

Community Cohesion Curriculum

Trainers' Manual

ZOA Iraq May 2023



1. Content

1. Introduction	3
2. Context of Iraq	4
3. Background and history of the curriculum	5
4. Theoretical framework	6
4.1 Community building	6
4.2 Communication	7
4.3 Social leadership	7
4.4 Conflict resolution	7
4.5 Mental health	8
5. Practical framework	9
5.1 Group size	9
5.2 Training period	10
5.3 Evaluation	10
6. Activities	11
Activity 1 Our village	11
Activity 2 Group values	15
Activity 3 I can't hear you! Are you listening?	18
Activity 4 When I am in a conflict situation	21
Activity 5 A family row	24
Activity 6 Moments of silence	28
7. Training agenda	30
8. Annexes	35
Annex 1 Protocol	36
Annex 2 Social cohesion questionnaire	
Annex 3 Training feedback form	

1. Introduction

The purpose of this Trainers' Manual is to provide a comprehensive framework for trainers implementing the community cohesion curriculum and provide them with the necessary methodologies and tools to effectively facilitate group training sessions that foster the development of knowledge and skills crucial for promoting social cohesion in post-conflict communities. Social cohesion can be understood as the binding force that unites a society, the collective sense of belonging, and the shared responsibility for the overall well-being and progress of one's community. It is characterized by harmonious relationships, shared values, and a commitment to inclusivity, where individuals and groups recognize and respect each other's differences. Conflict harms social cohesionⁱ while post-conflict measures to increase social cohesion are needed to prevent renewed conflict.

Tailored to the context of Iraq, this manual introduces a range of topics and exercises designed to enhance the theoretical and practical understanding of the trainees. It encompasses various themes related to social cohesion, such as community building, communication, conflict resolution, and mental health. A key aspect of the group training is the emphasis on experiential learning, where trainees actively engage in hands-on activities and subsequently analyse their experiences to better comprehend their relevance to real-life situations and explore avenues for positive change. This approach encourages trainees to fully immerse themselves in the learning process, involving their feelings, reflections, and actions — stimulating their hearts, heads, and hands.

The role of the trainer is to establish a safe and supportive learning environment, where trainees are encouraged to ask questions, actively listen to one another, and engage in constructive feedback exchanges. By creating such an atmosphere, trainers empower trainees to take an active role in their learning journey and contribute to the collective understanding and growth of the group.

2. Context of Iraq

As an insurgent group transitioning into a proto state¹, Daesh (also known as ISIL, which stands for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant) undertook a deliberate social transformation in the territories it occupied in Syria and Iraq. From 2014 to 2017, during its occupation, Daesh systematically established control over various aspects of society, including the economy, justice system, police force, and educational institutions. Beyond mere control, Daesh aimed to reshape people's worldview. The ability to influence mentalities, particularly among the younger generation, was seen by them as instrumental in constructing a society that could sustain and defend its ideological project. Many children and youth were indoctrinated with extremist ideas and trained as militants.

Daesh's presence severely eroded the trust between citizens and left a generation deeply affected by trauma and polarizing ideologies. Since the retreat of the group, Iraq has faced a significant challenge in terms of fostering integration and social cohesion within divided communities. This challenge is particularly prominent for populations perceived as having collaborated with the group, former combatants, and those who endured persecution or displacement due to Daesh.ⁱⁱ Rebuilding communities and addressing

¹ A proto-state can be understood as an organization that exhibits elements of statehood, such as territorial control, governance structures, and a claim to sovereignty, but lacks broad international recognition and legitimacy.

sectarian and ethnic conflicts in Iraq remains crucial. Failing to do so carries the inherent danger of fuelling renewed violence, extremism, and further conflict.

To effectively foster social cohesion within communities, it is essential to shift the focus from divisive ideologies to promoting ideas that cultivate respect for diversity and inclusivity. Furthermore, facilitating opportunities for positive interactions between individuals will strengthen social cohesion and facilitate integration.ⁱⁱⁱ

3. Background and history of the curriculum

Since 2017, ZOA in Iraq² has been addressing the psychosocial needs of children, youth, women, and men inside the city of Mosul through the establishment of Safe Spaces, which later became known as community centers. The primary objective was to create a secure environment where families could recover from the devastating effects of war. Over the years, ZOA established a substantial number of temporary community centers, serving four neighbourhoods in East Mosul and five neighbourhoods in West Mosul. These centers provided psychosocial support activities and reached a significant number of men, women, and children, including those with disabilities.

During their work in Mosul, ZOA noticed a lack of interaction between and within communities. Fear of disagreements and potential conflicts led people to isolate themselves, becoming more self-focused and neglecting the wellbeing of their community. To counteract this trend, ZOA developed a 5-day training curriculum called "the community builders' curriculum", aiming to foster a sense of care and concern within and between communities and inspire positive attitudes and engagement towards building a pluralistic society where people from diverse backgrounds live together harmoniously, recognizing that everyone in the community has a key role to play in achieving this.

The curriculum's development began in 2018, initially drawing inspiration from Julian Stodd's book "Social leadership in the community" to distil eight training topics.^{iv} Over the past five years, the curriculum was revised based on feedback gathered from post-project evaluations, trainers' input, and observations by ZOA's project staff. This iterative process has ensured the curriculum's ongoing relevance and applicability. During the first six months of implementation, the curriculum underwent revisions based on feedback from trainees. In 2020-2021, further updates were made. Pedagogical activities developed by the European Council were incorporated to enhance the material. It was at this time that the curriculum was renamed "the community cohesion curriculum" to reflect its ultimate purpose: restoring or creating social cohesion within and between different communities through grassroots, community-based approach. In 2023, the curriculum was reviewed by a researcher connected to ICBS (Institute for Community-Based Sociiotherapy) and final changes were made before the phase out of ZOA in Iraq and handover of the curriculum to the (humanitarian) community.

Since 2019, approximately 2000 individuals in Mosul have been trained with the use of the curriculum. The trainees represented a mix of internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees, and host community members, including youth, children, and adults. The training sessions took place in ZOA's community centers. Trainees participated voluntarily. Recognizing their role as future leaders, ZOA initially only targeted youth, while later also adults and children were included to incorporate representatives of the whole of society. Trainers

² ZOA is an international relief and recovery organisation that provides relief to people affected by violent conflicts and natural disasters in fragile contexts. They also assist them during their recovery from crisis.

- coming from diverse professional backgrounds such as social work, teaching, architecture, and engineering - were trained by ZOA staff. While the training has only been implemented in Mosul, the training's principles and concepts can also be applied in areas beyond the city. However, adaptations can continue to be made if the context of implementation asks for it.

4. Theoretical framework

Social cohesion refers to the level of connection and solidarity within and between different groups in a society. It encompasses the sense of togetherness and bonding exhibited by members of diverse communities, serving as the essential "glue" that holds a community or society together. Social cohesion comprises two key dimensions: the feeling of belonging within a community and the relationships among members both within that community and across different communities that form the broader society.^v Social cohesion can be defined as a "state of affairs concerning both the vertical and horizontal interactions among members of society as characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that include trust, a sense of belonging and the willingness to participate and help, as well as their behavioural manifestations."^{vi} In the training the main focus is on horizontal social cohesion, to which we refer as community cohesion.

From an operational standpoint, a strategy for social cohesion entails taking actions to ensure that every individual within a community has access to:

- the means to meet basic needs
- progress
- protection and legal rights
- dignity and social confidence

Any deficiency in accessing these aspects works against social cohesion.^{vii} Especially conflict is known to decrease social cohesion.^{viii}

Initiatives aimed at promoting social cohesion can be categorized into those where increased social cohesion is the primary objective and those where it is viewed as a by-product of other goals, particularly development. In the case of this training curriculum, the promotion of social cohesion is the primary objective. By treating social cohesion as a central goal, facilitators of the training are more likely to take proactive measures and facilitate dialogue, trust-building, and empathy through activities that yield non-material and less observable outcomes.^{ix} The underlying principle is that restored trust will enhance social cohesion and cultivate community resilience in the face of emerging or recurring crises.^x Each topic selected for this training curriculum in its own way, directly or indirectly, relates to community cohesion and its development.

3.1 Community building

Community building plays a vital role in promoting social cohesion, fostering a sense of belonging and strengthening interpersonal connections within a group or society. It encompasses a range of activities and initiatives aimed at bringing people together, encouraging collaboration, and nurturing a shared sense of identity. This can take place in various settings, such as neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools, and online communities. Community building initiatives in post-conflict settings have been found to have several

positive effects, contributing to peacebuilding, social cohesion, and sustainable development. Community building facilitates the reintegration of individuals and communities affected by conflict, fostering trust, cooperation, and reconciliation. Bringing people from different backgrounds together helps to build bridges, reduces prejudice and stereotypes, and creates spaces for dialogue and collaboration.^{xi,xii,xiii} Additionally, studies suggest, engaging in community service can serve as a preventive measure against perpetrating violence.^{xiv,xv} Through providing information on community building and practising ways of building a community together, the training aims to instil a sense of the importance of community engagement for one's wellbeing and a well-functioning society.

3.2 Communication

Effective communication plays a significant role in the functionality of communities, particularly in relation to social cohesion in various communities. The quality of communication within a group is closely tied to its level of cohesion, while on the other hand certain aspects of communication are believed to promote social cohesion. These include honest, supportive, open, and direct interactions.^{xvi} Giving feedback is a form of open and direct interaction and a fundamental component of effective communication that plays a vital role in interpersonal and group dynamics. Feedback in communication can be defined as the response, reaction, or information given by a recipient of a message to the sender. It is the process of letting someone know which areas can be improved. Giving and receiving feedback in a constructive manner can be challenging. However, it is a skill that can be developed.

By providing trainees with communication skills, the training aims to enhance community cohesion within and between the various groups that constitute the broader society. The training introduces an interpersonal communication model called the Johari window^{xvii}, which not only raises awareness about the importance of communication skills, but also helps create an environment conducive to creativity and collaborative learning. Applying the Johari window can breathe new life into the way individuals communicate, revitalizing their interactions. Using the Johari window and other practical exercises involving feedback, the training aims to equip trainees with valuable skills that will benefit them in both their personal and professional lives.

3.3 Social leadership

Social leadership emerges as a form of authority bestowed upon individuals by a community, earned through a reputation established over time^{xviii}. Leadership with a strong commitment to community building plays a crucial role in the development of community cohesion. Because leaders can wield significant influence and make decisions that impact peace and conflict, it is important to collectively engage in discussions and evaluations centred around leadership that helps educate trainees on how to identify, support, and cultivate social leadership based on a solid reputation.

Becoming a social leader involves several key steps. It begins with a commitment to the well-being and progress of the community, as well as a dedication to fostering unity and addressing pressing social issues. Social leaders often possess qualities such as empathy, effective communication, and the ability to inspire and mobilize others.

Furthermore, they are individuals who actively engage in activities and initiatives that promote positive change within their communities. This could involve volunteering, organizing community events, or taking

on leadership roles in local organizations. Building a solid reputation as a social leader takes time and consistency, as it is based on trust and respect earned through one's actions and contributions.

Ultimately, becoming a social leader is not just about acquiring a title or position; it's about a continuous commitment to making a positive impact, building strong, meaningful connections, and inspiring others to join in the journey of creating a better, more harmonious community. In doing so, social leaders play a pivotal role in peacebuilding efforts at the grassroots level.

3.4 Conflict resolution

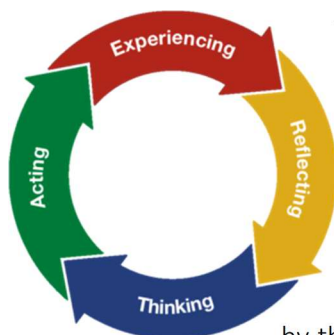
Addressing sectarian and ethnic conflicts at the local level in Iraq remains significant to prevent future conflict. The process of stitching communities back together and resolving these conflicts is seen as essential for fostering social cohesion and ultimately promoting peace within the country.^{xix} Efforts to strengthen social cohesion enhance the effectiveness of conflict resolution initiatives. Socially cohesive societies are better equipped to prevent conflicts from arising or escalating, as they provide a foundation of trust and cooperation. Conflict resolution, on the other hand, focuses on managing and resolving conflicts in a constructive manner. It involves mediation, negotiation, and dialogue to find peaceful solutions to disputes. Conflict resolution processes that prioritize inclusivity and address underlying grievances contribute to the promotion of social cohesion, as they help to rebuild trust, repair relationships, and foster understanding among conflicting parties.^{xx,xxi}

3.5 Mental health

Mental health plays a significant role in an individual's overall well-being and one's ability to actively participate in society.^{xxii} When individuals experience mental health challenges, such as depression, anxiety, or trauma, this can impact their social interactions and sense of belonging. Mental health issues can hinder the ability to form and maintain healthy relationships, engage in community activities, and contribute to the social fabric of the communities. By educating trainees about mental health and equipping them with the knowledge and skills to maintain their own mental wellbeing, their capacity to contribute to social cohesion in the community will be strengthened.

4. Practical framework

"For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them." - Aristotle



The curriculum has been designed to facilitate a practical understanding of the training content by adopting an experiential learning approach, guided by Kolb's learning cycle.^{xxiii} This model encompasses three crucial stages: reflecting on experiences, extracting valuable lessons from those experiences, and finally, applying the acquired knowledge in practice.

To ensure the effectiveness of this approach, a meticulous selection of activities has been made. These activities align perfectly with the training topics and have been selected from three specialized training kits developed by the Council of Europe. These kits aim to foster peace, cooperation, and human rights not only within Europe but also in the neighbouring Mediterranean countries. By incorporating these valuable resources, the curriculum is tailored to empower trainees with practical skills and knowledge for real-world applications.

4.1 Group size and invitation approach

A maximum of 20 trainees can be allowed per training group. To ensure effective group activities, a minimum of 15 trainees is advised. The participant invitation process employs diverse methods, including consulting community leaders, distributing flyers, and conducting door-to-door invitations. The training's purpose that is communicated is to foster community building and empowerment in post-conflict situations.

4.2 Training period

The training is spread out over five consecutive days. Two follow-up sessions within the two months following the training period are advised to share experiences and strengthen the cohesiveness of the group. In addition, trainees are encouraged to participate on a social media platform where they can support each other after the completion of the training.

4.3 Evaluation

Recognizing the limited availability of evaluation documents for social cohesion projects and the challenges in establishing a clear causal link between interventions aimed at promoting social cohesion and social cohesion resulting from these interventions, this curriculum incorporates pre- and post-training questionnaires. These questionnaires aim to gather experiential knowledge and assess the level of social cohesion among trainees as well as the broader population, ultimately evaluating the effectiveness of the training. To ensure a comprehensive evaluation, post-training questionnaires are to be administered immediately upon completion of the training, followed by questionnaire distributed two months later. This time gap allows trainees to process and apply the new ideas and techniques acquired during the training, such as exploring different communication styles, providing feedback, and effectively managing stress. Through this evaluation process, the curriculum seeks to measure the impact of the training and gauge its effectiveness in promoting social cohesion and practical application of acquired skills.

ACTIVITY 1: OUR VILLAGE

Introduction

Where do you want to live? In a global village or local world? Each group plans their village, deciding where to put the main buildings and services. This activity involves cooperation and creativity.

Source: T-Kit 11 Mosaic^{xxiv}, developed by the Council of Europe and the European Commission and edited by ZOA in Iraq.

Themes: democracy and local participation, visions, and realities in local communities

Learning objectives

- ✓ to foster democratic decision making
- ✓ to promote respect for the needs of others
- ✓ to develop team building and group work skills

Duration: 75 minutes

Group size: 10+

Materials

Large sheets of paper – Adequate tables or floor space for people to work on – The prepared elements in an envelope, one set per group – Glue – Paper and pens for the observers – Sticky tape for attaching the completed plans on a wall for display.

Preparation

- Collect pictures or drawings (e.g., clipart) of the basic elements of a village or town – mosque, church, temple, synagogue, kindergarten, park, streets, shops, factories, schools and so on. Cut them out and put them in an envelope, one set per group. Prepare large sheets of paper, one per group. On each, draw a river and a small lake marking out the site for the construction of the village. Make copies of the handout (guidance notes) for the observers, one per group.

Method

- Divide people into groups of five to seven.
- Ask each group to choose one member to be an observer. His/her job is to report back on how the group worked together. Give him/her a copy of the handout.
- Give each group a prepared sheet of paper and an envelope full of images.
- Tell the groups that the task is to plan the layout of a village. There are two rules:

1. Whatever they put down on the paper stays put; they cannot pick it up again.
2. They can only use the elements they have been given.

- Tell them they have 30 minutes for the group work.
- After 30 minutes, ask the group to display their pictures on the wall.

Debriefing and evaluation

In plenary, ask each observer to report on the working process in his/her group:

- How well did the group work together?
- Did they finish the task?
- Did everyone participate?

Then ask the workers in each group to reflect and comment:

- How did you experience the process?
- How did you make decisions?
- How did you cope with the rule about not adding any element of your own?

Then go on to generalize from the experience:

- What do we have to be aware of if everyone is to take part in an activity like this?
- Is it possible to accommodate everybody's wishes when people have different norms, values, and expectations of what their ideal town would be like?
- How do young people participate in your local communities? By campaigning? By demonstrating? By serving society where there are gaps and needs? What are realities in Iraq? To what extent are minorities involved in decisions that concern them? Are "minorities" visible in the villages you have built? How easy is it for young people to participate in decision-making processes at local, regional, and national levels? How can we promote greater participation through our youth work?

Tips for facilitators

Make the elements of the village by cutting pictures out of magazines and tourist brochures, using postcards, or draw your own. Try to get all the pictures to the same scale so that the final collage looks good. When choosing the elements, be careful to include a wide variety. Do not be restricted by your assumptions about people's needs and ideas according to their cultural or national background. Think creatively. You could, for instance, include windmills, waterworks, or an oil pipeline. You could also include elements that people might not like to have in their village, like a nuclear power station or a pig farm. Be prepared for the groups to need more time than scheduled to discuss and to make their collage.

Some groups may disobey the rules and add elements of their own. You should accept this, but take it up in the discussion: "When is it useful or permissible to accept rules, and when not?" "In real life, if you don't like a rule, what can you do about it?"

Consider the composition of the groups. There may well be more similarities between two international trainees who both live in a capital city than between two people from the same country, one from a town and one from the countryside. Do you want the groups to be mixed or do you want to put together people from cities, people from rural areas or people from a particular country?

Variations

This activity can be adapted and extended to raise issues about environmental protection, sustainability, alternative energy supplies and so on.

Ideas for action

Find new ideas for developing participation in your own community. Learn from each other. Start by sharing information about your daily lives and the opportunities you have for participation in community life. What similarities and differences are there between the countries of the Middle East region? What would work where you live? Make an action plan for a project in your own community.

Guidance notes for the observers

Here are some things you could look out for:

Does everyone enjoy themselves?

Is everyone involved?

Do any leaders emerge? How do you see this happening?

How do people lead? By example? By taking control? By organising the work process? Why?

Are the members of the group aware of each other?

Do some people hold back to allow others to come forward?

How are decisions made?

How are disagreements managed?

How do trainees organise the work?

Can you identify different working styles, e.g., systematic workers, others who work at random or spontaneously?

What are the most difficult or controversial issues?

As an observer, your role is to observe. Try to note the facts, rather than your own interpretation of them.

ACTIVITY 2: WHO WOULD YOU SAVE?

Introduction

This activity is based on the “trolley problem” which is a moral paradox first posed by Philippa Foot in 1967. This dilemma focuses on moral decisions and provokes debate about what is the right thing to do and what are the values behind such decisions.

Source: T-Kit 14 Value-based learning in mobility projects^{xxv}, developed by the Council of Europe and the European Commission and edited by ZOA in Iraq.

Themes: clashes of values

Learning objectives

- ✓ to foster discussions about ethics, values, and dilemmas
- ✓ To raise awareness of the complexity of putting values into practice

Duration: 30-60 minutes

Group size: 3-30

Preparation

Handouts with the story of the trolley problem (see Resources)

Method

1. Tell the story of the trolley: A runaway trolley (or tram), with no brakes, is heading fast towards a T-junction. If the trolley goes to the right, it will kill one child. If the trolley goes to the left, it will kill five adults. You have the power to move the switch on the track, to decide which way the trolley goes.
2. Divide the participants into small groups and ask them to discuss this dilemma and give them a time frame to reach a decision.
3. Each group presents their decision and explains why.
4. Debrief with the entire group of participants.

Debriefing

1. How was the process of deciding?
2. How did you feel during this exercise and with the decision of your group? Did all members agree?
3. What did you discover from this exercise? What values were challenged?
4. How can we take these kinds of decisions (or easier ones) in real life?
5. What different scenario would make the decision easier? Why?

Tips for facilitators

Move around between the groups of participants, to support and clarify any questions they may have, but avoid presenting a solution or guiding the participants towards one decision.

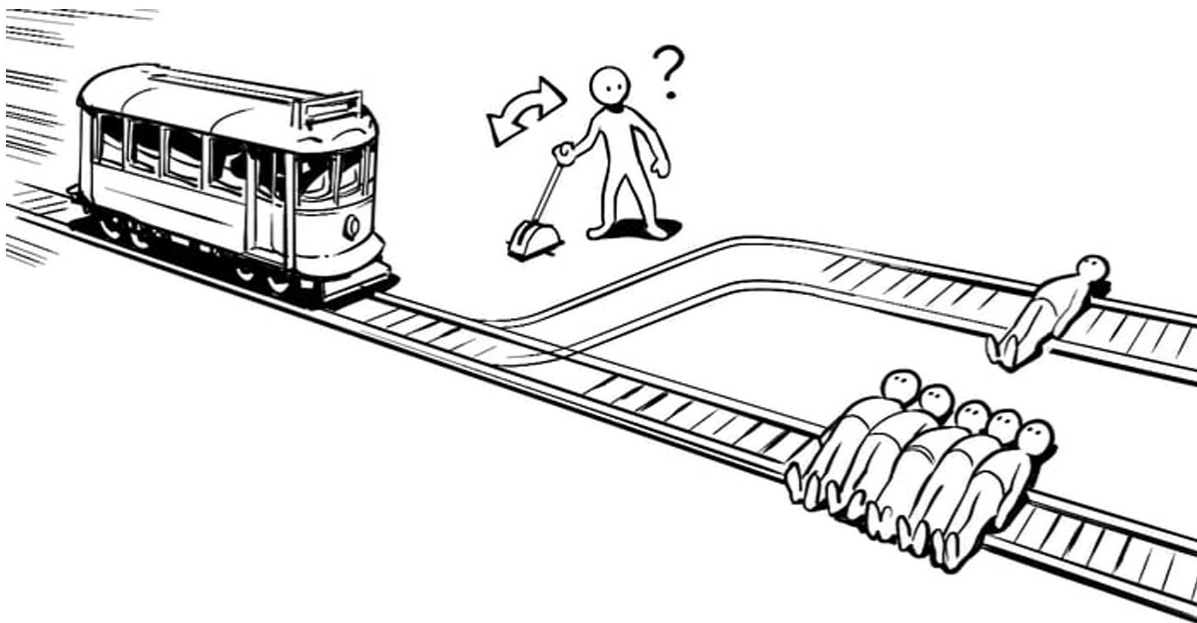
Variations

To bring another level to the dilemma, it is possible to change the characters. For example, instead of five adults on the left, it can be five elderly people. The same for professions, social status, and any other type of person that it is important to discuss.

Handouts with the story of the trolley problem (one for each group)

The trolley problem

A runaway trolley (or tram), without breaks, is heading fast towards a T-junction. If the trolley goes to the right, it will kill one child. If the trolley goes to the left, it will kill five adults. You have the power to move the switch on the track, to decide which way the trolley goes.



ACTIVITY 3: I CAN'T HEAR YOU! ARE YOU LISTENING?

Introduction

Active listening is a prerequisite skill for dealing with conflict and fostering group cooperation. Conflicts have often escalated and resulted in negative consequences because the parties involved do not consider, value, respect, or attempt to understand and listen to each other's point of view. This exercise helps trainees to understand the difference between listening and hearing, and to become sensitive to the role of communication in conflict transformation.

Source: T-Kit 12 Youth Transforming Conflict^{xxvi}, developed by the Council of Europe and the European Commission and edited by ZOA in Iraq.

Themes: active listening, conflict

Learning objectives

- ✓ to enable trainees to learn how to listen to others
- ✓ to understand better the feelings of other people and be able to communicate well with them, thus avoiding misunderstandings and false judgments which may hinder a peaceful relationship

Duration: 60 minutes, depending on group size

Group size: 10+

Materials

An adequately sized room for your group (or an open space), sheets of paper, pencils, whiteboard.

Preparation

This exercise may work better if trainees are not told specifically that it is about active listening skills, but rather about communication skills in general. Please, keep in mind:

- Effective listening requires an attitude of respect for the speaker and a willingness to understand him or her and the message being transmitted. This involves concentration on the content of the speaker's message. In doing so, both the speaker and the listener build a communication skill and the listener learns more about the speaker as a person.
- It is important to distinguish between hearing and listening. We usually hear people, but often don't listen to what they say. Listening is more complex because it involves interpreting and understanding the speaker without judging him or her. This understanding can be deepened by observing not only the content of the message, but also the speaker's body language.
- Questioning the speaker can enhance this understanding if the questions are not phrased in a threatening manner. Listening is a two-way process of learning that occurs between the speaker and the listener.

Method

1. Introduce the exercise as an occasion to learn about the importance of communication. One of the objectives of the exercise is 'skill development' in communication, a prerequisite for working effectively with conflict and groups. If you are working with a group where conflict is "present" (for example, some people in the group do not like each other and an argument has developed so that some people do not want to participate), then the exercise can be used to address the underlying issues in the group, as well as for learning the skills of active listening. Use the overview above to develop your introduction.
2. Divide the group into small groups of three people. This can be done randomly or, if you feel it will enhance group co-operation in the long run, you can make a predefined group division to make sure certain people are in the same group.
3. Tell the groups that in each group there will be a speaker, a listener, and a rapporteur. If you are working with a "conflict-free" group, the speaker is asked to think of an interesting story, a problem, or a conflict they have experienced. If your group has a conflict issue of its own, the speaker should tell the story of the group's conflict as they see it. The listener must listen actively to the story and respond using paraphrasing and summarisation. Paraphrasing means telling the same story using different words. Summarising means telling the story in a shorter and more concise way, using fewer words and less time. The rapporteur takes notes on the conversation. Give the small groups some time to agree on a division of roles.
4. Each speaker will have five minutes to tell the listener their story. The listener must listen actively, following what the speaker says and letting him/her know that he/she understands and appreciates the emotions and feelings as well as the story. For example, in Group A, participant No. 1 talks about an incident that had a great effect on him/her (feelings and content should be communicated in the message). Participant No. 2 must paraphrase back what he/she felt had been communicated to them. Both trainees should avoid making judgments and criticisms. The rapporteur in each group notes down the rephrased statements and considers how well the listener is listening. After each speaker, the rapporteur will review his/her analysis with the other two trainees. If there are disagreements, the role of the rapporteur will be to mediate those differences by again paraphrasing and summarising the content of the discussion.
5. Repeat the exercise so that each member of each group of three has a chance to play each role (speaker, listener, rapporteur). For each round, a different conflict story or part of the story should be used.

Debriefing

First ask the trainees about how they experienced the exercise:

- Was it difficult to tell the story of the conflict? If so, why was it challenging?
- As a listener, what was most difficult? What did the rapporteurs notice? What did speakers and listeners find complicated/difficult?
- What do you think the link between this exercise and conflict could be?

Move on in the debriefing to discuss the features of active listening:

- What makes listening active?
- When you were the listener, what techniques did you use to make listening active?
- Did the re-phrasing help the speaker and listener to understand each other better? How/why?
- How does active listening differ from regular listening/hearing?

Continue by relating the use of active listening to real-life situations where conflict is present:

- Describe a conflict situation you have experienced in which active listening would have been useful or helpful.
- Why do you think it would have been useful or helpful?
- Why do you think active listening would have contributed to the effective and peaceful management of the conflict in question?
- What kinds of conflict can be addressed best with active listening techniques? Which kinds cannot be addressed with active listening techniques?

Tips for facilitators

If you are conducting a training course for youth workers or youth leaders who usually work with groups of young people, you can also use these questions in the debriefing to reflect on how to work with active listening in a youth-work context:

- Do you think you can use active listening techniques in your work with young people on conflict or where conflict is present?
- How can you use it and in what circumstances? As a facilitator of young people's educational experiences, what do you think you need to know to be able to work with active listening?

Suggestions for follow-up/variations on the exercise

Re-run the role-play a second time telling the trainees to consider the features of active listening that have been identified during the brainstorming. Ask the observers to consider the extent to which communication has become more effective.

Ideas for action

You may encourage trainees to use this method (a speaker, a listener, and a rapporteur) during their meeting in order to improve their active listening skills.

ACTIVITY 4: WHEN I AM IN A CONFLICT SITUATION

Introduction

This is a simple activity about recognizing our own behaviour and the ways we deal with conflict.

Source: T-Kit 12 Youth Transforming Conflict, developed by the Council of Europe and the European Commission and edited by ZOA in Iraq.

Themes: conflict, behaviour, and feelings in conflict

Learning objectives

- ✓ to reflect on one's behaviour when in a conflict situation
- ✓ to become aware of one's feelings when facing conflict
- ✓ to explore one's own ways of dealing with conflict

Duration: 30 minutes

Group size: Any

Preparation

- One booklet for each participant in which several pre-prepared sentences are printed, one per page.

Method

1. Invite the trainees to sit in pairs.
2. Give each participant a little booklet with the sentences they should complete. Make sure that one sentence is printed on each page. Then read out the instructions for the trainees and give them to each pair as handout, as follows.

The following ground rules should be followed:

- Take turns initiating the discussion. Complete each statement orally. (Do not write in the booklet)
- This discussion is confidential.
- Do not skip items. Respond to each one in the order that it appears.
- When both you and your partner finish reading you may turn to the page and continue.
- Once all the pairs have finished sharing, start a short general debriefing session.

Instructions for trainees

Read silently. Do not look ahead in the booklet since the experience is only effective if your answers are spontaneous and unrehearsed. This booklet contains a series of open-ended statements intended to help you discover and share your reaction to conflict and your ways of dealing with it. You will also have an opportunity to learn from your partner's responses.

Debriefing

- How did you feel during the activity?
- Were you surprised about some of your own answers/the other person's answers?
- Where you aware of your way of dealing with conflict? Explain why.
- How do people deal with conflicts?
- Do you deal with conflict differently when it is with someone you know and are close to, or someone you do not know? If so, how?
- What did you learn about yourself?

Tips for facilitators

The sentences can be adapted to the context of the group. This means that if there are conflict issues in the group, or if the group is made up of people with a variety of backgrounds, these issues can also be discussed from the point of view of their influence on how people behave in conflict. For example, if your group consists of young men and women and gender issues are prominent in your group, you can discuss how gender may or may not influence the way individuals react or behave in conflict situations. Depending on how much time you have available for running and debriefing the exercise, you may consider extending or reducing the number of statements in the proposed list under "Handout".

Handout

Look at these different situations and discuss them with your partner. Each of you should give an answer to each question.

1. I get angry when ...
2. When I get angry, I ...
3. When someone I like hurts me, I ...
4. What I do to calm down is ...
5. When I see people fighting, I ...
6. Now I feel ...
7. Conflict can be positive for me when ...
8. I think that when you are openly confronted in front of other people, you ...
9. When my boss gives me fewer responsibilities because I am a young person, I ...
10. The time I felt best about dealing with conflict was when ...
11. When someone disagrees with me about something important or challenges me in front of others, I usually ...
12. When I think of negotiating, I ...
13. The most important outcome of conflict is ...
14. I usually react to negative criticism by ...
15. When I confront someone I care about, I ...
16. I feel most vulnerable during a conflict when ...
17. When someone avoids conflict with me, I ...
18. My greatest strength in handling conflict is ...
19. When things are not going well, I tend to ...
20. I imagine that you handle most conflict by ...

Check out your prediction with your partner.

21. I will sometimes avoid unpleasant situations by (explain ...)
22. My greatest weakness in handling conflict is ...
23. By next year, I would like to be able to handle conflict better by improving my ability to ...

ACTIVITY 5: A FAMILY ROW...

Introduction

This role-play looks at a conflict between a teenager and her immediate family.

Source: T-Kit 11 Mosaic, developed by the Council of Europe and the European Commission and edited by ZOA in Iraq.

Themes: conflict transformation, attitudes towards conflict, emotions during a conflict

Learning objectives

- ✓ To identify different attitudes towards a conflict
- ✓ To understand the influence of emotions on the outcome of a conflict
- ✓ To consider personal responsibility in a conflict
- ✓ To discuss cultural differences towards a conflict

Duration: 75 minutes

Group size: Any

Material

Copies of the role-cards and the scenarios for the four actors.
Notepaper and pens for trainees.

Preparation

Prepare the room so that the actors can be seen by the whole group. Photocopy the scenario and the roles and give them to four volunteers just before the session starts. Explain to them that they should play a family meeting until they find a solution. As an option, they should be ready to adapt their roles according to certain genres that you will announce at intervals during the performance, for example, a soap opera or thriller. They should not show their role-cards to each other.

Method

1. Explain that the activity will involve a short role-play, performed by some of the trainees. Those not taking part should observe how the conflict shown in the role-play develops and what role each actor has in the conflict. They should also make a note of the different emotions they see displayed by the actors.
2. Read out the scenario to the group and invite the actors to start the role-play.
3. At intervals, call out a change of genre: drama, soap-opera, mystery – or other ones of your choice.
4. The role-play should continue until the players reach agreement or until you feel the main objectives have been reached.

5. Thank the four actors and bring the group back for the debriefing and evaluation.

Debriefing

Begin by asking the four actors to come out of their roles and reflect on the process:

- How do you feel about how the role-play went?
- Was it difficult to play the role you had been allocated? Do you feel happy with the way you did it?

Question for the whole group:

- Did you find the scenario realistic? Could such a disagreement happen in your family or social environment?
- Which emotions did you identify among the characters? Which of these were most helpful and which least helpful for reaching a peaceful solution?
- Do you think that the various emotions that people display (or even the emotions that they experience) depend on their cultural background?
- How do you explain Aya's attitude during the conflict? Do you think that she was right to stay out of the argument?
- Do you think in general it is more important to "reach agreement" or to reach the "right outcome"? What are dangers in pursuing either of these?
- Can you think of decisions you have been involved in, where you have taken a role similar to any of the characters in this scenario? Which role was closest to your position?
- Is this conflict a real one? Are there other "typical" generational conflicts in the society where you live?
- Can you draw any lessons from the role-play on how to behave in a conflict? Do you think these lessons would be applicable to other situations and cultures?

Tips for facilitators

The activity is intended for both actors and non-actors. However, make sure that your group is comfortable working in this way and that the actors will not be uneasy about role-playing the scenario in front of their peers.

- You may want to ask for volunteers for the four roles or identify people you know will be comfortable playing them. Give the actors a few minutes after receiving their roles to prepare themselves and use the time to explain the task to the rest of the group. This may also be an opportunity to encourage them to support those who have volunteered to take on the roles.
- Do not allow the performance to go on for too long. Change the genre if the pace is slowing down or if you feel that the actors are going round in circles. Make sure to leave at least 30 minutes for the debriefing and evaluation, since these provide the important learning opportunities.
- Depending on the volunteer actors and on the way the play is going, you may not want to introduce a change of genre, but rather let the play go on so as to exploit fully the development of the plot.
- When you discuss the emotions that trainees have identified, tell them that the actors were asked to represent attitudes of:

Competition (Nadia)
Co-operation (Mariam)

Submission (Yassir)
Avoidance (Salma)

- Trainees will almost certainly identify co-operation as the most useful in reaching a resolution, but you may want to explore examples of conflict where they feel that co-operation is not appropriate: for example, where co-operation may mean sacrificing certain principles.

Variations

If you have a large group, you can run the role-play simultaneously in two or three small groups and then bring the groups together at the end to debrief and compare outcomes. You can also bring in new actors when you introduce each genre: this gives more people the opportunity to take part in the role-play and will help to change the dynamics.

Suggestions for follow-up/action

Suggest that trainees look at a real conflict and try to identify the emotions present in the different actors. They may be able to identify attitudes of competition, co-operation, submission, and avoidance. Ask them to consider which different attitudes among the different actors could help to bring about a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

HANDOUTS: ROLE CARDS AND SCENARIO

Scenario: The scene is a family get-together, the first for several months. Dinner has just started, when Grandfather Yassir turns to his 15-year-old granddaughter, Mariam, and asks her what she is planning to study at college. Mariam has not told her family that what she intends is to go to drama school. Her parents have always expected her to go into the nursing profession, like her aunt Salma. She decides now that it is the time to tell them about her plans. In addition to Mariam, Yassir and Salma, Mariam's mother, Nadia, is also at the dinner table.

Nadia: You are convinced that your daughter will be unhappy all her life if she tries to pursue a career in acting. It is a profession where finding work is difficult and uncertain, and it offers no financial security. You cannot accept that she will go to drama school, although you can see it is what she has decided she wants to do. You see this as a mistaken decision, and you know that she will regret it later. Although she is angry with you now for not supporting her decision, *you will not support her decision* and you believe she will be thankful when she understands the situation better. You know it will be better for her own happiness and security.

Yassir: You love your granddaughter very much, but you are surprised and disappointed by her decision to study drama. You know she is very talented and could be successful in various fields, and you will try to persuade her to study something more appropriate. You believe that drama is not useful, and nor does it have a good reputation for young women. You would much rather that Mariam found something more respectable, more worthwhile, and more suited to her abilities. However, *you do not want to push Mariam into something that she is not interested in or happy to do*. You may in the end be prepared to accept her position if she is really determined that she cannot do anything else.

Salma: You are a nurse, and you understand very well the difficulties of working in that profession. You cannot see anything particularly advantageous about Mariam going into the nursing profession, but you do not intend to take side in this argument. *You think that the decision has nothing to do with you:* It concerns Mariam and her parents. You think Mariam should be able to decide what is best for her, but you do not think that it is your place to say that at this time.

Mariam: You have been thinking about this decision for many months now but have not spoken about it before with your family. You know what you want to study is drama and become a professional actress. You are very determined that this is what you will do: you do not intend to be pressured by your family into going into something you're not interested in. You know there is no point in studying anything else as a back-up option, because this will be expensive and time consuming and will only make it less easy to do what you believe you are best suited doing. *You will not alter your decision to study drama, but you do want the support of your family*, so you will try to explain your decision as well as you can and try to make them see your point of view.

ACTIVITY 6: MOMENTS OF SILENCE

Introduction

This exercise helps to understand the usefulness of silence for focusing and communication.

Source: T-Kit 11 Mosaic, developed by the Council of Europe and the European Commission and edited by ZOA in Iraq.

Themes: communication, teambuilding, settling down

Learning objectives

- ✓ Experience the strength of silence
- ✓ Learn how to use silence as a buffer, an opportunity to switch gears, a source of inspiration, and/or healing

Duration: 10-20 minutes

Group size: Any

Preparation

Prepare a large empty space

Method

- Introduce the trainees to the idea of this exercise by saying some of the following:

Seemingly, a moment of silence is a simple and unthreatening thing, but in many societies, the cultural reward of speech, noise and activity are considerable. On the other hand, we use silence in destructive ways, as when it is used by sulking, to punish a child or a loved one for bad behavior. Therefore, when silence is called on for its own sake, as a source of healing and inspiration, many people become very uncomfortable with it, not knowing what to expect, perhaps having had some unpleasant experiences with it in the past.

- The moment of silence is not free time. Make sure you “hold” it by being concentrated and present.
- Ask the trainees to find a place in the room where they feel comfortable.
- Clearly indicate when the moment of silence begins and when it ends. You can do this by clapping your hands at the beginning and at the end, or by using a musical instrument.

Debriefing

- Was it difficult to stay silent? Why?
- What were you thinking during the silent moment?
- What does silence mean to you?

- How can silence contribute to transforming conflict?
- How do you deal with such moments in real life?

Tips for facilitators

To alleviate the initial discomfort, you might like to follow these guidelines:

- A moment of silence should be used when your group has enough sense of community to tolerate and share silence without too much discomfort.
- Before it is used, it should be explained in a way that trainees know what to expect and what is expected of them. Explain it as “switching gears” time, or as time to get in touch with one’s feelings. Use whatever explanation seems natural to you, but do not preach about it. People should be invited to swim, not drown in it.
- Establish beforehand a signal by which the silence will be ended, so that people will know.

It may be a useful tool for gathering trainees together after a role-play or a simulation exercise, when a bit of reflection time before a large discussion would be helpful. It is also used for helping people to settle down.

Day 1

COMMUNITY BUILDING

1. Introduce the training.
2. Strengthen social cohesion by promoting the practical understanding of community building

Time	Activity	Objectives
8:30 – 9:30	Introduction (15 min) Training objectives (5 min) Agenda (5 min) Pre- training questionnaire (10 min) Expectations (10 min) Rules (5 min)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give trainees an overview of the training • Create a safe and friendly environment for learning • Obtain a baseline measure to determine the effectiveness of the training
9:30 – 11:00	Session 1: Community building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand community and community building • Strengthen the ability to take responsibility in the community • Promote critical thinking
11 :00 – 11 :15	Coffee break (15 min)	
11 :15 – 12 :30	Activity 1: “Our village” dealing with the following themes: participation, environment, diversity, and minorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster democratic decision making • Develop team building and group work skills • Promote respect for the needs of others • Encourage co-operation and creativity
12 :30 - 13 :00	Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote critical thinking • Stimulate giving feedback • Encourage reflection
13 :00	End of session	

Day 2

SOCIAL LEADERSHIP

1. Strengthen social cohesion by promoting the practical understanding of social leadership.

Time	Activity	Objectives
8:30 – 9:00	Recap Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the key elements of yesterday's session • Allow the trainer to clarify or confirm certain concepts and notions learned so far
9:00 – 11:00	Session 2: Social leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on leadership • Understand social leadership and social authority • Explore and reflect on one's own reputation • Promote social leadership in the community
11 :00 – 11 :30	Coffee break (15 min)	
11 :30 – 12 :30	Activity 2: "Who would you safe?" dealing with the following themes: clash of values.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To foster discussions about ethics, values, and dilemmas • To raise awareness of the complexity of putting values into practice
12 :30- 13 :00	Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote critical thinking • Stimulate giving feedback • Encourage reflection
13 :00	End of session	

Day 3

COMMUNICATION

1. Strengthen social cohesion by acquiring effective communication skills.
2. Strengthen social cohesion by learning how to give and receive feedback in a constructive way

Time	Activity	Objectives
8:30 – 8:45	Recap Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the key elements of yesterday's session • Allow the trainer to clarify or confirm certain concepts and notions learned so far
8:45 – 10:15	Session 3: Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the importance of good communication in relationship to peace and community building • Understand verbal and non-verbal communication • Reflect on one's own communication • Promote an understanding for the needs of others • Encourage the effort to understand one another • Foster good communication skills
10:15-11:30	Activity 3: "I can't hear you! Are you listening?" dealing with the following themes: active listening, conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable trainees to learn how to listen to others • Understand better the feelings of other people and be able to communicate well with them, thus avoiding misunderstandings and false judgments which may hinder a peaceful relationship
11:30 – 11 :45	Coffee break (15 min)	
11 :45 – 13:00	Session 4: Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand the difference between constructive and non-constructive feedback • Understand the importance of constructive feedback in peacebuilding • Reflect on one's own ability to give and receive feedback • Strengthen the ability to give and receive feedback in a constructive way
13 :00	End of session	

Day 4

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

1. Introduce the training
2. Strengthen social cohesion by promoting the practical understanding of peace, conflict, and conflict resolution

Time	Activity	Objectives
8:30 - 9:30	Recap Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the key elements of yesterday's session • Allow the trainer to clarify or confirm certain concepts and notions learned so far
9:30 – 11:00	<p>Session 5: conflict resolution</p> <p>During the session: Activity 4: "when I am in a conflict situation" dealing with the following themes: conflict, behaviour, and feelings in conflict (30 min).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand conflict and conflict resolution • Reflect on personal attitude in conflict • Obtain knowledge on how to improve conflict negotiation • Reflect on one's behaviour when in a conflict situation • Become aware of one's feelings when facing conflict • Explore one's own ways of dealing with conflicts
11 :00 – 11 :15	Coffee break (15 min)	
11 :15 – 12 :30	Activity 5: "A family row" dealing with the following themes: peace and conflict, intercultural learning, gender equality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify different attitudes towards a conflict • Understand the influence of emotions on the outcome of a conflict • Consider personal responsibility in a conflict • Discuss cultural differences towards conflict
12 :30- 13 :00	Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote critical thinking • Stimulate giving feedback • Encourage reflection
13 :00	End of session	

Day 5

MENTAL HEALTH

1. Understand the importance of mental health in relationship to social cohesion
2. Acquire practical skills to improve the wellbeing of ourselves and others

Time	Activity	Objectives
8:30 – 9:00	Recap Day 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the key elements of yesterday's session. Allow the trainer to clarify or confirm certain concepts and notions learned so far.
9:00 – 11:00	Session 6: Mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the relationship between mental health and peace and community building Strengthen the ability to assess one's own mental health
11 :00 – 11 :15	Coffee break (15 min)	
	Activity 6: "Moments of silence" dealing with the following themes: communication, teambuilding, settling down	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquire practical knowledge to promote mental health Acquire practical skills to support someone with mental health issues Experience the strength of silence <p>Learn how to use silence as a buffer, an opportunity to switch gears, a source of inspiration, and/or healing.</p>
12 :00- 13 :00	Wrap-up of the training and feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize training material Consolidation of training material Promote critical thinking Stimulate giving feedback Encourage reflection
13 :00	End of session	

Annexes

<i>Annex 1</i>	<i>Protocol Social Cohesion Questionnaire</i>
<i>Annex 2</i>	<i>Social Cohesion Questionnaire</i>
<i>Annex 3</i>	<i>Training Feedback Form</i>

Annex 1

Protocol Social Cohesion Questionnaire

- Introduce yourself
- State the purpose of the questionnaire (“we are looking for your opinion”)
- Assure the information will be kept private
- Inform respondent of the questionnaire duration (20 minutes)
- Let the respondent know that their participation is voluntary; they can decline or discontinue the questionnaire anytime.
- Highlight the advantage for the respondents. Although they won't receive compensation, their involvement will contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian programs.
- Ask for the respondent's consent. If the respondent requires parental / adult permission, request one from the parents. Make sure to note down if consent is received.
- Thank the respondent for participation.

Annex 2

Social Cohesion Questionnaire

Annex 3

Training Feedback Form

Please answer the questions anonymously

Date:

Trainers:

CATEGORY 1: Trainers-Specific Questions

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree					
The trainers clearly presented the skills to be learned.										
The trainers explained concepts clearly.										
The trainers were helpful when I had difficulties or questions.										
The trainers provided clear constructive feedback.										
The trainers encouraged participant questions and participation.										
How successful were the trainers in creating an environment that was conducive to learning?	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
Considering both the limitations and possibilities of the subject matter and the training, how would you rate the overall effectiveness of the trainers?	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

CATEGORY 2: Participant Self-Evaluation Questions

How many training sessions did you attend?	
How many hours have you spent, during the training period, on reviewing notes, reflecting, and any other work outside of sessions?	
How many hours have you spent, during the training period, on supplementary readings and exercises, in particular?	

Notes

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