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Democratic
Dialogue –
A Handbook
for Practitioners



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This Handbook, sponsored jointly by International IDEA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), offers a comprehensive overview of the use of dialogue processes to address societal challenges in an inclusive, democratic way that engages a broad range of actors in bringing about positive change. It is addressed to people actively or potentially engaged in doing dialogue work—organizing, sponsoring, promoting, or facilitating dialogue processes within their institutions and societies. Most importantly, it is thoroughly grounded in the experience of dialogue practitioners from around the world.

The Handbook provides a conceptual framework that speaks to critical questions: ‘Why dialogue?’, ‘What is dialogue?’ and ‘How does dialogue contribute to positive change?’. It offers a detailed guide to putting these concepts into practice, offering practical guidance and concrete examples from the field for each step: exploring whether a dialogue process is appropriate in the context; designing and then implementing a dialogue process; and conducting a meaningful process of monitoring and evaluation throughout. A third major part of the book anchors all of this information in the reality of three fully developed case studies showing different approaches in different regions—Latin America, Africa and Asia. In two appendices, the Handbook also provides a comparative overview of more than 30 cases and a guide to the rich array of dialogue processes and process tools that practitioners can consider for use, or just for inspiration.

The authors of this Handbook on Democratic Dialogue have undertaken the difficult but necessary task of gathering the vast comparative knowledge accumulated in the field of dialogue and translating it into clear concepts and practical options for dialogue facilitators. Sponsored by and drawing upon the experience of three international organizations (IDEA, UNDP and the OAS) and one development cooperation agency (the Canadian CIDA), the Handbook offers helpful insights into contemporary conceptual approaches to dialogue and provides practitioners with concrete sets of options on how to design, start, convene, conduct, monitor and evaluate a dialogue process. The multiple options offered stem from practice, and the case studies presented . . . illustrate how these options may be applied in real life.

—from the Foreword by

Lakhdar Brahimi, former Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General

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