

**SHARING AND EXPLORING PACIFIC APPROACHES
TO DIALOGUE: A COMPENDIUM OF CASE STUDIES
FROM PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES**



THE DIALOGUE FIJI PROCESS



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Title: The Dialogue Fiji Process

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THE DIALOGUE FIJI PROCESS

SUMMARY

This case-study explores the process whereby Dialogue Fiji tried to engage the people of Fiji to have discussions on developmental issues in a way that could build mutual understanding and trust. The focus of the process was to foster the discovery of shared values and meanings, the (re)building of relationships and advancing problem-solving processes that serve a common good. The case study examines the dialogue methodology created by Dialogue Fiji and its experience conducting local-to-national level dialogues in Fiji.



1. CONTEXT

When Fiji became a nation on 10 October 1970 after nearly a century of colonial rule by Great Britain, independence did not bring an end to the many long standing differences that divide Fijian society. Fiji is divided by race, language, religion, region and wealth. In the period after independence, politicians exploited these differences and exacerbated, in particular, the racial animosities among the people. Escalation of racial tensions was at the heart of a series of four coups in the post-independence era: two in 1987, one in 2000, and one in 2006.

The most recent coup (2006) was headed by Commander of the Republic of the Fiji Military Forces, Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama who removed the democratically-elected government of Prime Minister Lasenia Qarase, from power, dissolved parliament, ousted President Ratu Josefa Iloilo and declared a state of emergency. Bainimarama stated that the coup was conducted to bring an end to race-based policies and to restore good governance. Unsurprisingly, the years that followed the 2006 coup were marked by significant acrimony among leading politicians, CSOs, chiefs and journalists. Although some recognized many of Bainimarama's policies as progressive in the sense that they supported universal principles of equality and non-discrimination, they disagreed with his methods: ruling by decree, restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly, and the lack of political participation and dialogue.

Under military rule, human rights violations have been reported and fear among the people of Fiji reinforced what is commonly called “the culture of silence”. The split between CSOs over their support for government policies and on the critical question of government engagement also led to a great deal of animosity and suspicion within the CSO sector. Despite such opposition, the government continued to move forward on its agenda for economic and political change and by 2010, it started to openly discuss plans for returning the country to civilian rule.

About this time, the national level CSOs realized that the military leadership was firmly in control of government functions and some began to seek new working relationships with government ministries. Some groups recognized Bainimarama's policies as progressive for supporting some of the universal principles of equality. Though distrust between CSOs and the government was still running high, CSOs sought ways to engage the Government of Fiji on a range of developmental issues in the hope of fostering more collaborative decision-making on many issues that affect the people's welfare. Many CSO

also recognized the need to restore the many shattered relationships at all levels of Fijian society.

This case-study explores the process through which Dialogue Fiji tried to engage the people of Fiji to have discussions on development issues in a way that could build mutual understanding and trust. The focus of the process was to foster the discovery of shared values and meanings, the (re)building of relationships and advancing problem-solving processes that serve a common good. The case study examines the dialogue methodology created by Dialogue Fiji and its experience conducting local-to-national level dialogues in Fiji.

2. PROBLEM

Although the justification for the coup was said to have been the end of race-based policies and the restoration of good governance, many in civil society believe that the coup and subsequent events have further deepened Fiji's inter-ethnic and political divisions not ameliorated them. Since the 2006 coup, Fiji has witnessed serious human rights violations and a gradual decline of social and political freedom. This decline accelerated after the 2009 abrogation of the constitution when the military declared a five-year period of "rule by decree." These decrees are issued at the will of the military. The lack of opportunities for citizens to gather and discuss issues has left people feeling disempowered and disconnected.

Groups in civil society maintain that the militarization of the State's democratic institutions, and the removal of personal freedoms lessen Fiji's chances of returning to sustainable democracy. Many people talk about "coup culture" which refers to a lack of patience with, and trust in, processes and procedures, and a reliance on swift, immediate change. Furthermore, the Public Emergency Regulation (PER) limited the accessibility and dissemination of information needed for a genuine dialogue process. Also, the lack of freedom has made people wary of participating in dialogue processes where there are no guarantees that they will not be targeted for expressing their opinions.

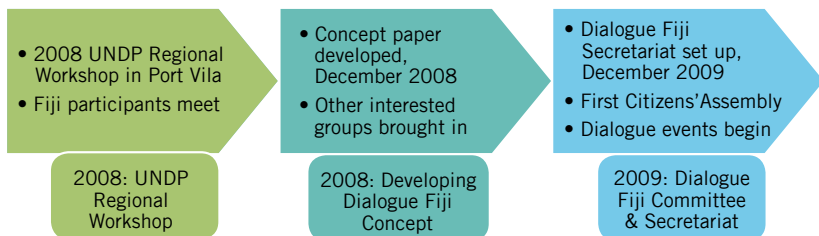
In April 2008, President Ratu Josefa Iloilo approved the convening of the President's Political Dialogue Forum to seek a way forward for Fiji. However, the initiative was short lived. When the PPDF convened for the third time in April 2009, four political parties were excluded from the discussions: the Soqosoqo Duavata ni Lewenivanua (SDL), National Federation Party (NFP), the United Peoples Party (UPP) and the Nationalist Vanua TakoLavo Party (NVTPL). Interim

Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama stated that the exclusion of the four parties was due to their inability “to operate beyond their political agendas, parochial and communal politics.” Many people in Fiji interpreted the exclusion of the four parties as a clear demonstration that the military government was not interested in dialogue with those it feels are against them.

During this same period, in May 2008, a group of civil society leaders, academics and senior civil servants from Fiji attended a Pan-Pacific workshop on conflict resolution in Port Vila, Vanuatu, organized by the UN. For representatives from Fiji, the workshop provided a safe space for dialogue and understanding, as well as an opportunity to heal and rebuild broken relationships. One of the commitments from the workshop was to continue the dialogue. Following the workshop, the group continued to meet privately and consult with key civil society and government actors. The group developed a concept note for a Dialogue Fiji initiative to provide support and broader momentum for the President’s Political Dialogue Forum. The concept paper also called for the convening of a Citizens’ Assembly designed to widen Dialogue Fiji’s mandate.

The founding members of Dialogue Fiji recognized that a national dialogue process aimed at healing deep societal and political divisions and rebuilding relationships was needed for Fiji to achieve sustainable democracy. They saw the Dialogue Fiji initiative as a way to provide mechanisms for long-term conflict resolution and national peace-building.

However, the political environment made it difficult to advance such a plan. The Public Emergency Regulation restricted engagement with the very groups Dialogue Fiji wanted to bring together. Dialogue Fiji recognized that dialogue was needed and in order to do that, they needed to create non-threatening ways to convene and engage key leaders. They also knew this approach needed to be sustainable and create an ongoing “culture of dialogue.”



By July 2009, it became clear that the President's Political Dialogue Forum was not going to go any further. Dialogue Fiji's experience with two initial dialogue processes in February and March of 2009 led them to believe that dialogue was still needed but that bottom-up conversations on developmental issues would be more viable than a high-level forum on the political situation. Thus, the group committed to finding ways to create opportunities and for citizens to talk about issues of concern, build relationships, and create understanding among community leaders in Fiji's four divisions to share common concerns.

From the beginning, it was decided that Dialogue Fiji's processes must be locally-driven and facilitated, with only occasional input and technical support from outside experts. The dialogues are convened by Dialogue Fiji and facilitated by a team of more experienced facilitators contracted from the Pacific Centre for Peacebuilding. This team was responsible for co-designing and co-facilitating the dialogues processes. What follows is a description of the model dialogue process developed by Dialogue Fiji and the Pacific Centre for Peace Building and how the model was applied at the divisional and national levels in Fiji.



3. THE PROCESS

Since 2009 Dialogue Fiji has convened a series of divisional dialogues targeting community leaders in each division. From this experience a replicable dialogue model has emerged. The same model was implemented again in 2012. The focus in 2012; however, put greater emphasis on six specific sectors: youth, women, media, faith-based organizations, traditional leaders, and the private sector. The Dialogue Fiji dialogue model/methodology consists of five specific phases:

1. A Citizens' Assembly

Convened every year to review Dialogue Fiji's work to validate and endorse Dialogue Fiji's plans and periodically review the results and impacts.

2. Preparation/Scoping Phase

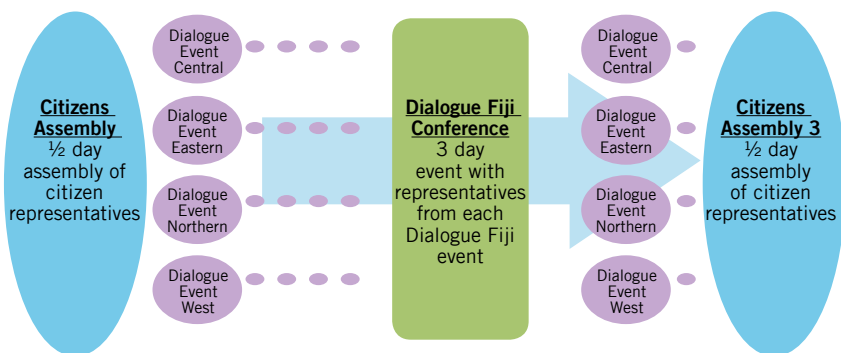
Preparation is vital for any dialogue process, and for Dialogue Fiji a series of scoping events are organized prior to every event.

3. The Dialogues

A three-day event for community leaders within each of the four administrative divisions in Fiji.

4. Follow-up

The follow-up events are important for checking in with participants, to see if there has been continued momentum, and to gather information on key issues and topics for future dialogues.



Supporting Training Programmes

4. The Dialogue Conference

This national event is the culmination of the four divisional dialogues. For three days representatives from each division engage in dialogue with senior government representatives on issues raised in their respective divisional dialogues.

The Citizens' Assembly

A Citizens' Assembly is convened every year to review Dialogue Fiji's work and committee membership. The first Citizens' Assembly was convened in March 2009 to launch the Dialogue Fiji initiative to gather support from broader civil society. The concept of 'dialogue' was discussed, and some believed dialogue was not an action, that it was a "talk fest," stating they were tired of talking and action was needed to bring about democracy. Some agreed they would come back at a later time to engage should they receive approval from their respective organizations. New members for the first Dialogue Fiji committee were selected from a variety of sectors: youth, business, unions, interfaith, and minority groups. A government representative was later nominated by the Prime Minister's office to join the committee as an observer in July 2009, and later granted full membership status at the Citizens' Assembly in January 2010.

Scoping

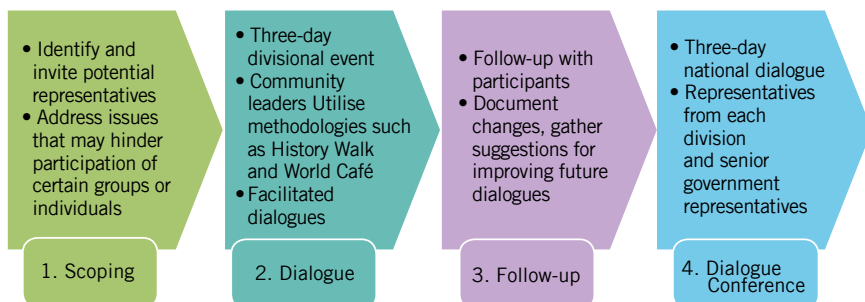
The scoping events are an integral part in preparing participants and the Dialogue Fiji secretariat for upcoming dialogues. The Dialogue Fiji team conducts a scoping event to:

- a. *Identify, build relationships and network with potential participants to invite and register their interest to participate in an upcoming dialogue.* The Dialogue Fiji team travels to each town and meets with various stakeholders in each division. These stakeholders may include faith-based leaders, government departments, women's groups, and youth groups. Previous participants play a vital role in identifying and linking the Dialogue Fiji secretariat with community leaders from different sectors as potential participants. Meetings are organized with senior government leaders to help them better understand the process in hopes of encouraging attendance, either by themselves or representatives from their departments.
- b. *To address concerns and answer questions potential participants may have.* This process minimizes the fear of the unknown as the Dialogue Fiji team attempts to address questions or concerns that hinder interest to participate.

This also allows potential participants to better understand Dialogue Fiji's work. Typical questions raised at the scoping events include:

- a. Does Dialogue Fiji apply for a permit for the dialogue?
 - b. What will be the issues raised in the dialogue?
 - c. Does the interim government know about the process and do they participate?
 - d. What is dialogue?
 - e. Who will be coming to the dialogue?
- c. *To identify a suitable venue.* The venue selected must be conducive to building relationships, establishing trust, and accommodating participants. Preference is given to venues that are close enough to transportation hubs, but some distance from city centres to discourage participants from leaving during lunch breaks for work or errands.

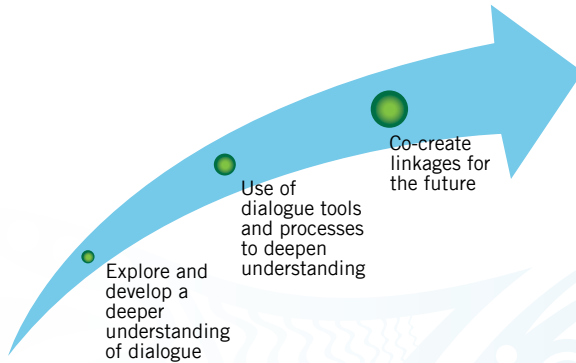
These scoping events are conducted in small groups, sometimes organized by past dialogue participants and/or individual face-to-face meetings. Participants are given registration forms and encouraged to attend. Scoping also allows Dialogue Fiji to better understand the expectations of potential participants and prepare facilitators on issues that may arise during the dialogue.



The Divisional Dialogues

Each three-day divisional dialogue focuses on creating a safe space where:

- Confidence and trust are built in order to (re)build sustainable relationships;
- Agreement is reached on strategies for overcoming challenges; and
- Focus is placed to how everyone can best contribute towards the development of their community and nation.

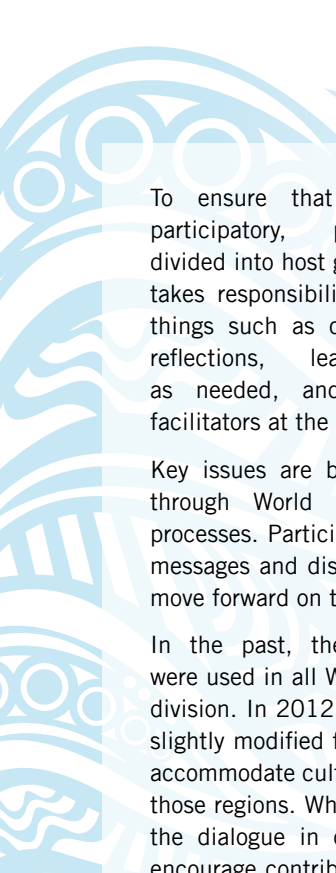


The Three-day Dialogue Road Map

The first day of the dialogue is spent on creating a safe space, and building relationships and trust. The second and third days are spent talking about key issues raised on the first day, while exploring opportunities for collaboration. Tools used include a History Walk, World Café, and Circle Process. See the sidebar for an explanation of these processes.

Setting the tone and creating a safe space from the beginning is vital to ensure a genuine dialogue process. Introductions are done through an exercise that asks participants to tell a story about their name. This encourages people to speak from personal experience, and has also helped to help them get to know each other, sometimes revealing connections and relations that were previously unknown.

Participants also create and agree to ground rules, creating buy-in for how the dialogues will function. During one dialogue, establishing ground rules turned into a frank discussion looking at how realistic it is to create space that's truly safe. Once participants were able to openly voice their opinions about the safety issue, they then agreed on how they would address the issue with the help of the facilitators.



To ensure that the process is participatory, participants are divided into host groups. Each group takes responsibility for one day for things such as organizing morning reflections, leading energizers as needed, and debriefing with facilitators at the end of the day.

Key issues are brought out mainly through World Cafés and circle processes. Participants agree on key messages and discuss how they can move forward on these issues.

In the past, the same questions were used in all World Cafés in each division. In 2012, the approach was slightly modified for each division to accommodate cultural differences in conversation styles and issues relevant to those regions. While land and governance are common issues in all divisions, the dialogue in on Vanua Levu was modified to include partner work to encourage contributions from women. Following the daily host group debrief, the Dialogue Fiji team now discusses any alterations needed to accommodate the needs of the participants.

Follow-Up

Follow-ups are organized after divisional dialogues, and before the Dialogue Conference, to provide opportunities for participants to continue their dialogue on issues brought up at their divisional dialogues. Follow-up also allows for:

- a. Document changes that have taken place after the dialogue;
- b. Preparation of participants and selection of representatives to attend the Dialogue Conference; and

History Walk

Objective: To give each participant the opportunity to share significant life events over the past 30 years

Participants are divided into four groups and given calico material, a string and pieces of colored paper. Participants have at least 5 minutes to write down key positive and negative events on the paper and place it on the calico timeline.

Once complete, participants share their stories while facilitators capture key messages and use in summarising. Facilitators process feelings about the exercise reminding participants that this exercise can raise difficult issues, and to take care of oneself.

The World Café Exercise

Objective: To explore commonalities and differences

Participants are divided into 4 groups and assigned to an initial café. Each café is given a specific question or topic for discussion.

Each café has a facilitated discussion for 40 minutes, and writes/draws issues raised on calico fabric. The last 5 minutes of each café is for summarization of key points.

Participants rotate to the next café until each group has visited all 4 cafes. Participants visit each café and to see all summaries captured.

- c. Gathering feedback on how the dialogue process can be improved

There are three possible ways Dialogue Fiji conducts a follow-up meeting:

1. Individual face-to-face meetings (email/phone if participants are not available to meet);
2. Geographical grouping of a one-day meeting; or
3. A divisional group meeting, either a half-day or full-day depending on the size of the group.

The Dialogue Conference

Each year the four divisional dialogues culminate in a three-day, National Dialogue Conference. The goal of the conference is to create a safe space for participants to deepen their understanding of dialogue as they engage and build relationships with key government representatives. The conference also seeks to explore opportunities to strengthen relationships, and engage with divisional and national issues brought up by participants in follow-up events. The Dialogue Conference follows a similar programme to the divisional dialogues utilizing World Café and circle processes.

The Circle Process

Objective: The Circle Process is a small group dialogue designed to encourage people to listen and speak from the heart in a spirit of inquiry. Groups sit in a circle and use an object, like a stick to monitor who speaks. The main rule is that the person holding the stick is the only one talking while the rest listen. When the speaker finishes, he/she hands the stick to someone else in the circle or to the person on the left or right.

Spin-off Events

Given the diversity of issues raised, and being a small organization with limited capacity, Dialogue Fiji does not convene dialogues on specific issues. Should pressing issues be raised, these issues are referred to other organizations with the expertise to convene dialogues around that issue. For example, during the first two years of both divisional and national dialogues in 2009 and 2010, land was a common issue. Dialogue Fiji referred the dialogue on land to the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) which had previous experience with this issue. Participants from divisional dialogues who had raised the issue of land were invited to participate in dialogues focusing on this issue with other stakeholders in the western and northern divisions. Other activities organized outside the scope of Dialogue Fiji's work include local dialogue groups formed by participants who chose to meet on their own following the dialogue.

5. TIMELINE

- May 2008: UNDP Conflict Resolution Workshop in Vanuatu
- Nov/Dec 2008: Develop first Dialogue Fiji concept note
- February 2009: Dialogue Fiji Secretariat established
- February 2009: 1st Community Leaders Dialogue by the Fiji Women's Rights Movement (which later became part of the Dialogue Fiji divisional dialogues)
- February: President's Political Dialogue Forum meeting to set agenda
- March 2009: First Citizens' Assembly
- March 2009: Eastern Division Community Leaders Dialogue
- April 2009: Easter – Court ruling and abrogation of 1997 Constitution
- July 2009: Dialogue Fiji review and planning meeting – amendment of Dialogue Fiji process to divisional dialogues
- September 2009: Northern Division Dialogue
- March 2010: Western Division Dialogue
- May – June 2012: Follow-up meetings
- July 2010: First Dialogue Conference
- September 2010: Conference follow-on meetings
- January 2011: Citizens' Assembly 2011
- March 2011: Central Eastern Divisional Dialogue
- May 2011: Northern Divisional Dialogue
- July 2011: Western Divisional Dialogue
- August 2011: Follow-on Meetings
- September 2011: National Dialogue Fiji Conference
- February 2012: Citizens' Assembly 2012
- May 2012: Scoping Activities
- July: 2012: Western and Central/Eastern Divisional Dialogues
- August 2012: Northern Divisional Dialogue
- September and October 2012: Follow-on meetings
- November 2012: National Dialogue Fiji Conference


6. PARTICIPANTS

The divisional dialogues range in size from 20 to 35 participants, and target community leaders within each division. The definition of community leaders is broad and includes traditional leaders, government officials, faith-based leaders, and leaders of both youth and women's groups. Participants are invited to register during scoping events, and are encouraged to let others in their communities know about the dialogues.

Inclusiveness is one of Dialogue Fiji's guiding principles, and a matrix of interested participants is systematically developed to ensure broad and balanced representation. Should Dialogue Fiji identify gaps in the representation of participants, efforts are made to invite representatives from any groups not represented. Extra efforts are made to ensure the participation of minority groups—not only so their voices are present at the dialogues, but also to accommodate language skills and provide interpreters as needed. Registrations are compiled, and selections are made to ensure a balanced representation in gender, age, geographical location, religion, ethnicity, level of work (local, divisional, national, regional, international), as well as issues participants are working on. Community leaders are identified during the selection process, and interested participants list their leadership roles and networks to assist the team in identifying the scope of their influence and how they might use the concepts and dialogue tools.

Potential participants represent a variety of interests. Some are eager for space to talk about issues, especially given the current political climate and lack of freedom of expression. Some are curious about dialogue and want to explore





and learn. Some want to know how dialogue can be used to address conflict within their own communities. Some government officials were directed to attend a dialogue, and were unsure of what to expect and what their role should be. However, many actively participated and expressed appreciation for the process. Some have encouraged other senior government representatives to attend because they recognize the need for dialogue.

7. CHALLENGES

Freedom of Expression

Many in civil society feel that there is currently no freedom of expression in Fiji, and there is therefore no protection to engage in dialogue on sensitive issues. One of the biggest challenges in bringing people together for dialogue is dealing with people's concerns and fears. People attend these dialogues knowing it is a risk, and that there is no guarantee against repercussions. The enforcement of the Public Emergency Regulation (PER) created fear for many dialogue participants and although the PER has been lifted, the fear to speak openly continues for many people. During scoping meetings potential participants often ask Dialogue Fiji if a permit will be granted, or if representatives from the interim government will be present. Attendees are told there will be a permit, and the interim government is aware of the process. Previous attendees address some of these concerns with new participants, and encourage both community leaders and government representatives to attend.

Fear

In the beginning there was a great deal of hesitation to attend due to fear, uncertainty as to who would attend, suspicion of Dialogue Fiji's intentions, and uncertainty over other participants' motivations. Dialogue Fiji recognized this, and began its scoping trips to answer questions from potential participants, and address issues that might later prevent participation. There was typically some hesitation during the first day of dialogue as participants gauge how safe the space is when they see certain representatives, such as police officers, in the room. Hopes and fears are addressed by facilitators on the first day before the dialogue continues. Sometimes this requires a government representative to state that he or she is there to participate with an open mind, and they are there to hear different views.

Definition of Dialogue:

There are various understandings of what dialogue is. The term 'dialogue' has been politicized. It is sometimes perceived as a one-way conversation. Dialogue Fiji allows participants to map their own understanding of dialogue and how it is different from others concepts such as consultation, negotiation and mediation. Attendees have the opportunity, often for the first time, to experience a genuine dialogue process.

Representation

In early sessions, there were challenges to bring in key government representatives. They had little understanding of what dialogue is, and some stated they were directed to attend. However, during the dialogue process these representatives said that they had experienced genuine dialogue and enjoyed the opportunity to engage with other participants. Once they trusted the process they were able to help identify and invite other government representatives.

Competing Processes

Both conveners and facilitators dialogue needed to be aware of other processes taking place and what kinds of information was being shared at those events. Multiple dialogue initiatives happening at the same time in the same localities could be confusing for dialogue participants. Facilitators needed to be able to explain and differentiate Dialogue Fiji's efforts from other efforts happening at the same time.

8. BREAKTHROUGHS

Creating a safe space for dialogue:

During one of the dialogues, participants spent most of the morning discussing issues about safety. Different participants expressed a need for dialogue to be honest, and that no participant should be taken to task by government representatives for honest opinions shared. The dialogue was able to continue after a senior government representative stated that the government representatives were there to listen and not report on participants. Later, participants were able to have frank discussions on difficult issues such as the Public Emergency Regulation and its impact on them, calling for a review and removal of the PER.

Bringing in key, interim government representatives

Initially, there were difficulties getting senior government representatives to attend the dialogues due to misperceptions about Dialogue Fiji as well as a fear of the unknown. However, thanks to UNDP's dialogue process, relationships between Dialogue Fiji and the government was strengthened. This helped create a better understanding about the work of Dialogue Fiji and an agreement for government representatives to participate. Following their participation in the dialogues, representatives recognized its importance and encouraged greater government representation in future dialogues.

The shift in issues from safe to 'sticky'

During the first series of divisional dialogues, most of the issues were focused on 'safe' issues such as development, which all agreed was needed. However, during the second series there was a shift and issues such as development, national dialogue processes, electoral reforms, the Public Emergency Regulation, and national reconciliation were raised and discussed.

Changing perception of Dialogue Fiji

During the first Citizens' Assembly in March 2009, many people were skeptical about the dialogue process. As some people began to attend the dialogues, over time, support for dialogues increased. The first Citizens' Assembly in 2009 comprised of 34 representatives. In comparison, in 2011 more than 80 people attended the event. The Dialogue Fiji Secretariat turned people



away because they'd reached the maximum number of participants they could accommodate according to the permit requirements. There was also a shift in the Citizens' Assembly discussions. The first Citizens' Assembly was met with a lot of opposition to the idea of dialogue, and statements were made on the need for more action towards democracy. However, after a few dialogues and hearing about the impacts of the dialogues, the conversations have shifted to focus on the need for more dialogue at different levels.

9. RESULTS AND IMPACTS

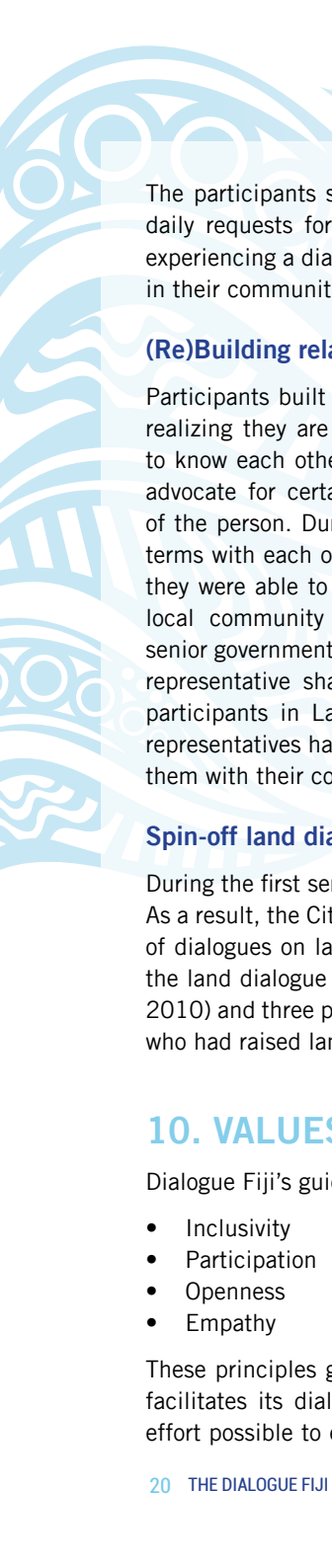
The success of the dialogues are measured by the levels of engagement and participation of different groups, participants feeling safe enough to speak openly about issues of concern, and the shift in conversations from safe to 'sticky' issues such as the Public Emergency Regulation. It is also measured by increased interest from certain groups wanting to participate, and requests for more dialogue.

Development of local dialogue groups

During the March 2010 Western Dialogue, there were discussions among people from the same town and the group members continued to meet after the dialogue. Dialogue groups were formed in Sigatoka, Tavua and Rakiraki. Past dialogue participants from these groups continued to meet and network after the dialogue. In Sigatoka, the group gave a presentation to the town council about the need to use dialogue to address conflicts in the community. The group in Tavua continued their relationship with participants in Lautoka and assisted the group with a water project. Also in Tavua, one participant requested the assistance of another participant to resolve a land conflict in her settlement. Through their efforts, and with assistance from the Dialogue Fiji Secretariat, they were able to bring about the renewal of seven leases in one settlement. A group of women in Rakiraki continue to work together to encourage dialogue to address conflict within their village, as well as in their local women's network.

Creating a culture of dialogue

As a result of the dialogues, participants stated the need for training on conflict resolution to better resolve local issues. Through support provided by UNDP Pacific Centre's Strengthening Capacities for Peace and Development (CPAD) programme grant, two three-day training workshops were held in Labasa and Rakiraki, along with the assistance from dialogue groups of community leaders.



The participants stated their appreciation for such a process as they receive daily requests for resolving conflicts as leaders in their communities. After experiencing a dialogue, they agreed they were better equipped to use dialogue in their communities.

(Re)Building relationships

Participants built relationships with others during the three days of dialogue, realizing they are all citizens of Fiji sharing common dreams. They also get to know each other better and come to a better understanding of why others advocate for certain positions on issues, and this changes their perception of the person. During one dialogue, two participants arrived, not on speaking terms with each other due to a personal conflict. However, during the process they were able to rebuild their relationship and continue to work together on local community projects. Relationships between community leaders and senior government representatives have also been built. One senior government representative shared that he has had regular communication with certain participants in Labasa, Tavua and Ba on issues such as land. Government representatives have also been able to network with some participants to assist them with their community work.

Spin-off land dialogues

During the first series of divisional dialogues, land was a common issue raised. As a result, the Citizens' Constitutional Forum (CCF) agreed to convene a series of dialogues on land given their past experience on the issue. Participants in the land dialogue included five participants from the Western Division (March 2010) and three participants from the Northern Division (Sept 2009) dialogues who had raised land issues with other stakeholders in those divisions.

10. VALUES

Dialogue Fiji's guiding principles are:

- Inclusivity
- Participation
- Openness
- Empathy

These principles guide the way in which Dialogue Fiji designs, organizes and facilitates its dialogue processes. The Dialogue Fiji Secretariat makes every effort possible to ensure that the dialogues are inclusive through a systematic

selection process, with special attention given to outreach to minority groups. Tools used in the dialogues are participatory, and participants determine the issues to be discussed, as well as ways for moving forward. Openness and Empathy are conveyed in the manner of the facilitators, the ground rules that are set for the meeting and the moderation of the discussions.

11. LESSONS LEARNED

Designing and convening a dialogue

When designing and convening a dialogue, it is vital to create and communicate clear objectives and delineate the roles of the different actors involved in the effort.

Defining Roles

Facilitators play a crucial role in ensuring the safety of the discussion, as well as facilitating conversations that may be seen as controversial. Facilitators must be impartial and knowledgeable of the process.

Knowledge of other processes

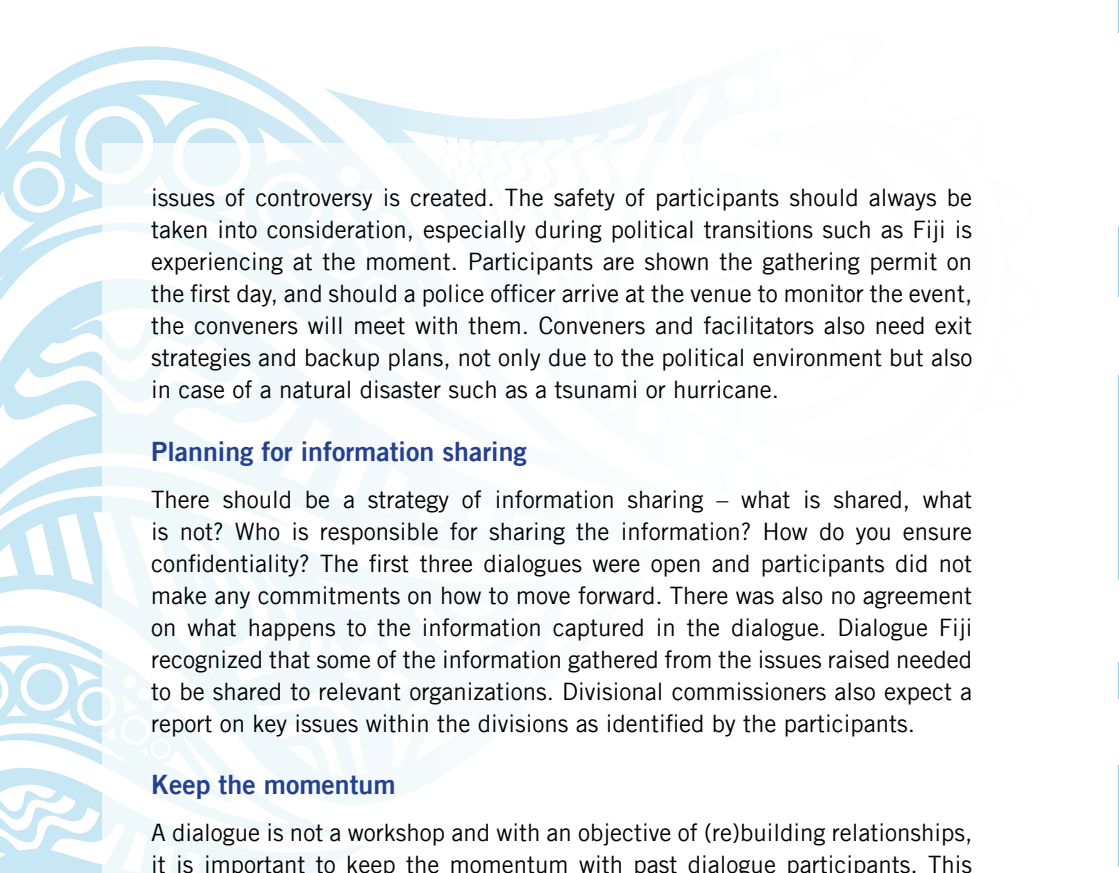
Both conveners and facilitators of dialogues need to be aware of other processes taking place, and explore possible linkages or share information (if available) that could enrich dialogue processes happening at various levels.

Preparation is key for any dialogue process

Ample time must be given for preparation. Adequate preparation of dialogue participants helps them to take ownership of the process, and also prepares them to enter into the dialogue. Facilitators must also be prepared so that they are clear on the objectives of the dialogue and the role they play. In addition, they also need to be aware of potential issues that may arise, and be prepared to address participants that may try to jeopardize the dialogue. Conveners need enough time to ensure that logistics are well organized so there are no disruptions during the dialogue.

Safety of Space

The creation of as safe a space as possible is important for dialogue to be a genuine process, and to create a high level of trust on the first day. When trust is built between participants on the first day, a safe space to discuss



issues of controversy is created. The safety of participants should always be taken into consideration, especially during political transitions such as Fiji is experiencing at the moment. Participants are shown the gathering permit on the first day, and should a police officer arrive at the venue to monitor the event, the conveners will meet with them. Conveners and facilitators also need exit strategies and backup plans, not only due to the political environment but also in case of a natural disaster such as a tsunami or hurricane.

Planning for information sharing

There should be a strategy of information sharing – what is shared, what is not? Who is responsible for sharing the information? How do you ensure confidentiality? The first three dialogues were open and participants did not make any commitments on how to move forward. There was also no agreement on what happens to the information captured in the dialogue. Dialogue Fiji recognized that some of the information gathered from the issues raised needed to be shared to relevant organizations. Divisional commissioners also expect a report on key issues within the divisions as identified by the participants.

Keep the momentum

A dialogue is not a workshop and with an objective of (re)building relationships, it is important to keep the momentum with past dialogue participants. This can be done through regular contact on email, phone or visits. Regular updates such as newsletters are also useful. Past dialogue participants also help with identifying potential leaders and bringing them into the dialogue as well as provide valuable feedback on improving the process.

