
- Which constituency groups are indispensable to the process?
- What would motivate those groups to participate or to stay away?
- What are the implications for not engaging certain groups?
- How does the purpose relate to hardliners and potential spoilers? Are there other ways to engage them outside of the MSP?

Approaching potential participants: preliminary consultations form part of the initial convening process to get a sense of whether there is sufficient interest in the MSP, any concerns potential participants have and initial process proposals. These consultations can help identify opportunities, and risks, as well as gaps in the analysis and other key stakeholders to approach. It is also a good time to discuss the scope and size of the group. All of this can provide input for a draft charter, or terms of reference.

Observing protocol: In cases where the process aims to involve high-level state or intergovernmental participation, it may be necessary to seek official endorsement in this phase of the process. The role of officials or government will vary, depending on the political dynamics and the degree to which government is enmeshed in conflict dynamics.

Administrative and practical preparations: organisers must have dedicated people in charge of preparing the practicalities for launching the process. This can include outlining the programme, sending out invitations, securing an appropriate venue and time for the first meetings and handling all other logistics relevant to start the MSP. Note that the administrative functions and timely communications will be important and recurring tasks throughout the process, which has implications for funding/budget considerations.

#### 4. Getting Acquainted

The first group meetings and the acquaintance phase must be considered carefully, as they can set the tone for the rest of the process. The acquaintance phase can involve a degree of disagreement and contestation about the issues at stake. This is a natural part of the process, and should be allowed to play out, where the facilitator helps to unpack the key issues and barriers present in the group to start building confidence. For this reason, it is useful for the group to agree on how to work together from the outset.

Facilitating interaction: Pay attention to practical arrangements, facilitation and space that can encourage interaction among the participants. For example, seating arrangements, icebreakers and allowing time for social spaces, learning and networking can make for more productive and open group discussions. Note that MSPs involving high-level officials from formal institutions will need to take into account official protocol, which may be a pre-condition for meeting. In this case, breaks, outings and other activities can be important to make space for relationship building.

Stating expectations: It is the role of the convener to present the anticipated intentions and purpose of the initiative in the first meeting. Introductions are made to acknowledge those present while taking note of who is not present and whose absence may affect the process. It is important that participants get the opportunity to express their expectations to start identifying commonalities or areas of contention. The role of the participants should be clear: are they there to give advice, to make recommendations, to take decisions, to reach consensus? Do they have a specific function in the MSP because of their expertise or background? Who is responsible for follow up? The decision making process should be explicitly agreed: are decisions made by the group, and how?

Ground Rules: Having collective agreement on how to interact and participate in the process gives a clear mandate to the facilitator to intervene when the group dynamics are not respectful or productive. This can be done in several ways (described in detail in Lesson 21), for example:

- Presenting a draft text for discussion, amendment and approval.
- Developing them as part of, or in follow up to, preparatory bilateral meetings.
- Engaging the participants in formulating ground rules from scratch in the first meetings.
- Organising a joint training session on dialogue and listening skills, where the participants can learn about each other's ways of working, values, and constraints.

### Sample Ground Rules

- Listen to each other
- Stay open to learning and new perspectives
- Respectful behaviour
- Avoid disruptions or distractions (e.g. mobile phones, laptops, side-talk, interrupting each other)
- Ask questions whenever something is not clear or unresolved
- Commit to staying involved in the process
- Find common ground, while respecting and understanding differences

Rules of engagement and procedures: Protocol helps the participants to assess and state their level of commitment, roles and responsibilities. Involving the participants in setting out and agreeing to the proceedings is necessary to avoid or minimise misunderstandings once the process is underway. They help the facilitator to ensure a fair and appropriate process. (See Box on next page)

Accountability and transparency of MSP processes: To whom are participants accountable? How will they seek input from and report back to broader constituencies? It is important to be clear on expectations and limitations in this regard, especially where there are no formal feedback mechanisms. Stakeholders can draft an accountability map in which they are explicit to whom they are accountable and how they will communicate with their respective institutions and constituencies.

Grievance resolution mechanisms need to be in place and clear to all participants, where expectations within and outside the group are clearly agreed, and where there is a procedure that spells out how disagreements or complaints are handled in the group. It can also be useful to have an agreed procedure for dealing with inactive participants or those whose behaviour (whether in the meeting or externally) can undermine the process.

Agreement on internal and external communication and confidentiality in relation to what can or cannot be disclosed outside the meeting is key to maintaining a level of trust between the participants and in the process. Depending on the nature of the MSP, it may be useful to agree to apply the Chatham House Rule, which allows participants to disclose the content of discussions but not to attribute that content to anyone. In cases where the Chatham House Rule is not considered sufficiently strict, an event can also be held entirely off the record.

The degree of formality required ultimately depends on the culture and the stakeholders involved, and on the conditions of where and how the dialogue is conducted. Some cultures (including sub-cultures within a specific context) function more through spoken word rather than through documents. Where formal institutions are part of the process, formal charters and reports may be necessary for institutional endorsement.

### **Developing Terms of Reference**

The written terms of reference for the convening process are sometimes called a charter. The charter names the stakeholder groups and their representatives and outlines how they will work together and what they will discuss. The facilitator can create the draft in collaboration with the stakeholders during the preparatory/bilateral meetings and submit it to the group for discussion and approval. The charter can include some or all of the following components:

**Goal:**

Statement of purpose and the group's mandate (relationship to other initiatives as relevant).

**List of Stakeholders:**

- Stakeholder groups and their representatives (can include organisational or individual representation; alternates; gender balance; geographic or thematic spread).

**Roles:**

- Roles and responsibilities for MSP participants.
- Role of the third party facilitator.
- Role and mandate of coordinator/organiser/secretariat.

**Procedures:**

- Procedure for changing or selecting new participants.
- Guidelines for communicating with the press/media.
- Observer guidelines.
- Expectations for stakeholders to communicate with and report feedback from their constituencies.
- Decision-making procedures for the dialogue and within stakeholder groups (consensus, straw polls, voting, etc.)
- Dispute/grievance resolution mechanism.
- Conflict of interest.
- Procedures for documenting meetings and process for tracking agreements.
- Moments or timeline for reviewing or adapting the charter/Terms of Reference.

**Schedule:**

- Schedule of meetings and proposed tasks.

**Adapted from:** *Convening: Organizing Multiparty Stakeholder Negotiations* (CDR Associates, 1998) and *Protocol for Developing Multi-Stakeholder Group Terms of Reference and Internal Governance Rules and Procedures* (Institute for Multi-Stakeholder Initiative Integrity, February 2015).

## 5. Agreeing To Go Forward

To be able to function together, the group eventually needs to find a degree of consensus on several levels: the purpose of the process; the problem definition; a shared vision; and a shared plan of what the group will do together. This is not likely to be achieved in one sitting, but is usually the result of a longer process and regular interactions. The sequence of the steps described may take different forms depending on what suits the group dynamics.

**Framing the issue(s):** By jointly defining and exploring the scope of the problem to be addressed, the group can reach a shared problem formulation. This exercise should be well prepared and can be informed by the preliminary engagement with participants.

**Finding common ground for a vision:** While a vision for what the group would ideally like to achieve should be inspiring and ambitious, it is useful to prepare a visioning exercise that can get as detailed as possible. Participants will have different starting points, assumptions, and institutional interests, so a vision may need to be unpacked and described in concrete terms from different perspectives to avoid different interpretations of the ideal scenario.

**Action Plans:** Following from the logic of a conflict assessment, planning should address key who, what, how and when questions about follow up actions the participants will take, whether individually or together.

**Goals and milestones:** An important part of the action plan is the formulation of what changes and achievements are expected as a result of the actions. It supports motivation and credibility of the process to have some milestones or progress indicators already spelled out from the beginning, and to include some intermediary achievements and quick wins along the way.

**Costing the plan:** Once there are clear ideas about follow up actions, assess resources needed to implement the plans, and agree on how they will be secured. Fundraising or pooling of resources may be necessary as part of the follow up steps; this may also be the moment to mobilise any donors or donor connections involved in the process.

### Sample Dialogue Questions for Exploring the Diversity of Experiences

- How does public safety impact you personally?
- When do you feel most unsafe?
- How are you coping with insecurity?
- What is your greatest concern about security now?
- When do you feel most safe?
- How is security affecting our community?
- What changes to public safety are we seeing?
- How have security issues affected how we work together? Are there new tensions among us?
- What are 3 main challenges that keeps us from improving security?
- What values in our community can we draw on to address this problem?
- What are the causes of or history the issues?
- Do we have different understandings of the history of security challenges?

#### Suggested Caucus Questions

- What do we need to know from an opposing point of view in order to address this issue?
- How does our group benefit from and suffer from the status quo?

## Sample Questions for Action Planning

- What should we do about this issue now that we have built relationships with each other, shared our experiences and deepened our understanding of the issues?
- Of all the ideas shared, which 2 or 3 ideas seem most practical for us to work on together?
- What resources do we already have available to us?

### 6. Implementing Action Plans

To achieve results beyond the individual level, a crucial part of the process is in the follow up outside the meeting room. Flexibility is needed to be able to go back to re-assert and adjust the process as it moves along and where the need to change plans arises. Internal and external communication throughout this phase is crucial, both for the sake of keeping up momentum and for the purpose of accountability and trust in the process.

**Getting organised:** With plans of action and definition of roles, the group considers how to work together in the follow up phase, for example by forming working groups, delegations, advisory groups, contact persons/liaisons or action-oriented task forces. The tasks can include activities to support and strengthen the platform itself, such as mobilisation of extra resources as well as public and political support. Constant or emerging issues in this phase may lead to new ways of getting things done. This stage is an opportunity to broaden the engagement in the process, by involving additional groups in the proposed actions.

**Feedback loop:** Make a point of scheduling regular report back sessions of participants to the group and of the group to broader constituencies. There are many ways of doing this, either using existing channels, or using media, online tools, or arranging for workshops or conferences for a broader range of participants to validate or respond to the activities of the group. Feedback loops are relevant both for the sake of accountability and in order to manage expectations. It is essential that participants have a common base of information. Provide well-organised, concise, accurate and jargon-free information

**Keeping up the momentum:** The MSP is most effective when it is results-driven: when each participant begins their tasks with the end result in mind and then deliberately plans how to achieve this with milestones and set timelines that they can report back on. It is just as important that the process inspires and motivates participants to follow these actions through. Extra support, capacity building, buddying schemes or coaching may be needed for a stakeholder to achieve some results.

**Adapting:** New issues that emerge may require the inclusion of new stakeholders. Some participants may have dropped out causing a gap in the composition of the group. The procedures and rules of engagement may need to be reviewed to be more suitable for the group.

### 7. Exit strategies

A multi-stakeholder dialogue may be an on-going effort and there is not necessarily an end to such processes. Nevertheless, the time may come when the MSP will either wind down or move to the next level of institutionalisation. In this phase, the process should not simply fade out without notice, explicit agreement or exit strategy, as this can cause disillusionment that can discourage future initiatives.

**Closure:** The participants may reach consensus about closure for various reasons. Key outputs/objectives may have been reached, or the agreed time period for the initiative is coming to a close. Lack of resources or motivation, or external factors or risks in the context can also directly affect this decision.

**Exit strategy:** An exit strategy can range from gradually winding down a process, to handing it over to continuous, institutionalised mechanisms. Either way, it is important to communicate the next steps not only to participants but also to key partners, target groups and broader constituencies. It may also involve ensuring that some of the collaboration achieved and relationships built are safeguarded through some other form of engagement or contact.

**Lessons learned:** For future reference and broader learning, it is useful to document and share not only the outcomes of the process, but also the learning points about the process itself. Some conventional ways of doing this might include reports or presentations (workshops, conferences), but other means can include videos, interviews or blogs.

Institutionalisation: in the best-case scenario, the process evolves into permanent structures, so-called standing mechanisms for different local stakeholders. Dedicated resources allocated by local authorities/government, or institutional or policy frameworks underpinning the multi-stakeholder collaboration as well as capacity building exemplify this.

## REVIEW

This lesson provided a detailed guide for designing a multi-stakeholder process. Civil society or the security sector can initiate a multi-stakeholder process to help communities identify security challenges through a process of conflict assessment, or to design and implement a security project together. Multi-stakeholder processes may also be used to design a forum for joint monitoring and evaluation of the security sector. Module 10 provides a conceptual framework to assess security governance, accountability and performance to use in a multi-stakeholder process.

## Citations

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<sup>46</sup> Jenny Aulin, *Multi-stakeholder Processes for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding: A Manual*, (The Hague, The Netherlands: Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), 2015).

<sup>47</sup> GPPAC Preventive Action Working Group discussions, adapting from (amongst others): *Convening: Organizing Multiparty Stakeholder Negotiations* (CDR Associates, 1998); Mariette van Huijstee, [Multi-Stakeholder Initiatives: A Strategic Guide for Civil Society Organisations](#) (Rochester, NY: Social Science Research Network, 12 March 2012); Bernard S. Mayer and others, [Constructive Engagement Resource Guide: Practical Advice for Dialogue among Workers, Communities and Regulators](#) (US Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Pollution Prevention and Toxics, NSCEP, 1999), 23.

## Lesson 11

## Learning Exercises

### Anchor

10 minutes

Anchor the content in this lesson with an open question. Participants can share in groups of two or three people their response to this question:

- Are there places in society where military, police, government and civil society sit together to discuss security issues?
- What makes these spaces challenging? What makes them effective?

### Add

20 minutes

Present the PowerPoint slides or ask participants to discuss the lesson readings in a small group.

### Apply

25 minutes

The President has announced the formation of a National Security Dialogue including government, security force, and civil society representatives beginning in two months. Each of the stakeholder teams to be part of the planning team.

In scenario stakeholder teams, discuss the following questions:

- What would it take for your stakeholder team and other groups in society to consider a multi-stakeholder security dialogue legitimate, credible and accountable?
- What factors would influence your decision not to participate?
- Who are the relevant stakeholders to include in a security dialogue? Which key leaders will be important to invite first, to assure their buy-in?
- What key messages can be used to appeal to the interests of different stakeholders to take part in your security dialogue?
- What is the best location for your security dialogue to take place?

After 20 minutes of team discussion, each team shares their strategy with the other teams. The facilitator asks the entire group for their observations.

See the “Scenario-based Learning” section in the [Handbook on Human Security: A Civil-Military-Police Curriculum](#) for explanation of the scenarios and teams.

### Away

5 minutes

To end the lesson, the trainer can ask participants to divide into groups of 2 or 3 people. Participants can share with each other their reflections on this lesson.

This Lesson is part of the *Handbook on Human Security* found at [www.humansecuritycoordination.org](http://www.humansecuritycoordination.org)

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