



CENTRE FOR PEACE &
CONFLICT STUDIES

HOW DO WE FOSTER HUMAN CONNECTION? TIPS AND TRICKS FOR FACILITATING PEACEBUILDING ONLINE.

What happens when peacebuilders go “online”



Peacebuilding always begins in the midst of crisis; challenging situations push us to get creative, strategic, and think beyond the way we’ve been doing things. How do we continue to build and nurture relationships with our partners, when most of us are now in zoom rooms instead of meeting face to face?”

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In March 2020, the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS) began transitioning to an online peacebuilding organisation. The increasing travel restrictions and preventive measures linked to the COVID-19 pandemic became a catalyst for CPCS to critically reflect on ways in which we approach peace work and to imagine what could be the benefits and challenges of running an online organisation with staff working remotely. In assessing options for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, it was clear that the violent conflicts that CPCS is engaged with would continue to unfold despite the global pandemic, and we would need to rapidly transition our organisation to adapt to continue our efforts to violent conflicts in Asia.

Having tested and adjusted the structure of our work, consulted with our partners, and deeply reflected within our team, CPCS has identified key lessons and principles for carrying forward our work, beyond the current climate of COVID19 restrictions.

This third article on **what happens when peacebuilders go “online”** focuses on tools, tips and tricks for facilitating peacebuilding online.

Technical Tips & Tricks for Peacebuilding Online

- **Facilitating Human Connection:** Online facilitation requires a technical and relational element such that the facilitator maintains the relationship and connections between and among participants that will evolve and develop in the process. Connectivity is the key.



- **Process Design:** Most of our work can continue through online communication tools such as Zoom, but this requires us to think differently on how to design each activity. For example, people do not have the same length of energy and focus for absorbing new information through zoom as a workshop; so, instead of turning a two-day workshop into a two-day zoom call, sessions need to be broken down.
- **Preparation:** Online requires more planning and preparation for the participants. For example, to establish the purpose and objectives of the process; you have to visualize what is going to happen, which means going through our mind the various stages of the process; anticipate what is going to happen and what might go wrong in the process; preparation of logistics is critical; communicating well with participants what is needed and what to prepare and sending of reading materials in advance.
- **Pre-Activity Guidance:** Send participants clear information about where and how to access the online sessions, a well-defined agenda with expectations, and any information or preparations needed from the participants. Include guidelines for participants – for example, should participants send questions or comments to one designated person or via the chat? Will there be a chance for follow up questions, such as a follow up discussion session? Will there be break-out rooms?
- **Co-facilitation:** Clearly defined roles for hosts and co-hosts, including one person to manage the technical process (admitting people to the call, collecting questions or comments, monitoring chat, etc), and one person for taking notes.
- **Peace Talks Videos:** share pre-recorded interviews and presentations about core topics, contexts, and lessons with participants before a session with a resource person. These videos give participants time to absorb the information in the video, and sessions for question and answer, dialogue and delving deeper into relevant aspects with the resource person.
- **Variety of tools in Zoom:** Practice with the participants how to use the messaging tools in Zoom, using the “thumbs up” emoji to acknowledge agreement; the “applause” to signal you have a question or comment. Assign one person to take notes of the key points in the messaging box, which also aids in translation and can provide a summary of discussion points for follow up. Use break out rooms for participants to have smaller discussions.
- **Alternative Platforms:** While Zoom offers an array of features, there are times when phone calls are more useful (if the internet connection is unstable).
- **Security:** Zoom features such as waiting rooms and passwords help protect the online space. For highlighting sensitive meetings, we also use WebEx and Jitsi platforms, as well as proton mail for sending encrypted emails and Signal for encrypted messaging.
- **Debriefing:** Allow ample time for the team to debrief after activities. This is something that used to be done informally over dinner or in the car after a workshop; now it must be more intentional. The peace process support team is having biweekly meetings to share reflections and debrief on the overall work.



Who is the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

The Centre for Peace and Conflicts Studies (CPCS) is a Cambodia-based, nongovernmental organisation that promotes strategic interventions to violent conflicts, with the aim of sustainable peace in Asia. CPCS emphasises strong partnerships with key people, both in terms of local partners who are working on conflicts in their communities and external partners who have invested in sustainable peace.

Specific interventions are developed in consultation with local partners, grounded in on-going analysis, and are flexible and adaptable to shifting dynamics. CPCS is a value-driven organisation, and our core values continue to guide us in making decisions and developing interventions. **Our values are:**

Grounded: We are committed to mindful interventions into violent conflicts. We design conflict transformation initiatives rooted in the critical and on-going analysis.

Trust: We create and nurture relationships with our partners and each other. Our relationships are honest, generous, heartfelt, and respectful. We practice humility, empathy, and solidarity. We value diversity.

Continued learning: We critically reflect, evaluate, and adapt our methods, programmes, and goals. We share our learning and learn from the approaches and experiences of others.

Excellence: We are committed to outstanding work. We strive to be excellent by challenging ourselves to ongoing improvement in our work.

Courageous: We embrace challenges, innovate, persevere, and push boundaries. We support and encourage others and ourselves to take the initiative and leadership.