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# **Advocacy on dialogue as a tool for prevention and resolution of political and social conflict in Africa**







## **\_Introduction**

This advocacy document is produced by Partners West Africa, drafted in the frame of “Advocacy on dialogue as a tool for political and social conflict resolution in Africa “, funded by United States Institute of Peace (USIP), with the technical support of ECOWAS. This seven-month project led to the organization of two sub-regional and regional workshops.

From those two workshops, respectively entitled « Dialogue as an efficient political and social conflict resolution tool » and « Which national dialogue for an effective conflict prevention, resolution and the democratic political transition in Africa? », it was concluded that traditional and/or modern dialogue continues to be an efficient and pertinent tool of conflict resolution in Africa.

Since the beginning of decolonization, Africa has dealt with cycles of violence, which often result in political and social conflicts, therefore engendering a destabilization and even a fragility of states and societies. However, in spite of the persistence of the conflicts, it should be recognized that tools of conflict prevention and successful experiences of peaceful disputes resolution still exist in Africa.

These experiences are generally based on the dialogue that allows on one hand the laying of the foundations for peaceful democratic transitions in some countries, and on the other hand pacifies the relationships between various actors.

Dialogue is a traditional means of prevention and resolution of conflicts in Africa as symbolized by the mythical «palaver tree” in pre-colonial Africa.

## THE KEY PRINCIPLE

Dialogue is an efficient social and political conflict resolution tool.

## STRATEGY

Awaken the consciousness and sensitize the political decision-makers, negotiators, mediators, opinion leaders, and civil society leaders on the necessity of focusing on inclusive and sincere dialogue in the prevention and resolution of political and social conflicts in Africa.

## RESOURCES TO BE EXPLOITED

- \* Dialogue is rooted in African culture.
- \* There are successful experiences of dialogue that gave way to peaceful democratic transitions.
- \* Dialogue has to be based on principles and rules in order to sustainably resolve conflicts.
- \* Women play a fundamental role in the facilitation of dialogue in Africa.
- \* Dialogue can be adapted to the environment.

## What is a dialogue ?

«Dialogue» indicates a particular type of communication between several people or groups of people. It distinguishes itself from the discussion and from the debate because it refers to a mode of conversation that inevitably contains reason, discernment, accuracy and wisdom. Dialogue involves an interpenetration of convergent and convincing arguments displayed among the interlocutors. It is a tool of mediation that favors the search for a consensus. In the end, dialogue tries to establish neither a winner nor a loser.

## Status report of dialogue in Africa

### The endogenous and modern mechanisms of dialogue in Africa

- \* Palaver Tree ;
- \* Kinship and cousin joking relations ;
- \* Agreements, pacts and charters ;
- \* Interreligious and political dialogue ;
- \* Truth and reconciliation committees, conferences or national dialogues ;
- \* Tripartite dialogue (Employer, government, labor unions) and tripartite plus (beyond 3 groups aforementioned) ;
- \* ECOWAS Council of the Wise ;
- \* Citizen Assembly (Mali).

### The strengths and advantages

- \* Fluidity of social relationships ;
- \* Tolerance and solidarity ;
- \* Local governance ;
- \* Inclusive consensus ;
- \* Pacification of the social space ;
- \* Interethnic relationships and a culture of forgiveness.

### The obstacles

- \* Lack of formalization and generalization ;
- \* Failure to respect the commitments and the agreement ;
- \* Non inclusive ;
- \* Difficulty of implementing the recommendations ;
- \* Lack of relevance in the representativity of the actors ;
- \* Lack of relevance in the methodology ;
- \* Lack of effectiveness of the recommendations ;
- \* Reluctance in the application.

# Dialogue as a conflict resolution tool in West Africa

## The national Consultations in Senegal

### NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS ?

Series of free consultations and discussions between equals to find solutions to Senegal's issues.

### Motivation

Alternative for the opposition in its absence at the plenary chamber which is by excellence a space of dialogue.

### Consultations legitimacy

Opposition parties and Civil society (trade unions, NGOs, human right organization, associations, population etc.) agree upon the objectives, the principles and the approach.

### Principles

- Rejection of dogmatism,
- Search for consensus
- Use of local languages.

### Success

Gather the Senegalese to discuss all the problems they think might be of interest to the country.

## The processus ?

### Phase 1 : : Preparation June 2007- May 2008

- Drafting TOR ;
- Choose an indepent and neutral person to lead the work ;
- fundraising.

### Phase 2 : national consultations June 2008 - May 2009

Holding of public citizen consultation: a charter, a general report, 9 thematic reports , 35 deparmental reports and 3 reports from the diapora

### Phase 3 : Post-consultation since 2009

Lethargy benefitting the search for a single candidate during the 2012 presidential election

## The limits ?

A good ratio of the political and civil society actors who were part of the consultations were found in power even without the implementation of the findings.

Lack of ownership of the national consultations' results by the Senegalese, which is probably due to the absence of the results' restitution.

Low Involvement of the diaspora whose reason need to be clarified.

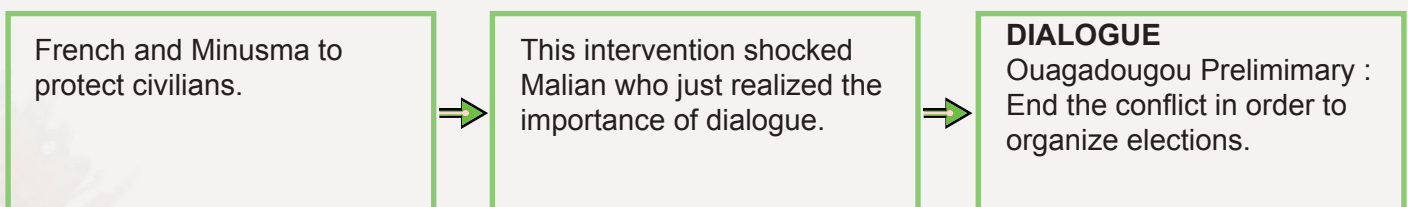
## The role of the MINUSMA in the peace process in Mali

*The national Consultations in Senegal*

### Context of the conflict

- Occupation in the north of the country by Tuareg separatist movements of the Azawad ;
- Connotation of the conflict ;
- internationalization of the conflict with the arrival of new jihadists actors ;
- regionalization of the conflict with the circulation of drugs and weapons ;
- Malians Incapacity to manage the consequences of the Libyan crisis on their territory with the arrival of many armed combatants ;
- Coup d'état which has completely shuffled.

### How were Malian forced to the dialogue ?



### Dialogue successful factors

- Bilateral mediation (neighbouring countries such Algeria)
- Multilateral dialogue (ECOWAS, AU, EU).

MINUSMA involvement: facilitate and encourage the dissemination of information to population.

### The constraints in dialogue

Presence of multiplicity of actors.

Lack sincere actors.

The primacy of France and the other actors interest over those of Mali and its people.



## Dialogue to build a successful democratic transition

*Conclusive examples from Rwanda, South Africa, Benin*

### Speak

Discuss/exchange on the issue and encourage the search for compromise.



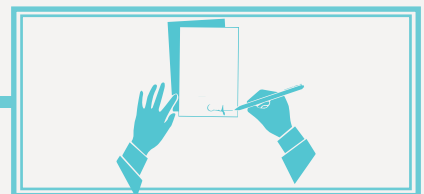
### Reconcile

To confront victims and executioners within a transitional justice framework.



### Formalize the reconciliation

Institutionalize consultation forums therefore making the application of the conclusions effective.



### Who will lead ?

Choose a consensual, charismatic and respected personality.



### Build a social pact

Take care of the claims of all stakeholders.



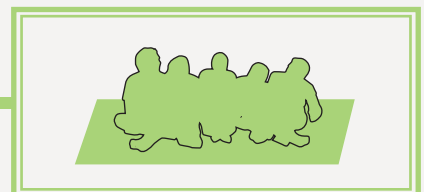
### Think about everyone

Respect the conclusions and have a strong sense of the general good.



### Include everyone

- \* Involve and strengthen Civil Society Organizations and other networks in particular women's networks ;
- \* Integrate religious and traditional leaders and the all the communities including the minority group into the consultation forum.

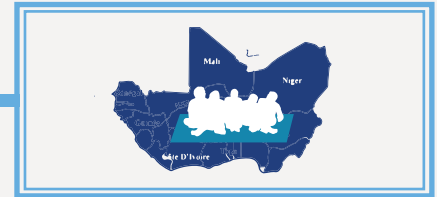


## Dialogue in states under democratic construction

### Prerequisites for a successful dialogue : Guinea, Ivory Coast

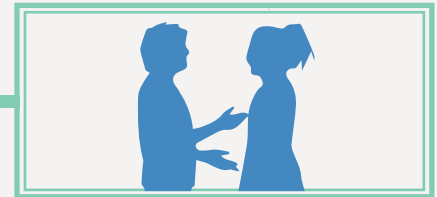
#### Be open to mediation

Meet the commitments of the regional economic centers (AU, ECOWAS).



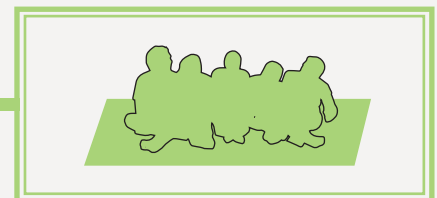
#### Speak

Favor National consultations.



#### Include everyone

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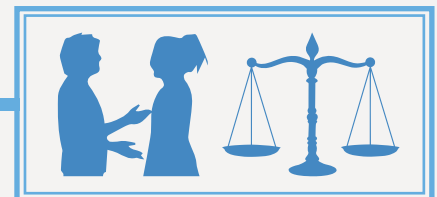
#### Reform security

- \* Reduce endemic violence ;
- \* Reconnect the relationship between the security and defense forces and the population.



#### Link Justice and dialogue

Create a synergy between both processes. Justice does not have to trump dialogue.



## The reasons for failure

### Guinea Bissau, RDC, Burundi, Chad

#### Context

- \* Institutional and the socio-political context troubled (violent and repeated coups d'état, wars, genocide, etc.);
- \* A very difficult access to independence.

#### The causes for failures

- \* Unfavorable institutional and socio-political context for dialogue;
- \* No sense of general interest: political, military and social actors put their own interests first;
- \* Lack of political will which creates the lack of resources available for dialogue.

## The role of women in national dialogue

### Mechanisms to include women

- \* Existence of numerous associations, NGO's, federations, national and international women networks (CEDEF, Compendium of competent women in Ivory Coast, pool of 30 women trained in mediation by ECOWAS, etc.) ;
- \* Strengthened legal frameworks (Resolution 1325 and following ones, law on the parity in Senegal) ;
- \* Creation of ministerial departments for the advancement of women ;
- \* Spaces offered by decentralization and local governance ;
- \* International days dedicated to the women, early childhood and to peace.
- \* African children's day.

### Strength and advantages

- \* Women, a social strength ;
- \* Political will of the Financial Technical Partners and the States on the implication of the women ;
- \* Capacity building for women ;
- \* Presence of the women in of defense and security forces ;
- \* Reduction of socioeconomic disparities and the protection of vulnerable people ;
- \* Strengthened international legal framework (international legal instruments, CEDEF, Resolution 1325, CADEG) ;
- \* Strengthened national legal framework.

### Weaknesses and obstacles

- \* Lack of skills, low rate of high level educated women ;
- \* Social and cultural pressures ;
- \* Low implementation rate of gender based policies ;
- \* Low representativity of women in decision making bodies ;
- \* Inappropriate choice of women represented in dialogue committees ;
- \* Lack of commitment and solidarity among women ;
- \* Lack of information and dissemination of best practice ;
- \* Low access to information by women ;
- \* Women's poverty ;
- \* Political instrumentalization of cleavages.

## Practices to be promoted in every political situation

### Speak

Discuss/exchange on the issue and encourage the search of compromise.



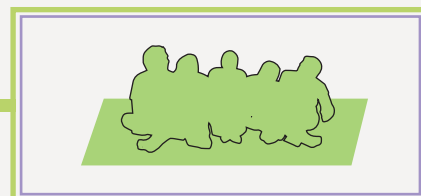
### Strengthen institutions and democracy

- \* Improve the functioning of institutions ;
- \* Strengthen the democracy ;
- \* Deepen the rule of law and modernize the political system.



### Include everyone

- \* Involve and strengthen Civil Society Organizations and other networks in particular women's networks ;
- \* Integrate religious and traditional leaders and the all the communities including the minority group into the consultation forum.



## Conclusion

Dialogue appears to be the most relevant tool to create a conducive environment for mediation, negotiation and to build compromises in order to decrease the tension or definitively resolve conflicts.

Conflict and crisis dynamics found across the African continent for more than half a century did not hinder the internal capacities to promote peace and to reconcile conflict parties.

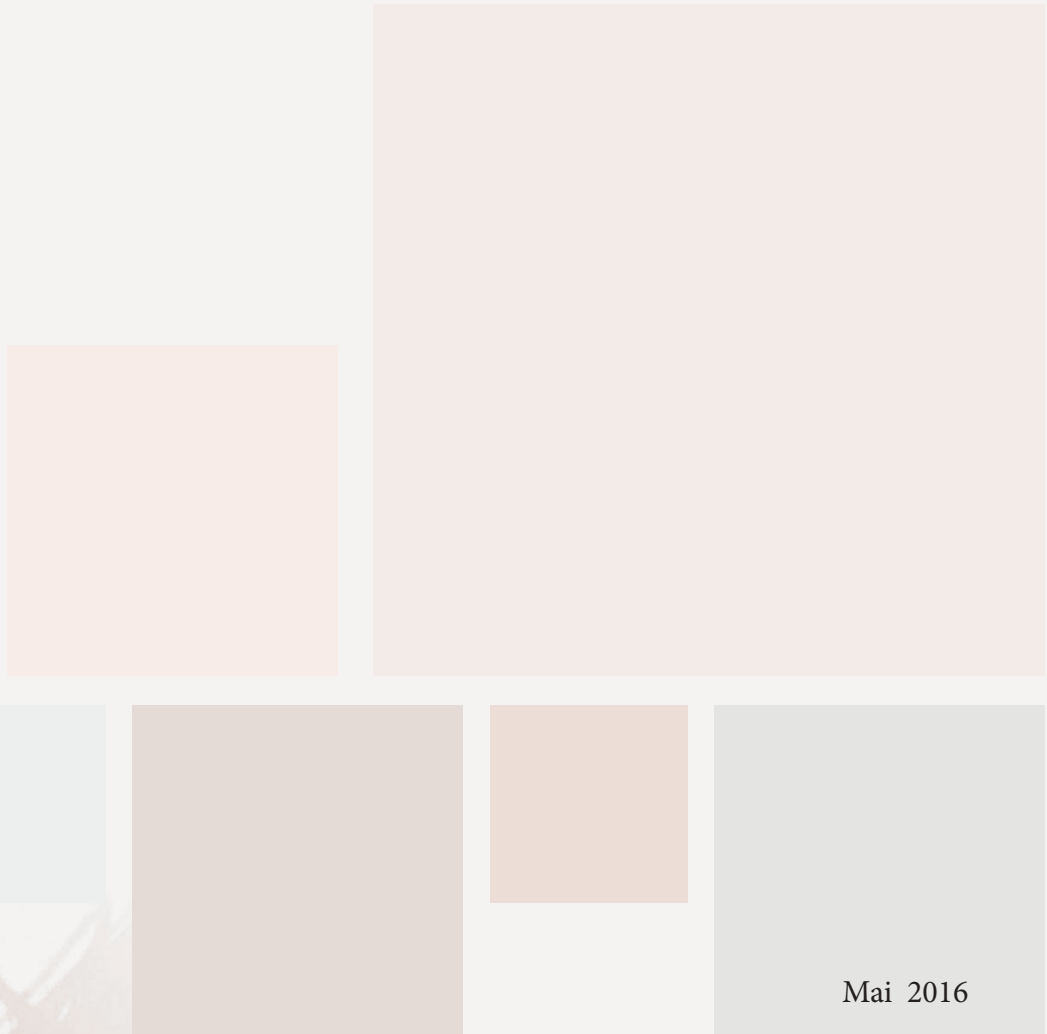
The anchoring of dialogue in the African culture, as well as its capacity to transcend the contingencies of the present to create a peaceful future, deserve to be exploited every time conflict erupts on the continent. In order for dialogue to be deeply rooted over time, it has to be completed with modern tools of conflict prevention and resolution at the regional and international level.

It is this dialectical linkage which will allow Africa, scarred by so many conflicts and crises, to renew with its past, its culture and to envisage the future in a prospect of justice, reconciliation and democracy.





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