



TOOLKIT

EDIN

**Empowering Dialogue
and Interfaith Networks**

Peer-to-Peer Capacity-Building Training
Between Young Religious Leaders and
Young Media Makers

THE EDIN TOOLKIT

Implementing interfaith dialogue for preventing violent extremism on social media

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Foreword

This Toolkit has been prepared by participants, trainers, and facilitators of the EDIN project of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) and the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism/UN Counter-Terrorism Centre (UNOCT/UNCCT) under the lead of Taras Dzyubanskyy.

The Empowering Interfaith Dialogue Networks project (“EDIN”) is an innovative platform of the UNAOC and the UNOCT/UNCCT that targets young religious leaders, representatives of faith-based organizations and young media makers in a peer-to-peer capacity building training. Through EDIN, participants are equipped with knowledge and skills needed to prevent violent extremism and to create alternative narratives to hate speech on social media. The project aims at employing interfaith dialogue on social media to defuse sectarian tensions, to counter terrorist narratives and to promote social cohesion.

Throughout EDIN’s modules, young religious leaders, representatives of faith-based organizations and young media makers are exposed to a variety of theoretical frameworks regarding interfaith dialogue. As countering hate speech is one of the highest priorities of the international community, EDIN participants are also familiarized with relevant international frameworks, United Nations documents and statements that deal with the theme of intersection of social media and interfaith as well as intercultural affairs. Human rights, Sustainable Development Goals, freedom of speech and freedom of belief are some of the themes pertinent to EDIN.

In the context of COVID-19 pandemic, hate speech and stigmatization as well as targeting religious communities has risen and this has only led to the necessity of this project. Intercultural/interfaith dialogue is an important tool to strengthen cohesion, promote understanding and acceptance. In the framework of EDIN, twenty young religious leaders from the three Abrahamic faiths worked together with the young media makers, creating social media campaigns, raising awareness about extremism, radicalization, and discussing best practices and ways of crafting alternative-narratives. The social media campaigns they created aim to highlight positive examples of peaceful coexistence and interfaith harmony among three Abrahamic faiths, celebrate diversity, promote inclusion and tolerance, and address radicalization, hate speech, prejudices and biases, extremist views about 'the other' and issues related to violence.

EDIN participants had the chance to learn about and learn from each other, as they brought their insights, experiences, and expertise to the whole group. EDIN was also an opportunity for young religious leaders and young media makers to meet, work and network, and to create individual and joint social media campaigns.

During the course of their workshops and training sessions, young religious leaders and young media makers explored some of the current weaknesses and challenges posed by societal challenges and issues, a rise in stigma, hate speech and hate crimes, xenophobia, and racism against vulnerable communities, including religious and faith communities. In light of these pressing challenges, EDIN participants were invited to think of the ways of addressing their contexts and of the ways to engage youth as well as other actors in their social media campaigns.

Conversations around the risks of misinformation during the coronavirus pandemic and a call for solidarity helped frame the thinking behind participants' social media campaigns as they explored the ways of contextualizing issues within their relevant audiences and communities. EDIN offered space for young religious leaders and young media makers to build and enhance their capacity to prevent sectarian violence and counter-terrorist narratives, using efficient communication tools and strategies to reach their community.

This Toolkit is a repository/summary of modules, methods, materials, and resources that were compiled and used during the peer-to-peer interfaith project, EDIN, between young religious leaders from the Abrahamic faiths and young media makers.

This Toolkit has been designed for interfaith/intercultural dialogue practitioners, organizations and individuals engaged in dialogue training and facilitation, or anyone else interested in this type of dialogue. This toolkit comprises the topics, themes, and outcomes of the main modules of the EDIN project and highlights the discussions which provided a theoretical and conceptual framework for participants in creating their social media campaigns. Each module is outlined, highlighting the key learning objectives and outcomes and providing a set of practical skills and guidelines with approaches to designing social media campaigns. In addition, the Annex includes relevant literature, materials and links to select United Nations documents.

Module 1

Creating Safe Space for Dialogue and Collaboration

What you will learn in this module

- Learn what dialogue is, and how it is different to other forms of communication, such as debate.
- Learn about dialogue and the necessary conditions for a safe dialogue space.

Religious and cultural diversity is a fact. However, not all people have the same understanding of what religious/cultural diversity is and what its implications are. Before any dialogue may take place, it is important to take the time to understand what dialogue is, to establish the level of trust and security needed for people of different cultural and religious backgrounds to come together.

This is particularly important when we want to collaborate with other “like-hearted” individuals and groups to develop campaigns for interfaith dialogue that come from very different walks of life.

Safe space for dialogue is absolutely essential to a campaign group’s dynamic and ability to execute a meaningful digital campaign that seeks to promote interfaith dialogue or prevent the misuse and abuse of religious beliefs.

What is dialogue?¹

In the purest sense of the word, dialogue is a style of communication between two or more people that seeks to increase each participating party’s understanding and empathy of one another.

In the context of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, dialogue is often deployed and administered in a process that involves discussing delicate and sensitive issues, feelings, and personal beliefs to prevent an escalation of violence or/and bring parties closer to a more beneficial situation.

One of the main goals of dialogue is change and transformation of all parties involved: on the level of thinking, behaving, and acting and achieving in a more mutually conscious way. Of course, one of the major challenges of dialogue is to bring people together across differing worldviews without it turning into a different style of communication, like debate. This is especially the case when working with others to develop a campaign – good dialogue and communication channels are critical to a group’s experience.

Dialogue is...

- **A transformative method.** It is transformative because it changes individual perceptions of the other and therefore of the conflict. As a result, it transforms the relationship between the parties from an adversarial relationship to a relationship of understanding and respect. It helps the participant to differentiate between the person and the problem; it helps

¹KAICIID’s Manual on Interreligious Dialogue, pp. 7–10

to view the individual within the larger group that is perceived as an adversary.

- **A safe space or “container”** for people to surface their assumptions, and to question their previous perceptions and judgments. It has emphasis on questioning, listening, and co-creation.

- **A process to build** relationships, raise awareness, and contribute to resolving conflicts. Therefore, dialogue must be approached with an attitude of learning and seeking understanding and collaboration. Such an attitude always puts the relationship and the purpose at the forefront.

Dialogue is not...

- **Advocacy:** in advocacy, the objective is to rally support for a specific idea or action in general. Therefore, the intention is to convince others of your perception. In dialogue, convincing others should not be the objective.

- **Conference:** in conferences, people come to share their theories and statements in a formal setting. Dialogue is less formal and based more on sharing personal and collective experiences, it is not a space for intellectualizing and theorizing.

- **Consultation:** in consultations, the organizers receive feedback or opinions on certain topics from the participants to get their feedback and sometimes to identify their needs or to develop recommendations for solutions. Dialogue is not a relationship between a beneficiary and a service provider where feedback is needed in one direction.

- **Discussion (or “Salons”):** in salons and discussions, participants explore a topic with the intention of learning more about a topic, with less emphasis on the participants. In dialogue, the participants and their relationships are at the centre of the process.

- **Debate:** in debate, each party tries to prove that their ideas are the right ones and disqualify the other party’s ideas. In Dialogue, participants come to learn about each other, rather than informing each other or proving each other is wrong.

- **Negotiation:** in negotiation, the parties come with the pressure of reaching an agreement. In dialogue, the intention is to learn about the other party’s perception of the topic without the pressure of reaching a resolution.

The conditions of dialogue

If you think about the deep-rooted nature of people's worldviews, particularly in the context of interreligious dialogue (more on this in **Module 2**), this challenge makes a lot of sense. Therefore, the challenge we take on is ensuring the conditions for successful dialogue are there. Be proactive with your group and set a series of guidelines early on how to engage with one another when working together on potentially sensitive topics.

Some of the conditions to consider including in guidelines should include:

- **Boundaries that Safeguard:** what is and is not acceptable in any given dialogue?
- **Respect between Participants:** do participants view each other as equals or is there a power imbalance that needs to be named and accounted for?
- **Openness to Transformation:** what room do participants have to change their minds and actions when presented with new information?
- **A Mutual Endeavour:** is the dialogue framed as opposing opinions coming into contact or as every participant bringing their experiences, views, ideas as assets to bring everyone closer to a truth or solution?
- **Realistic Expectations:** if true dialogue is an ongoing conversation, then what is the realistic next step to aim for in that conversation?

Annex B which contains “**Principles and Guidelines for Safe Engagement**” for the **EDIN Project** is one such example that seeks to codify these principles for the purposes of carrying out interreligious dialogue with a view to collaboration. Use this as a guide to create your own. If you are looking at using digital communications technology to collaborate remotely, keep some of the following things in mind:

- Provide opportunities for collaborators to spend some time getting to know each other through using facilitated, easy-entry ice-breakers and built-in informal times to gather.
- Consider utilising break-out rooms sessions that help participants gather virtually in small groups and lead similar discussions.
- Create and maintain shared folders and project documents via cloud technology, particularly those that allow asynchronous and simultaneous editing.

Module 2

Interreligious Dialogue (IRD)

What you will learn in this module

- Strengthen knowledge on interreligious dialogue.
- Find out about religious scriptures on the topic that are related to the theme of interreligious dialogue.
- Familiarize yourself with the best practices in the field of IRD and learn about challenges across the world.
- Learn more about exclusivism, inclusivism, universalism, and pluralism – that help orient oneself around the topic of interfaith dialogue and diversity.

Coming from different cultural and religious backgrounds, it is not uncommon for people to have different understandings of the process of dialogue, its role in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and theological foundations for dialogue.

Interreligious versus Interfaith: what's the difference?

The terms “interreligious” and “interfaith” are often used interchangeably; however, one must bear in mind that a distinction is often made, that is dependent on context. For example, the World Council of Churches distinguishes between “ecumenical dialogue” between various Christian churches, “interfaith dialogue” between the three so-called “Abrahamic faiths” and “interreligious dialogue” with religions from other civilizational backgrounds such as Hinduism or Buddhism. In other instances, the reverse can be true, with “interreligious” designating relationships between religions and religious institutions, while “interfaith” can have a broader meaning, inclusive of non-religious traditions such as traditional wisdoms, philosophical schools or atheistic beliefs.²

Is IRD part of classical religious culture?

- One should first acknowledge the historical variation of the concept: there has not always been such a thing as “interfaith” or “interreligious dialogue”, although there were to be sure relationships between representatives of different religions.
- Those relationships in pre-modern times could be cordial or very tense, but they were almost always motivated by conflictual motives (such as seeking conversion of the other, or “proving them wrong”, and always took place in a context of fundamental asymmetry of power between a religion backed up by

² See: <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/ecumenical-considerations-for-dialogue-and-relations-with-people-of-other-religions>

a political power and a minority faith, or between two powers at war.

- However, one can identify several key instances or seeds of true respectful dialogue between faiths throughout history, even before modern times, either in in-person encounters or in theological writings. Such examples include the writings of Ibn 'Arabi, Maimonides, Francis of Assisi, Johannes Reuchlin, Jacob Emden, Emir Abdelkader, etc.
- Even in Scriptures, one can find key ideas that form the basis of tolerance and pluralism, such as the Qur'anic phrase "No compulsion in religion".
- Dr. Alan Brill, in his book *Judaism and Other Religions: models of understanding* (London, 2010) has helpfully defined four fundamental approaches towards other religions: exclusivism, inclusivism, universalism, and pluralism where exclusivism means "my religion is true and all the others are false", inclusivism means "my religion expresses the truth in its most perfect form but other religions are approximations of the same truth", universalism means "all religions, including mine, are approximations of the same ultimate, universal truth" and pluralism means "that same ultimate, universal truth can only be expressed through the diversity of religions". He goes on to show that those four attitudes can be identified in the corpus of classical Jewish literature, and the same research could be undertaken in other corpuses.

Past and present challenges and obstacles to the IRD field

- Given that the notion of IRD does not exist per se in classical sources, **its legitimacy is often challenged** by more conservative segments of the religious communities.
- This issue also translates into **terminological and linguistic challenges**: how do you say "interreligious" and "dialogue" in Classical Hebrew or Arabic?
- Given the long history of political conflict and games of power manipulating religion, **religious minorities are often wary that "dialogue" is just a facade for proselytizing**.
- Along with universalist and tolerant messages, the many texts of **all religious traditions also contain exclusivist messages that perpetuate** stereotypes about the other groups. This was done in a context of community building in the face of discrimination and persecution, but constitutes a hindrance when those quotes are pulled out of context and weaponized by a given religious group - or its adversaries.
- In fact, no religious community is homogeneous and **intrafaith dialogue is oftentimes more difficult than interfaith dialogue** due to what Freud terms "the narcissism of small differences" (*Civilization and its Discontents*, 1930). Paradoxically, a broader panel including representatives of the various denominations in an interfaith setting can help overcome this issue.

- Interreligious dialogue often takes the easy road by starting with the similarities and the common ground between faith, stopping at the ascertainment of irreconcilable differences, on the rightful basis that trying to erase those differences would be tantamount to proselytizing or syncretism. The question being: **how do we move forward from this point on?**

IRD as a major tool for mending the present and building the future

The core idea of the EDIN project is to use IRD as a stepping stone for interfaith cooperation in peace- and community-building projects.

The questions that it explores are:

- What is the place of IRD in an increasingly secular/pluralist global context?
- What role does the Internet have in IRD and peacebuilding generally?
- How do you create these conditions in the online world?
- How can online IRD and peacebuilding support real-world efforts to resolve conflict?

Core principles for conflict resolution

Interfaith studies can help us identify core principles common to all faiths that can be usefully employed in conflict resolution:

- First and foremost is **the Golden Rule: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellow.”**
- Its corollary being: **“Do not judge your fellow until you’ve been in his/her stead.”**
- **Acknowledging one’s own prejudices** and trying to understand that if we switched places, we would have good reasons to think likewise.
- Being aware that tolerance and righteousness, as well as prejudice and violence, are not exclusive to any group: **“There are now two kinds of people in the world: those who are happy to live and engage with people who are not like themselves and those who are not.”** (Simon Schama)
- All religions emphasise **the dignity of every single human being**, whatever their gender, age, class, faith.
- All religions emphasise that **humanity is responsible for the world**, which translates into environmental and social concerns that can constitute the basis for fruitful interfaith cooperation.

Module 3

Real-World Violence and Digital Worlds: The Starting Points for Online Peacebuilding

What you will learn in this module

- Learn evidence-based starting points of digital storytelling for interfaith dialogue (IRD) and preventing violent extremism (PVE) and engage with different examples of digital storytelling techniques for IRD and PVE.
- Learn best practice principles of effective digital media and storytelling for IRD and PVE.
- Access to follow-up resources that will assist participants with the implementation of their digital campaigns.

With more and more young people joining and using social media, digital is becoming the new reality. Instances of hate speech and digital violence and radicalization through social media are the current challenges that need to be addressed because we know that there are very real consequences that flow from them. However, the relationship between online hate and real-world violence is not so straightforward.

What is the relationship between real-world violence and online hate?

On one hand, there have been very clear links between social media and destructive real-world outcomes. As of this writing, there have been at least 8 acts of mass violence directly reference the livestreamed March 15 terrorist attack in Christchurch 2019.

On the other hand, the research shows – time and time again – that it is simply not enough to encourage individuals to act in any given way using campaigns or media.

The relationship between extremism, polarisation, radicalisation, and the internet – particularly social media – is not cut and dry. Neither hate speech nor radicalisation are entirely new phenomena – however, the consequences and manifestations have changed due to the digital landscape.

But at the same time, so too have the opportunities for peacebuilding in this landscape.

So, what does online dialogue and peacebuilding look like?

Peacebuilding, via online dialogue, takes many forms because it involves any activity that takes place in a digital space that seeks to make online environments safer for everyone, no matter their race, ethnicity, religion, orientation or other identity attribute.

In fact, it would be likely that you come across examples of it all of the time without being conscious of it. Some of the common forms of online peacebuilding includes:

- Interventions conducted by individuals who wish to engage with those members of their community engaging in risky, anti-social behaviours online. This can be through a very public discussion on an open forum or the comment section of a news article or in private via a messenger application.
- Telling and disseminating human stories using various social media platforms to humanise and celebrate diverse groups of people whose stories may not be widely available, but need to be told.

- Developing and executing digital campaigns, advocating for a specific cause or goal, ranging from awareness raising and petition signatures to organising protest and offline actions.

- More recently, social media companies have been adopting AI and algorithmic technologies to help with the detection of potentially harmful content before it reaches broader audiences. It should be noted here that social media companies have conceded that AI-led interventions are not a panacea and that human judgment will always be critical in deciding what content stays and what content should be removed for safety reasons.

For the purposes of this Toolkit, we will primarily be focussing on the methods of interfaith dialogue and storytelling and digital campaigning on social media, as this provides with a multitude of options in terms of genres, formats and platforms that suit you and your audience the most.

Consider some of the following digital campaign types:

GENRE (WHAT?)	FORMAT (HOW?)	PLATFORM (WHERE?)
Comedy (Satire / Memes / Skits)	Audio-Visual	Facebook
Educational (Explainers / Resources)	Infographics	Instagram
News (Reports / Analysis)	Podcast	YouTube

GENRE (WHAT?)	FORMAT (HOW?)	PLATFORM (WHERE?)
Inspirational	Animation	TikTok
Music / Dance	Blog / Vlog	Tumblr
Social Experiment / Reality	Photo-essay / Photovoice	Bespoke
<i>What other categories can you think of?</i>	<i>What other creative formats do people use online?</i>	<i>What other platforms do people use?</i>

What works best? Countering hate or promoting love?

"... projects that are most successful do not seek to comprehensively reshape the status quo, but rather aim to facilitate conversation, encourage awareness, or dispel misinformation." (Ferguson, 2016)

There is no silver bullet approach to online peacebuilding. As stated earlier, audiences of our efforts cannot simply be willed into our intended actions, and have to be given the opportunity to place themselves within any given story or narrative.

While there are certainly best practices about audience responses to different categories of content, the most important thing in any digital campaign is that it is underpinned by a well-thought-out **campaign narrative** and **strategy to execute this narrative**.³

(Really) understanding narrative

According to Archetti (2016):

"We all intuitively understand the meaning of "narrative": it is a sequence of events tied together by a plot line. Technically, however, narratives are something deeper and more complex. As Stephanie Lawler (2002: 242, her emphasis) writes, for instance, narratives do not simply "carry" 'a set of "facts"': they are

³ Designing, executing and monitoring strategy will be explored in Module 6 using the established GAMMMA+ model in digital campaigning and the methods to keep track of the success of your campaign.

'social products produced by people within the context of specific social, historical and cultural locations'. They are 'interpretive devices through which people represent themselves, both to themselves and to others' (ibid). In this sense narratives are central to the construction of identity (Somers and Gibson, 1994; Benwell and Stokoe, 2006: 42)."

Before progressing any further, it would be beneficial to revisit the concept of narrative in the context of online dialogue and peacebuilding efforts. If dialogue is a method of communication between two or more people, think of narrative as the form that knowledge, experiences and information takes when moving along this communication channel. For our intents and purposes, it might be useful to think of your campaign as a form of dialogue with your audience.

What form will your campaign narrative take?

Speaking on the social nature of narratives, Archetti (2016) continues:

"First, a narrative does not exist independently from individual agency. Narrative is the means through which people 'connect together past and present' (Lawler, 2002: 242). This occurs through a process of 'emplotment' through which apparently unrelated events become 'episodes' of a coherent plot. (ibid: 245-246)."

"Second, a narrative is a collective construction. As Linde points out, even 'an individual's life story is not the property of that individual alone, but also belongs to others who have shared the events narrated—or were placed to have opinions about them' (Linde, 1993 in Linde, 2009: 4) by having 'some expertise or authority.' (ibid: 5)."

This is extremely important to consider because much like traditional narratives such as fairy tales, parables, news, campaign narratives – extremist or peacebuilding ones – provide lenses for how we interpret the world around us and experiences within it. That is, they help us make sense of the narratives we also build based on our experiences in our own worlds – not just the narratives that come from media sources.

Some Golden Rules

There are no guarantees about how your message is received by audiences. However, this should not deter you from designing and executing a digital campaign. Whether it is promoting understanding or countering hate speech, it is all necessary and important – let strategy (as discussed later) and some of the following principles be your guide when making a decision about the substance of your campaign.

1. Know yourself, first and foremost: if nothing else, credibility and authenticity are the most important aspects of effective campaigning.
2. Know your audience and your environment. Words and images draw upon social knowledge.
3. Empathise with and speak directly to your audience's personal and social needs.
4. Do not shame – invite difference of opinion. Shaming just does not work (and is not strategic).
5. Peace is not the absence of conflict – do not be shy to stand for what you believe, but be open-hearted too.

Module 4

Using Religious Sources to Develop Social Media Campaigns to Promote Interfaith Dialogue and Build Peace

What you will learn in this module

- Develop a critical awareness of the diversity of religious sources and how they are different from nonreligious or “secular” sources.
- Learning about some interpretative methods of sacred texts in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.
- Getting familiar with some sacred texts and contexts (related to the theme of peace) from other religious traditions.

The importance of sacred texts in the Abrahamic Faiths

Written word – the sacred scripture – is fundamental in the Abrahamic Faiths. Jewish Scriptures, the New Testament and the Holy Quran are read, interpreted, and taught across the three religious traditions. While sometimes extremist groups take and misuse the Holy texts, it is important to have a clear understanding of the fact that the sacred text has as its aim to help the faithful become better human beings and develop a healthy relationship with God and with fellow human beings. In view of this, the concept of peace – *salam/shalom* – is fundamental in the holy writings.

Religious sources and texts are fundamental in the Abrahamic religions. They form the base for theological tradition within each of the three religions. At the same time, each religion has developed its own way and methods of interpreting sacred texts.

What are religious sources?

Generally speaking, religious sources are any documented writings that are centered around such themes as: God, divinity, God’s attributes, spirits, theology and similar topics. Sources can be also unwritten, i.e., oral, but

here we are concerned only with written or documented sources. In the Abrahamic religions, the fundamental sources are sacred writings - the Torah in Judaism, the Bible in Christianity and the Quran in Islam. Followers of the Abrahamic Faiths believe that the sacred texts are the revealed word of God.

	JUDAISM	CHRISTIANITY	ISLAM
SCRIPTURE	Tanakh or Hebrew Bible: Torah (Direct Word of God), Prophets (Indirect Word of God), Writings (Divine Inspiration)	Hebrew Bible Gospel: Matthew, Luke, Mark and John (Jesus as the Word of God) and Epistles	Qur’an (Direct Word of God)
TRADITION	Talmud and Midrash (divinely sanctioned interpretation)	Church Fathers (St Basil, Athanasius, Augustine, John Chrysostom, Benedict)	Sunna (behavior of the Prophet)
INTERPRETATIONS (MODERN AND MEDIEVAL)	Classical commentators (Rashi, Maimonides)	Philosophers (Thomas Aquinas) and saints (Francis, Ignatius of Loyola, St Teresa of Lisieux)	Theologians (al-Ghazali, Ibn Arabi)
CONTEMPORARY AUTHORITIES	Current rabbinical bodies (RCA, CER, Chief Rabbi-nate of Israel)	Councils and Encyclicals	Fatwas by al-Azhar

Hermeneutics: theory of interpretation

Hermeneutics (From the Greek verb *hermeneuein* ('to proclaim', 'to utter', 'to translate'): the theory of the (act of) interpretation of texts, especially sacred texts, theological texts, and philosophical texts. It is a critical reflection on the basis, character and aims of reading, interpreting and understanding texts (from contemporary situations and the past).

Text and methods of interpretation

There are differences within each of the religious traditions as to how to interpret the sacred texts. Looking at a text as a text, these are some of the questions we might want to be asking to find out the meaning of the text:

- What kind of document is it?
- What kind of literary form (genre) does it take?
- What does it contain?
- Who wrote it and what can be known about the author (cultural and social context)?
- What is/was the purpose of the text (information, persuasion, encouragement)?
- What about the audience?
- In what circumstances was the text written? What can be known about its social and cultural context?
- How long after 'the event' was the text produced?

- Has it been altered or edited?
- Who preserved or copied the text?

Depending on which religious tradition we are talking, some of the interpretative methods with that tradition are:

- Spiritual and moral approach to interpreting sacred writings
- Juridical method
- Allegorical method
- Analogical method
- Literal interpretation
- Historical-critical method

Sacred Texts of the Abrahamic Religions are believed to be the Word of G'd. When dealing with sacred literature in so far as with a TEXT, we must remember a few points:

- the text has many levels of meaning (allegorical, spiritual, mystical) and we read/understand the text through the prism of our faith/beliefs
- it was composed in a certain moment of history (context)
- different genres
- different purposes and audiences
- mostly, sacred texts are narratives and in any type of narrative there are protagonists and antagonists

Module 5

Demystifying Digital Violence: Stereotypes, Hate Speech, Misinformation and Violent Extremist Narratives

What you will learn in this module

- Develop a critical understanding of the concepts of stereotyping, hate speech and misinformation.
- Develop a critical awareness of the tools and methods used to address these issues.
- Further develop participants' understanding of violent extremism, particularly as it relates to stereotyping, hate speech and misinformation.
- Learn to deconstruct violent extremist narratives by looking at religious examples.

Unfortunately, people's race, religion and ethnicity are often targeted in acts of digital violence in four common ways: stereotyping, hate speech, misinformation and violent extremist narratives.

What is a stereotype?

Broadly speaking, a stereotype is "a fixed, over generalized belief about a particular group or class of people." When we use stereotypes to describe or make judgements about people, we are making an assumption that a person has a specific set of characteristics and abilities that we assume all members of "their" group (however defined) have.

Stereotyping is not necessarily a negative thing by itself. It is simply a way of processing the world in a way that makes our lives easier to navigate. However, where stereotyping becomes problematic is when the stereotypes, we develop of people go untested or resist changing in the face of new information.

What is hate speech?

"Hate speech is in itself an attack on tolerance, inclusion, diversity and the very essence of our human rights norms and principles. More broadly, it undermines social cohesion, erodes shared values, and can lay the foundation for violence, setting back the cause of peace, stability, sustainable development and the fulfillment of human rights for all."
(United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech)

In a sense, hate speech is closely related to stereotyping as it is about assigning a negative value to a group of people based on an aspect of their identity. i.e., hate speech normally perpetuates negative stereotypes about people, and sometimes can lead to discrimination, ostracism and even violence towards members of this group.

What is disinformation, misinformation or mal-information?

Similarly to the aforementioned concepts dis/mis/mal-information, which can have become shorthand for the catch-all term of “fake news” is not always easy to identify. But understanding the difference between the different types of information. According to [UNESCO's #FightFakeNews Handbook](#):

- **Disinformation** is information that is false and deliberately created to harm a person, social group, organisation or country.
- **Misinformation** is information that is false but not created with the intention of causing harm.
- **Mal-information** is information that is based on reality, used to inflict harm on a person, social group, organisation or country.

No matter what form this takes, dis/mis/mal-information can be a very powerful vehicle for negative attitudes towards other groups because it can be disguised as legitimate sources of news or as creative entertainment which downplays the real-world harms that marginalised groups of people (often the subject of such information) can often experience.

What are violent extremist narratives?

Before we dissect what a “Violent Extremist Narrative” (VXN) is, perhaps we should revisit the concepts of “violent extremism” and “narrative.”

“Violent extremism” is a diverse phenomenon, without clear definition. It is neither new nor exclusive to any region, nationality or system of belief. However, as a broad concept, “violent extremism” tends to refer to the multitude of activities that constitute the use of violence to achieve any political, religious, or other ideological goal. Violent extremism is such a dangerous phenomenon because it impacts collective efforts towards maintaining peace and security, fostering sustainable development, protecting human rights, promoting the rule of law and taking humanitarian action.

“Narrative”, then, which is based on the Latin word, *narrare* (“to tell”), is essentially a story about a series of connected events. It is important to remember then to remember a few key things about narratives:

- They are not just fictional stories and fairy tales.
- They are not just found and spread via media; and
- They are understood within a shared context – knowledge is social.

Put together, a VXN becomes a story about a series of connected events that justify the use of violence to achieve any political, religious, or other ideological goal. A VXN can often take the form of *"narratives of grievance, actual or perceived injustice, promised empowerment and sweeping change become attractive where human rights are being violated, good governance is being ignored and aspirations are being crushed."* ([Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism](#)).

What does this mean for online peacebuilding efforts?

As contemporary social media platforms evolve, their policies to deal with these forms of digital violence, so too do the ways digital violence is communicated to mass audiences.

Each method of digital violence listed as essentially powerful devices to make the use of violence make sense to their target audiences, in many ways:

- they can provide convenient worldview in a global environment characterised by complexity, ambiguity and uncertainty;
- they can provide outlets of anger, rage and fear for people who feel their options to improve their life circumstances are limited;

Understanding how these devices work is critical to understanding their appeal, and hence, how to dismantle them. However, when you design and execute your digital campaign, it is not only important to think about what needs these devices fulfill, but also how you will provide your intended audience an alternative way of meeting those needs.

Module 6

Planning and Executing Your Social Media Campaign using the GAMMMA+ Model

What you will learn in this module

- Understand what each stage of the GAMMMA+ process is.
- Knowledge of the questions and considerations to address at each stage.
- Access to follow-up resources that will assist participants with the implementation of their digital campaigns.

"If you fail to plan, then you plan to fail."

As detailed in the previous modules, these are all considerations that should be built into your campaign from the very beginning. This module uses the GAMMMA+ model as the basis of the discussion, with some questions to be asked and answered along the way.

What is the GAMMMA+ Model?

As the name alludes to, GAMMMA+ is a campaign strategy that has 7 core elements that should be addressed in any prospective digital campaign that seeks to promote a cause, like interfaith dialogue and friendship, or counter negative influences, such as the misuse and abuse of religious beliefs.

These 7 elements are:



Goal



Audience



Message



Messenger



Medium



(Call To) Action



+Monitoring and Evaluation

Goal: “What do you really want to give your audience?”

When it comes to planning digital campaigns that seek to build peace, celebrate diversity or challenge extremist narratives, some common themes include:

- Emphasise what we are for (rather than against) by offering positive stories about shared values, open-mindedness, freedom and democracy;
- Highlight how hatred (from ostracism to violence) negatively impacts on the people it claims to be in the name of;
- Rectify factual inaccuracies used in political or cultural discourse and invite people to reorient their understanding; and/or;
- Mock or satirise propaganda to undermine its credibility.

This is the heart of your campaign. What is it that you are really trying to achieve through your campaign? While that sounds simple enough, goal-setting can be really difficult - it can simultaneously be the broadest and most specific part of your campaign.

Tips: When setting your goals for your campaign, a helpful way to do this is to develop a **theory of change**. I.e. as a result of **x**, **y** will follow.

Audience: Who is most likely to listen to and receive your message?

Once you have settled on your goal, the next thing to consider is who are the people you most want to reach and why?

Campaigns can attempt to reach more than one audience. However, it's important not to be too ambitious and try to reach everyone. Being as specific as possible when thinking about exactly who the right audience is does not preclude your campaign from reaching more people: it is a way to anchor your message in language, content and expression that will be in the best position to resonate with the audience you wish to dialogue with and engage.

Tips: If you are really not sure, write a bio for your ideal audience member... down to the name, age, nationality etc. This not only includes who they are, but where they are i.e. where they spend the most time online.

Message: “What do you want your audience to hear?”

Once you have deeply empathised with your audience’s needs, you will have a strong enough orientation to make a judgement on how to construct your message in a way that is likely to resonate with them most.

Tips:

Speak with your audience, not at them.
Offer alternatives.
Fill in the gaps.

Messenger: Who is the right person to deliver your message?

Not only is the content and presentation of a message important, so too is the deliverer of such a message. The two most desirable attributes for a prospective campaign messenger are credibility (what is their level of expertise, skill, knowledge, experience on the issues they are talking about) and authenticity (are they sincere about what they are talking about or is there a hidden agenda?)

Tips:

If you are not sure who is best placed to deliver your campaign message, use this guiding question to help you decide: *“Based on what we know of our audience, who is the person / are the people they are most likely to take seriously (credibility) and trust (authenticity)?”*

Medium: What way/s will you reach your audience?

Your medium will be informed by everything that has come before it, but budget, resources and accessibility are of course key considerations here.

Tips:

If your budget is small and time is short, keep it simple. While being visible on multiple platforms is ideal, take the time to understand where your audiences are and go to them.

(Call to) Action: What do you want your audience to do once they receive your message?

Being clear on the action you want your audience to take is an overlooked aspect of campaigning. But anchoring your campaign to a call-to-action ensures that people don’t arrive at the end of their journey with you and are left to feel “now what?”

Tips:

If there is one thing you want your audience to do after consuming your content, ask yourself two questions.

“What is the one thing you most want them to do?”

“What is the one thing they are most likely to do?”

If the answers to these questions are not the same, your Call-To-Action should aim to be in the middle of them.

+Monitoring and Evaluation: How do you know that you've reached your goal?

Social media platforms will have their own analytics tools, which allow you to see results such as views, likes, shares, and the number of comments but what about the way it has made them feel or act?

As social media campaigns are launched it is important to try and track the effectiveness and impact based on the information available to you. Generally speaking, knowing what indicators you will use to tell the story of your campaign's impact is something that should be considered before you launch. That way you are not on the backfoot trying to work out how to measure your campaign while you are executing it.

As a general rule, the indicators you can use to measure and evaluate your campaign can be broken down into three categories: **awareness**, **engagement** and **impact** indicators.

Awareness indicators show you how many people were reached and who. E.g. Impressions, Reach, Impressions Frequency, Views, Clicks.

Engagement indicators show what people feel and think about your content. E.g. Likes, Comments, Shares, Retention, Drop-Offs.

Impact indicators show you what actions people have taken as a result of consuming your content. E.g. Constructive / Antagonistic Feedback, Testimonials, References and Citations.

Being able to track what your audiences have done as a result of your campaign is critical, not only to demonstrate to others who may want to support your efforts in the future, but to keep you on track.

Tips:

Success does not look the same for all campaigns and that is OK. Make sure you and your team have defined "success" so you can be clear on what you are working towards.

What's Next?

Congratulations!

You now have a Toolkit of the absolute essentials for making a digital campaign that aims to prevent violent extremism through the lens of interreligious dialogue practice.

This Toolkit has been developed alongside the Guide (prepared by all the trainers and participants under the lead of Julien Darmon) and is designed to be read in parallel. Therefore, before you go ahead and start creating, we encourage you to learn from the experiences of those who have experience via the EDIN Guide.

The Guide is a summary of those key experiences and learnings from the participants and trainers of the EDIN project to provide prospective campaigners with practical insights and recommendations in how to execute IRD for PVE social media campaigns.

Annex A

Select Literature and Useful Resources

1. Culture of Peace and Interreligious and Intercultural dialogue

- The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 75/26 on “Promotion of interreligious and intercultural dialogue, understanding and cooperation for peace”: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/342/94/pdf/N2034294.pdf?OpenElement>
- The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 75/25 on “Follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace”: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N20/342/88/pdf/N2034288.pdf?OpenElement>

2. The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy

- ‘The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy’ (20 September 2006) A/RES/60/288: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/60/288>
- ‘The United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy: seventh review’ (30 June 2021) A/RES/75/291: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/291>
- Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism: Report of the Secretary General’ (24 December 2015) A/70/674: https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/674
- Op-ed by the United Nations Secretary-General “Uniting to Prevent Violent Extremism”, October 2016: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/uniting-to-prevent-violen_b_8994150

3. Interfaith Harmony Week and “Human Fraternity”

- The World Interfaith Harmony Week, proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 65/5: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/65/5>
- The United Nations General Assembly Resolution 75/200, establishing the International Day of Human Fraternity (4 February): <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/200>

4. Hate Speech

- The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech: <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/UN%20Strategy%20and%20Plan%20of%20Action%20on%20Hate%20Speech%2018%20June%20SYNOPSIS.pdf>.
- The United Nations Secretary-General's remarks on Hate Speech, June 2019: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2019-06-18/secretary-generals-remarks-the-launch-of-the-united-nations-strategy-and-plan-of-action-hate-speech-delivered>

5. Safeguarding Religious Sites

- The United Nations Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious: <https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/12-09-2019-UNAOC-PoA-Religious-Sites.pdf>
- UNAOC's Global communications campaign, implemented as part of the Plan, launched in September 2020: <https://forsafeworship.org/>
- The United Nations Resolution 75/258 on "Promoting a culture of peace and tolerance to safeguard religious sites": <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/75/258>

6. COVID-19 and the United Nations response and calls

- The United Nations response to COVID-19, repository of all statements, plans, activities: <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/un-response>
- The Joint Call for Solidarity, Compassion and Unity, issued by the UNAOC High Representative and the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, March 2020: <https://www.unaoc.org/2020/03/a-joint-call-for-solidarity-compassion-and-unity/>
- The special appeal of the United Nations Secretary-General to religious leaders in times of COVID-19 "Let us renew our faith in one another", April 2020: <https://www.unodc.org/middleeastandnorthafrica/en/web-stories/the-secretary-general----special-appeal-to-religious-leaders.html>

- The joint statement dated April 2020, issued by the principals of the rotating IATF co-Chairs (UNAOOC and UNOSAPG) and Executive Secretariat (UNFPA) on behalf of the members of the IATF and endorsed by the co-Chairs of the IATF Multi-Faith Advisory Council (MFAC) on behalf of the MFAC: <https://www.unaoc.org/2020/04/joint-statement-interagency-task-force-on-religion-and-sustainable-development/>
- The United Nations Secretary-General’s remarks to High-Level Dialogue on Press Freedom and Tackling Disinformation in the COVID-19 Context, May 2020: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-05-04/secretary-generals-remarks-high-level-dialogue-press-freedom-and-tackling-disinformation-the-covid-19-context-bilingual-delivered-scroll-down-for-english-and-french>
- The United Nations Secretary-General’s remarks at High-Level Video Conference entitled, “The Role of Religious Leaders in Addressing the Multiple Challenges of COVID-19”, May 2020: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2020-05-12/secretary-generals-remarks-high-level-video-conference-entitled-the-role-of-religious-leaders-addressing-the-multiple-challenges-of-covid-19-delivered>
- The United Nations Secretary-General’s report on the “The UN Comprehensive Response”, in order to save lives, protect societies and recover better from COVID-19, June 2020: https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/un_comprehensive_response_to_covid-19_june_2020.pdf

7. United Nations Development Agenda

- Sustainable Development Goals: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

8. Online resources for Judaism

- Sefaria.org
- Alhatorah.org
- chabad.org
- akadem.org (in French)

9. Online resources for Christianity

- <https://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Exegesis.htm>
- <http://www.understandingchristianity.org.uk/>
- <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/>
- http://www.oxfordbiblicalstudies.com/article/book/obso-9780195282801?_hi=2&_pos=4
- https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html

10. Online resources for Islam

- <https://www.clearquran.com>
- <https://sunnah.com>
- <http://www.islamweb.net/en/>
- <http://www.messengerofgod.info/>

11. Online resources for interfaith dialogue

- <https://www.ciunow.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Scriptural-Resources-for-Peace.pdf>
- <https://www.jp2center.org/>
- www.scripturalreasoning.org

12. Social media resources and useful links

- RAN Europe's GAMMMA+ Model
https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/default/files/what-we-do/networks/radicalisation_awareness_network/about-ran/ran-c-and-n/docs/ran_cn_academy_creating_implementing_effective_campaigns_brus-sels_14-15112019_en.pdf

- Facebook Counter speech Database
<https://counterspeech.fb.com/en/>
- ISD's Counter Narrative Handbook
http://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Counter-narrative-Handbook_1.pdf
- Google APAC Share Some Good Toolkit
<http://sharesomegood.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/SSG-Toolkit-ProofFinal-Digital.pdf>
- Designing posts and videos
<https://www.canva.com/>
- Music
<https://www.epidemicsound.com/music/featured/>

13. Other useful resources and links

- KACIID. Interreligious dialogue report 2015
<http://peacemap.kaiciid.org/downloads/IRD-Directory-Report.pdf>
- KACIID. Interreligious Dialogue Resource Guide 2017.
- UNESCO. Intercultural dialogue survey 2017 <http://uis.unesco.org/en/files/unesco-survey-intercultural-dialogue-2017-analysis-findings-2018-en-pdf>
- Andrew Orton (2016) Interfaith dialogue: seven key questions for theory, policy and practice, Religion, State & Society, 44:4, 349-365, DOI: 10.1080/09637494.2016.1242886
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09637494.2016.1242886?needAccess=true>
- Dzyubanskyy, Taras, Interfaith Leadership and Typologies of Religious Plurality at: <https://irstudies.org/index.php/jirs/article/view/475/513>
- United States Institute for Peace. What works: Evaluating Interfaith Dialogue 2004 <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr123.pdf>
- Faiths working together toolkit with case studies:
https://www.interfaith.org.uk/uploads/Faiths_Working_Together_Toolkit.pdf

- Case studies:

<https://www.kaiciid.org/dialogue-knowledge-hub/resources/promising-practices/interfaith-social-media>

<http://www.theinterfaithobserver.org/journal-articles/2019/10/28/spontaneous-interfaith-support-using-social-media>

- KAICIID. Digital dialogue: countering online hate speech April 2020

<https://www.kaiciid.org/news-events/features/digital-dialogue-countering-online-hate-speech>

<https://www.kaiciid.org/publications-resources/heroes-dialogue>

- Case study/ short read from Jewish newspaper, 2021: <https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/young-people-gather-to-discuss-solutions-to-hate-speech-online/>

- G20 interfaith online hate speech brief, 2021: <https://www.g20interfaith.org/app/uploads/2020/09/G20-Interfaith-Policy-Brief-Hate-Speech-Nov-5.pdf>

- Art of storytelling with Khayal Theatre. They have done great work, transitioning to online delivery during pandemic: <https://www.khayaal.co.uk/what-is-on>

- Unitarian Universalist Association, interfaith storytelling resources, online in particular: <https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/chorus/workshop5/173718.shtml>

Annex B

Principles and Guidelines for Safe Engagement Online

Some useful and helpful tips for good online etiquette:

- Please double check the exact start time of the sessions that will be applicable in your time zone. You can use one of the time zone converters to determine the session times or download/save a calendar event for this Zoom meeting.
- Turn on your camera and position it properly. Make sure your webcam is in a stable position and focused at eye level, so you can look into the camera. Direct eye contact will help create a sense of engagement with others during group exercises and conversations.
- Mute your microphone when you are not speaking in order to keep background noise to a minimum. Be mindful of background noise, find a quiet place to connect to Zoom during the sessions.
- Limit distractions on the screen.
- Use chat at the bottom of your screen if wish to communicate with an entire group while others are speaking, capture ideas and questions you may have for speakers or the group.
- If you want to talk, do not interrupt. Alternatively, you can (depending on software functionality):
 - Use the "Raise Hand" function,
 - Physically raise your hand on camera, or
 - Simply write a comment in the chat function that you would like to take the floor.
- Be mindful of your time when you take the floor in order to allow others to participate as well. Avoid using the side chat for side conversations. If you want to discuss something related to the topic of the session, please share with the group. And if it is not related, keep it for later.

Role of facilitators and team:

- Your facilitators are here for you. You can come to them at any point to share your concerns, your frustrations, and disclose incidents that might have happened with other participants.
- The top priority for all facilitators is to provide a safe space in which everyone feels comfortable and heard.

Aim for conversation not consensus:

- Respect opinions, beliefs and points of view different to your own.

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Aim for conversation not consensus:

- Respect opinions, beliefs and points of view different to your own.
- If an opinion is expressed and offends you, please raise it in the discussion – if you feel comfortable with it – so that we can all talk about and learn from it.
- Always remain polite and respectful when providing counter arguments.
- Agree to disagree.

Express your opinions freely, honestly, and respectfully:

- Use a “first person” perspective when describing your experiences.
- Avoid generalisations and assumptions.
- Anonymise stories that involve other people and their experiences.

Look after your fellow group members:

- Be conscious of all forms of diversity: cultural, ability and otherwise.

Avoid using or promoting divisive, hateful and/or incendiary images, messages or terminology based on their religion, culture, or any belief.

Annex C

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