

Stichting Oikos – Netherlands
Vesper Society – U.S.A.
EAALCE – Belgium
TIDES Training – No. Ireland

Dialogue for Peaceful Change
Creating Pathways for Overcoming Division

Pilot Phase
2004 – 2007

NOTE: This report covers the Pilot Phase when Vesper Society was an active partner. DPC trainings are still taking place in various locations globally. Except when referring to the period of the Pilot Phase, the report retains the present tense in its description for those portions that are continuing.

Updated: October 2008

1.0 PROJECT SUMMARY

1.1 Impact Objective

To equip all leaders globally, working for social change, with the professional skills required to address the conflicts that arise in such endeavours.

1.2 What is DPC and Why is It Needed?

Community leaders working in the field of social change are on the front line of building and rebuilding society and frequently deal with conflicts. To be successful in their endeavours, these leaders must acquire specific skills to enable them to address a variety of conflicts.

Dialogue for Peaceful Change (DPC) was developed to professionalize the acquisition of the skills needed by local leaders to address the conflicts they encounter at all levels in their daily work.

DPC provides training for participants to be facilitators in the process of Mediative Dialogue — a methodology developed from the work of Stichting Oikos in the Netherlands and the Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland. The DPC training methodology has been further expanded by Colin Craig of TIDES Training in Northern Ireland. TIDES Training is an NGO working internationally on Leadership Development in Conflict Management. DPC methodology has been enriched by the experiences and views presented by the participants and presenters during the initial two DPC conferences.

DPC teaches the practical skills that enable leaders to assist those in conflict to agree on how they can live and work without violence. It fully recognizes that conflicts in today's global community frequently include tensions that have an inter-religious basis.

1.3 Goals and Activities

During its pilot phase (2004-2007), the Dialogue for Peaceful Change provided training to 180 local leaders around the globe to be facilitators and trained an additional 20 people to be trainers.

DPC provides two levels of training:

- Training of Facilitators (ToF) workshops prepare participants to apply the tools of Mediative Dialogue in a variety of conflicts that may appear in the course of their work for social change.
- Training of Trainers (ToT) workshops are for a select group of those who have successfully completed the ToF training and have the desire, skills, and organizational support to train others. Participants who successfully complete this course become Certified DPC Trainers.

DPC workshops are open to all. Initially, most participants will be drawn from OIKOSNET — a global network of Christian academies, laity centres and movements of social concern from a broad range of denominational backgrounds. With about 350 member centres and organisations in all continents, OIKOSNET brings to this project a number of assets that qualify it in a unique way:

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- It is a functioning global network
- It offers physical facilities with a reputation of being “safe spaces”
- The notion of dialogue is a central conceptual element for the whole network
- It has a number of member centres with long-standing expertise in fields that are crucial to the project, such as
 - Varied methodologies of dialogue
 - Conflict resolution strategies
 - Advanced communication and collaboration strategies
 - Leadership development models

1.4 Project Partners

Four experienced partners joined forces to coordinate and manage the Dialogue for Peaceful Change project in its Pilot Phase:

- Stichting Oikos, a Dutch-based foundation in Utrecht, Netherlands
Stichting Oikos has been a leader in the Netherlands in a variety of projects that concentrate on questions regarding development cooperation. Part of its work deals with bringing those in conflict to a process of dialogue.
www.stichtingoikos.nl
- Vesper Society, a U.S.A.-based Private Operating Foundation in San Francisco
Since the 1960's, Vesper Society has been successfully bringing parties in conflict to a common table for dialogue - in the U.S., Europe, and Central America.
www.vesper.org
- EAALCE (Ecumenical Association of Academies and Laity Centres in Europe)
EAALCE is an association of about 80 Christian academies and laity centres in 20 European countries. It is a regional member of OIKOSNET – a global association of over 350 faith-based centres and movements of social concern.
www.eaalce.org

- TIDES Training, a NGO based in Ballycastle, No. Ireland
TIDES Training works locally in No. Ireland addressing the 35 years of political violence as well as internationally on Leadership Development in Conflict Management.
www.tidestraining.org

Additional funds were provided by:

- ICCO, Utrecht, the Netherlands
- Global Ministries of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, Utrecht, the Netherlands
- Turku Christian Institute, Turku, Finland
- Bread for All, Basel Switzerland

2.0 PROJECT DETAILS

2.1 Background

In almost all major political, cultural, and social conflicts around the world, religious aspects are an important factor. Unfortunately, in most cases the religious factor adds to the conflict rather than helps to resolve or de-escalate (Northern Ireland, former Yugoslavia and the Middle East, as examples). The aim of Dialogue for Peaceful Change is to strengthening those persons and institutions within faith communities that are committed to and actively seeking a visible expression of peace and reconciliation - that we recognize as the core of all religions.

Building trust is a key element of “social capital” which in turn is a key factor for social peace. “Investing in bonds of social trust” is important for democratic political culture as well as for a successful economic environment.

While dialogue is a widely shared and appreciated concept and is often studied academically, its practice is often vague and lacking methodological precision. Thus, there is a need to distinguish between different types of dialogue, i.e., dialogue for advocacy, dialogue for understanding, dialogue for change.

2.1.1 Methodology

The ultimate goal of DPC is to develop, test and implement an inter-culturally viable learning and communication model that can serve as a tool for trust-building and conflict mediation, within and between faith communities as well as in secular contexts.

The heart of DPC is to provide a select group of training centres from different parts of world with staff trained to address issues of conflict. These individuals form the initial core group that is examining the cultural viability of the methodology and is developing contextualised case studies and model applications in their respective locations. They meet face-to-face at training workshops, as well as use electronic communication for collaboration.

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The core group of training centres will adapt the methodology to their respective contexts while at the same time continuously sharing their experience with the other partners world-wide.

2.2 DPC Activities

2.2.1 Training of Facilitators (ToF)

DPC training builds on the existing skills and best practices of each participant leader and helps them to:

1. Understand the methodology of Mediative Dialogue
2. Acquire the step-by-step skills that can be used to address tensions within their organization and in their larger community
3. Learn what is being practiced in other regions of the world
4. Develop a group of colleagues who will support their future work for peaceful change

DPC Trainings of Facilitators are open to all. Partial financial assistance may be available for attendees from centres that are members of OIKOSNET.

The initial Training of Facilitators was held in Turku, Finland, in June 2005. The 16 participants from 14 countries are now applying the DPC methodology in local projects. Through a shared-space website they communicate regularly their successes and challenges.

In May 2006, eight participants of the training in Turku became Certified DPC trainers and conducted a Training of Facilitators at the Corrymeela Centre in Ballycastle, No. Ireland for 19 participants.

During 2007, workshops were conducted in Asia, No. America, Europe, and Sub-Sahara Africa.

For more information on ToF workshops, see www.dialogueforpeacefulchange.net.

2.2.2 Training of Trainers (ToT)

ToT workshops are for those who have successfully completed the Training of Facilitators program. Those selected for this training must meet established criteria and have the support of their institution to provide training to other leaders in their region.

The training consists on a three-day intensive review of all materials and methodologies of Mediative Dialogue. The next five days are spent leading an actual Training of Facilitators under the oversight of the staff of TIDES Trainings.

Within the following twelve months, each participant who successfully completes the ToT is expected to participate in two regional trainings – one within their home region and one as a training team member in another region.

2.2.3 Centres as Training Hubs for DPC

It is anticipated that some OIKOSNET centres will adopt DPC as a formal part of their programmatic work. Such centres will have staff members who are Certified ToF Trainers and will develop a variety of workshops using DPC materials.

2.2.4 Course Materials

A formal curriculum for ToF and ToT workshops has been developed. This material is available to all participants of DPC-sponsored workshops as well as the DPC Hub Centres.

3.0 RESULTS

- A self-sustaining, operative network of persons and centres engaged in Dialogue for Peaceful Change is created. In this network at least two centres in each of the regions (generally continents) of the OIKOSNET participate.
- A methodology for building trust in difficult situations and thus reducing the potential for conflicts resulting in violence has been worked out. This methodology is made available for interested people from all different backgrounds, religions, and countries.
- This methodology of Dialogue for Peaceful Change is available as an accepted tool for addressing and reducing the potential for violence in situations of conflict.
- This methodology is made available for all member centres of OIKOSNET and all interested groups and centres and people.

4.0 EVALUATION

At the end of the Pilot Phase, an extensive evaluation of all aspects of DPC was conducted by outside, professional evaluators. This evaluation informed is available to all participating individuals and organizations.