



COVID-19 GUIDANCE

Getting to win-win solutions

Conflict-resolution tool

During the current pandemic, stresses among people and communities may increase and lead to disagreement and conflict. This guidance has been adapted from our peacebuilding resources to help people address conflict in a constructive way.

This resource is for those who may already be involved with peacebuilding activities, but can be used by anyone who wishes to understand and use conflict-resolution tools in their family and / or community. It includes guidance on how to bring people back together where conflict has led to violence or hurt.

1. Identify needs and interests

Get behind stated **positions** to uncover the underlying **needs** and **interests**. What are the basic needs at stake for each party?

Definitions

Positions are the public expression of the aim or goal of the person or group in a disagreement. It is the opening stance that they take. It is often stated in quite stark terms and may appear adversarial. Beneath this, however, are people's basic needs and interests. Getting beneath the stated opening positions to the level of interests and needs can often open up ways of resolving seemingly intractable problems.

Needs are the goals pursued by an individual or a group in order to survive. It may be things like the need to provide for their families, things such as food, shelter, education and health care.

Interests are what people require in order to meet their underlying needs. So, for example, to meet their need for food, their interest may be having access to land to farm; alternatively, it might be a reliable source of income and access to markets where they can buy food. This immediately opens up many more potential ways to resolve a disagreement.

2. Brainstorm options to meet the identified needs

- Don't judge ideas: don't reject anything, however wild it may seem.
 - Stimulate ideas rather than shut them down. Evaluation comes later.
 - A 'bad' idea may generate other ideas or become part of an eventual solution.
- Draw upon everyone's ideas.
- Go for quantity: the more ideas you have, the better the chance of a winner.
- Collaborate: build on other people's ideas.

3. Establish objective criteria for a solution

- What will a solution need to accomplish?
- How will we know we have a solution?
- List the things that an acceptable solution should do.

4. Refine options to develop the best solution

- Which options show the best potential for meeting the interests of both sides?
- Can several interests be met in the same option?
- How can problems be minimised or compensated for in some of the options?
- Can some elements be strengthened so they meet some interests more effectively?
- Remember that everyone needs to participate in shaping the solution – so all parties share in owning the final solution.

Advanced version of the conflict-resolution tool:

If the disagreement has already resulted in violence or hurt, the person(s) involved may need to begin with two earlier steps that address the hurt that has been caused. This will prepare the different sides to work constructively with each other. Firstly, they need to acknowledge that they have been enemies, that they have hurt each other, and then they need to reframe their relationship as neighbours facing a common challenge such as covid-19.

1. Enemies need to acknowledge past or present conflict

- Focus on the tangible details of the conflict.
- Recognise that the situation has been described in terms of **us vs them**.
- Create a safe place to look at what happened and the relationship between both sides.
- Use a trusted third person to facilitate this stage, acting as a referee.
- Work together to create a shared view that the conflict is negative:

'This is hurting us both – we do not want to do this any more!'

2. Different sides need to change their view of the relationship and start to see one another as 'neighbours'

- Focus on the 'why' and 'who' of the conflict.
 - What does each side care about most deeply in this conflict?
 - Why does it matter so much?
 - What are the motivations?
 - Where do the sides share responsibility for the conflict?
- 'We are both at fault – both victims and both perpetrators.'*
- Which needs and values are threatened or frustrated in this conflict?
 - Help people move from seeing their relationship as being '**us versus them**' to seeing one another as '**we together**'.

Identify and discuss common needs and motivations.