

Dialogue is necessary for change

Dialogue is a natural part of our lives; it is how we form relationships with family, friends, and colleagues.

Dialogue is simply the talking, listening and learning that we use to build relationships based on trust and understanding. It is this basic trust and understanding that enables us to find solutions to our differences and disagreements.

Dialogue is therefore a

dialogue fails in the long-term. Such 'non-dialogue' change tends to only increase division, tension and the entrenching of attitudes. People feel betrayed and excluded and hold on to these negative feelings into the future; feelings that ultimately form the beginning of the next conflict.

When it comes to dialogue on a social and political level, a structured dialogue

participants and have joint ownership of the process. The dialogue process must also take place at all levels in society; from the community level, to the national leadership level. Such public involvement and consensus is necessary for changes at the political level to be sustainable.

must provide a comfortable space for all the participants to speak freely.

This environment is essential to reflect on the root causes of the conflict and to facilitate new and innovative solutions to problems. A process which is not inclusive and independent

The secret to successful dialogue lies in participants

is about minds unfolding and learning; it is about putting

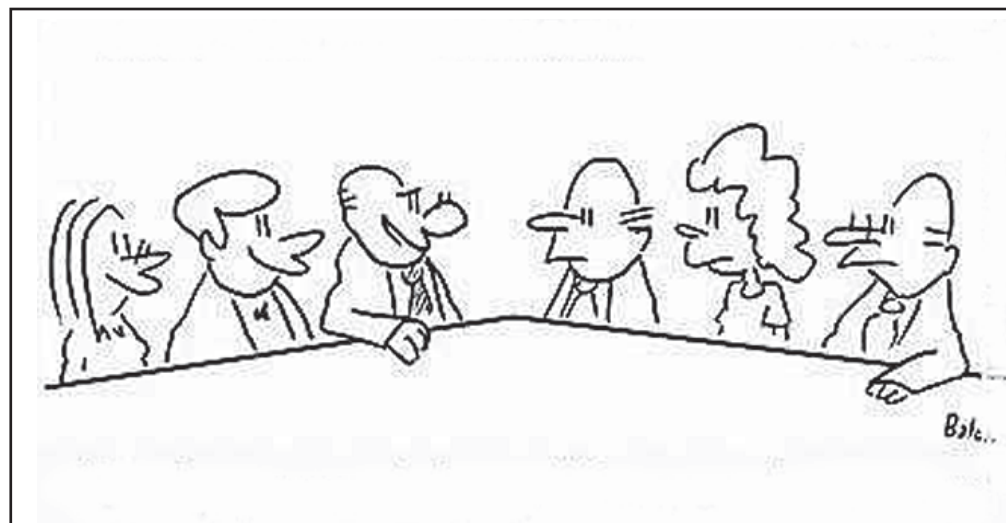
The secret to successful dialogue lies in participants coming together to understand each other's point of view. It goes beyond just talking, it is about minds unfolding and learning ... about putting oneself in the other person's shoes.

History shows that trying to introduce change without open inclusive dialogue fails in the long-term. Such 'non-dialogue' change tends to only increase division, tension and the entrenching of attitudes.

vital ingredient for introducing change; changes at home, changes in the workplace, and in particular long-term social and political change. History shows that introducing political change without open, inclusive

process is usually required. Such a process is capable of introducing sustainable positive change.

For a dialogue process to be successful, all parties need to be equal and willing



Dialogue is about talking, listening and learning. (Source: www.CartoonStock.com)

To secure inclusiveness and joint ownership, the process must be independently managed and facilitated and it

will not provide a sustainable solution and will only fuel distrust and escalate the conflict.

coming together to understand each other's point of view. A successful dialogue goes beyond just talking, it

oneself in the other person's shoes.

A successful dialogue will identify the core reasons for the conflict and division and take a long-term perspective in finding solutions.

Now is the time for a national dialogue for change in Fiji.

CCF urges Fiji's community and national leaders, along with Fiji's international neighbours and partners to open up to dialogue, to construct a new pathway forward based on talking, listening and learning.

Can dialogue provide a way forward for Fiji?

This question was posed to people passing by in a Suva street, and their answers are given below.



Kitione Tui, 49
Security Officer, Caubati
Yes, dialogue plays an important role in solving conflicts. People have lots of issues and different opinions that can be put through dialogue to the government.



Arishma Nandni, 27
Admin Assistant, Vatuwaqa
No, dialogue has always been present and so far there has not been much change. People at the grassroots level have voiced their opinions through the media and yet they have been ignored.



Gabrielle Tunai
Medical Officer, Suva
Yes, it will certainly help to move the country forward. People need to actively participate and understand and this will be possible through more dialogue.



Eleni Duvuna, 35
Self-employed, Sawani
What is dialogue? I don't get the concept of dialogue at all. I am sure there are a lot of people who also don't understand it. We should educate people on dialogue before we practice it.



Ranjeeta Bala
Register Controller, Samabula
No, I don't think dialogue would make much difference now. It has been tried before and the past has shown it carries no weight. We need to see active change and not hear false promises.



Zonal Rishal, 20
Sales Assistant, Nausori
Yes, if people can come together and voice out their opinions, a lot of misunderstandings can be cleared. This works well for both communities and the government as well.



Loyola Vakaqotabua, 22
Student, Samabula
Yes, dialogue is a form of peace building and that is exactly what the nation needs. We have seen outcomes of coups and protests. We should give dialogue a chance and see what happens.



Alipate Gukibau, 52
Estimate Officer, Toorak
No, there is no use holding dialogue. So far that's all people have been doing. Our new motto should be: less talk more action.

Useful links

- Dialogue by Design: www.dialoguebydesign.net/
- Search for Common Ground: www.sfcg.org/
- Conciliation Resources: www.c-r.org/
- Community Dialogue: www.communitydialogue.org/

Processes involving Dialogue

Dialogue is a primary method of conflict resolution. Around the world, dialogue has been used in peace processes to move countries forward. Some have not been successful and others have been partially successful. Below are examples of countries where conflict resolution processes have enabled peace.

Northern Ireland - In 2007, years of dialogue saw the formation of a multi-party government in Northern Ireland, ending over 30 years of communal conflict which had claimed over 3500 lives.

South Africa - The negotiation process for the 1996 South African constitution established democracy in this country ruled under an apartheid system since 1948. The 1996 Truth and Reconciliation Commission process enabled healing from the violent conflict under apartheid.

Bougainville - Almost a decade of bloody conflict was ended through a political negotiation process between Bougainvilleans and the Papua New Guinea government. Commencing in 1997, it culminated in the Bougainville Peace Agreement of 2001. The agreement enabled the negotiation for an autonomous Bougainville government.

Aceh - A dialogue process led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding by the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement in August 2005. This ended more than 30 years of armed conflict and suffering in Aceh, although peace is still fragile there.

Fiji - The 1997 Constitution process was geared at conflict resolution as the document made provisions for power-sharing. The recent President's Political Dialogue Forum is also a conflict resolution process that appears to have stalled temporarily.

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