



The Generation Dialogue

A guidance note for project managers and their teams

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This Guidance Note is part of a toolkit supporting Generation Dialogues. For more information, go to health.bmz.de/generation_dialogue_toolkit or write to the Sector Programme 'Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Rights' at sp.gender@giz.de

WHAT IS THE GENERATION DIALOGUE?

In places where traditional beliefs sustain practices which have harmful effects on the health and well-being of community members, the Generation Dialogue can initiate processes of social change in keeping with communities' sense of identity and pride. The method was originally developed in 2001 in Guinea, West Africa, as part of an effort to reduce the widespread practice of female genital mutilation. It has subsequently been adapted to address other topics related to sexual and reproductive health, human rights, gender equality and social cohesion and has been implemented, with German support, in ten African and three Asian countries.

The sector programme 'Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Rights' and its predecessor project, 'Ending female genital mutilation and other harmful traditional practices', implemented by GIZ on behalf of Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), has supported the design and implementation of this approach since its conception.

The Generation Dialogue is a 'living' method which is constantly being refined on the basis of implementation experiences. It is a flexible approach which can be adapted to different topics, projects and contexts if these fulfil the requirements spelled out in this Guidance Note.

WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT THE DIALOGUE APPROACH?

The Generation Dialogue is different from traditional behaviour change communication approaches in which health promoters raise awareness of the consequences of certain practices and encourage people to abandon them. It takes as its starting point that there must be good reasons why practices with harmful effects endure – and that until these reasons and the values underpinning them are first explored and appreciated, and then re-assessed by communities, they are unlikely to end.

Rather than coming in as 'experts,' organisations which implement the Generation Dialogue act as interested researchers and facilitators. They create space for community members from both generations and of both sexes to talk about their beliefs and values, without fear of judgement, and to be listened to respectfully – first by the facilitators and then by one another. This reversal

of roles – with community members acting as ‘knowledge holders’ and the implementing organisations learning from them – makes community members feel appreciated, understood and respected. On this basis of trust, they can begin to share doubts and dilemmas, as well as ideas about how to overcome or adapt practices with harmful effects in their own way and at their own pace. The Generation Dialogue fundamentally changes the relationship between community members and organisations promoting social change – and, in doing so, opens up the space that is needed for envisioning and gradually moving towards changes in existing practices.

WHAT RESULTS HAS IT GENERATED?

The Generation Dialogue is a powerful methodology which can have profound effects on its participants and on the wider community. Successive rounds of implementation have shown that the Dialogue is often transformative for individual participants, leading them to question deeply-held beliefs and to view relationships with family members in a new light. This has been particularly visible in Dialogue processes concerned with practises such as female genital mutilation and lack of access to maternal health services, where members of the older generation play a leading role in enforcing social norms or approving contact with community institutions.

At the community level the Generation Dialogue has been successful in engaging local authorities, including government and elected officials, through its inclusive, community-driven approach. Although the intervention touches upon sensitive issues, it does so in a non-threatening way, and creates needed space for important conversations to take place. It has also proven effective in bringing together men and women in societies, such as Pakistan and Yemen, where public discussion involving both women and men rarely, if ever, occurs.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

You can learn more about the Generation Dialogue and how it works on the [Healthy DEvelopments](#) internet portal, or by contacting the GIZ Sector Programme ‘Promoting Gender Equality and Women’s Rights’ (spgender@giz.de), the programme that supports the implementation of the Generations Dialogue on behalf of BMZ.

A user-friendly [Generation Dialogue online toolkit](#) is available for interested project teams. It aims to facilitate step-by-step adaptation and learning processes in development cooperation projects around the world.

IS THE GENERATION DIALOGUE THE RIGHT APPROACH FOR YOUR PROJECT?

The Generation Dialogue is a powerful intervention that can have profound effects on its participants and the communities of which they are a part. However, the Dialogue approach itself is complex and requires the involvement and commitment of many different actors and stakeholder groups, including your own project team. Given the scope of the process, and the cultural and political sensitivities which can be involved, it is important that you carefully consider whether it is the right approach for your project. Four questions can help you with this:

1. IS THERE A SPARK OF CHANGE WHICH A DIALOGUE COULD HELP STRENGTHEN AND EXPAND?

Generation Dialogues are most likely to have a lasting impact in communities where a locally-led change effort has been underway, but has not been successful or has gotten ‘stuck’ — and where those who are trying to bring about change are looking for new ways to tackle an issue. Conversely, a Dialogue will be ineffective in communities where the ‘spark of change’ has not yet taken root and where there are no existing efforts the Dialogue process can support.

- ▶ Can you think of persons and initiatives in communities in which you might work which embody this spark of change?

2. DO YOU HAVE THE NECESSARY CAPACITY TO ACCOMPANY THE DIALOGUE PROCESS?

Previous experience has shown that introducing the Generation Dialogue in a new context requires a dedicated GIZ project staff member to be continuously involved in its adaptation and implementation. This entails providing technical advice, facilitation and supportive supervision to the key Dialogue actors throughout the Dialogue process.

This dedicated person can be a GIZ technical advisor or development worker who has a thorough understanding of the topic areas to be addressed by the Generation Dialogue and a genuine desire to support communities to lead their own change process. Up to 50 per cent of the staff member's time will be required for these tasks over a period of several months.

- ▶ Is there someone in your team who can and would like to play this role?

3. CAN YOUR PROJECT AND ITS PARTNERS SUSTAIN THE GENERATION DIALOGUE?

A significant investment of time and resources is required to implement the Generation Dialogue the first time. Although subsequent rounds of implementation will demand fewer resources (both human and financial), Dialogues will always require some degree of financial and technical support. Going through the seven steps of a Dialogue process will take about a year (see section 'How long does it take', p. 14). Ideally further rounds of Dialogue implementation will help partner organisations consolidate their Dialogue expertise before the project ends.

- ▶ Will the focus and duration of your project commission allow you to work towards sustaining the Generation Dialogue approach, together with your partner institutions, after you have implemented it the first time?

4. CAN YOU IDENTIFY THE BROADER TOPIC AREA FOR YOUR GENERATION DIALOGUE?

The Generation Dialogue approach can be applied to a wide range of sexual and reproductive health-, human rights- and gender-related topics in which tensions between traditional and modern belief systems play a central role. At the outset you may be inclined to focus narrowly on a specific harmful practice that your project aims to reduce or eliminate. However, experience shows that trying to eliminate a practice that is rooted in communities' traditions and belief systems often has the opposite effect: It brings forth defensive reactions and lots of arguments for rather than against the practice.

The Dialogue approach challenges you to broaden the perspective and to identify the sphere of a community's everyday life of which a given practice is a part. The practice of female genital mutilation, for example, or of sending young boys to herd animals in the mountains on their own, are both part of communities' ways of introducing young people to adulthood and its

responsibilities. Making this the topic of your Dialogue will allow community members, who are the real agents of change, to identify themselves what it is about these practices that they experience as problematic. Generation Dialogues to date have shown that communities will start talking about all the harmful aspects of a practice when they feel that important values that may underlie these practices are respected and appreciated.

- ▶ Against this background, how can the ‘problem’ your project is addressing be transformed into a broader Dialogue topic which is grounded in a sphere of community life?

READY?

ARE YOU READY TO MAKE A DECISION?

Once you have discussed and answered these core questions, you should be able to make an informed decision as to whether the Generation Dialogue is a suitable approach for your project. If you choose to move ahead, keep in mind that it is not a method for ‘quick wins’. The Generation Dialogue is a transformative process in which your project will support communities to initiate and engage in new pathways of social change. Be ambitious and visionary, but keep your expectations realistic.

The next chapters will help you plan your first Generation Dialogue.



WHO NEEDS TO BE INVOLVED AND HOW?

WHY IS A STRONG PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN GIZ AND LOCAL PARTNERS SO IMPORTANT?

The Generation Dialogue is special because it engages key actors in a transformative learning process led by community members themselves. However, this can only happen if the Generation Dialogue is carefully designed, implemented, and refined over time with the significant involvement of your project team. It is therefore critical that you establish a strong partnership with the local partner and fully engage in the Dialogue process with them from the initial steps through to the end of the cycle.

A well-designed partnership should marry the 'insider' knowledge and commitment of local change agents with the experience and resources of an outside organisation like GIZ. Community actors know who is who: they understand the tensions and lines of conflict in the community, and also where the desire for change lies. Moreover, they are invested in tackling a problem because they are directly affected by it. GIZ, for its part, brings an outside, developmental perspective and a methodological approach which can help to unlock change. It can also provide the resources to make a structured, community-wide process happen.

This partnership seeks to go beyond the modes of funding and technical assistance typically provided by GIZ projects. The person you designate to work closely with the local partner should be highly present and support the key actors at critical points throughout the implementation cycle. By engaging fully in the transformative learning process, you as a project will come to understand much more about the topic and practices you aim to address.

WHO IS PART OF THE DIALOGUE TEAM?

The successful implementation of a Generation Dialogue requires a profound collaborative effort and commitment from a range of actors and stakeholders. A dedicated staff member from your own project team needs to be appointed as **technical advisor** for the Generation Dialogue. In the community or communities where you implement the Dialogues, you will need to identify two well-organised, motivated and experienced individuals (one man, one woman) to act as **coordinators** for the Dialogue activities. They will form a team with four local men and four local women acting as **facilitators** of the Dialogue sessions. In some cases, it can make sense for coordinators to also be facilitators, thus reducing the size of a community's Dialogue team. Finally, you will need to commission two **independent researchers** (one male and one female) to monitor the effects of the Dialogue process.

The tasks of these actors are outlined below. The [online Generation Dialogue](#) toolkit provides more detailed profiles and task descriptions for coordinators and facilitators.

GIZ advisor

The GIZ staff member designated to work hand-in-hand with the local partner should have a genuine desire to learn from community members and sufficient time to accompany the process. S/he should also have the ability to step back from the 'problem definition', which is often so predominant in development discourse, and instead support the partner communities in tackling the problematic issues in a way that is in sync with their values and sense of identity.

The GIZ advisor is typically responsible for:

1. Acting as focal point, sparring partner and technical advisor to the local partner throughout the Dialogue process.
2. Together with the local partner, developing partnership agreements, work plans, budgets and reports.
3. Accompanying the partner, coordinators and facilitators through all steps of the process. Organise regular meetings with the coordinators to facilitate joint reflection on the process and decide when they are ready to move on to the next step.
4. Liaising with local and religious leaders, government officials and other key stakeholders as necessary.

5. Monitoring and evaluation of the process and results, including review and quality assurance of reports.
6. Documenting and sharing lessons learned with a broad range of national and local partners to foster joint learning and enhance the sustainability of the approach.

Local partner

The local partner is the owner of and the driving force behind the Dialogue in the community. It needs to appoint two coordinators from within its own group to lead the Dialogue process and to accompany the facilitators and communities throughout the implementation phase.

The Generation Dialogue online toolkit provides a **checklist** which can help you narrow down your options when selecting a local partner. It also describes the essential attributes of a suitable partner and other important factors to consider. At times, when implementing Generation Dialogues in large communities or in more than one community at a time, you can work with more than one local partner.

Coordinators

A **profile and list of tasks for the coordinators** can be found in the online toolkit. Their main responsibilities are the following:

1. Identify up to four male and four female facilitators who will be part of the Dialogue team in the community.
2. Together with GIZ staff, meet with community leaders to secure their support for the Generation Dialogue process.
3. Participate in the first workshop organised by GIZ to learn about the first three steps of the Dialogue process and begin to prepare for Community Consultations.
4. Together with facilitators, prepare for, guide and supervise Community Consultations.
5. Participate in the second workshop organised by GIZ to discuss the results of the Community Consultation, to be introduced to the final four steps of the Dialogue and to take part in designing and practising the exercises for the Dialogue sessions. The aim is to customise the Dialogue exercises to the specifics of the topic, the community and the local language.

6. Prepare for and supervise facilitators as they conduct the first four Dialogue sessions, the first Public Meeting and the fifth Dialogue session.
7. Guide the facilitators as they support participants to carry out activities during the follow-up period, including by attending supervision meetings.
8. Guide and supervise facilitators to plan and conduct the second Public Meeting and the follow-up Community Consultations.
9. Together with facilitators and the outside researchers, identify the main results of the Generation Dialogue and the learnings from implementation.

Facilitators

A [profile and list of tasks for the facilitators](#) can be found in the online toolkit. Their main tasks and responsibilities are to:

1. Together with Dialogue coordinators, prepare for and conduct Community Consultations.
2. Together with the coordinators, design and practice Dialogue sessions which are customised to the specifics of the topic, the community and the local language.
3. Prepare for and conduct the first four Dialogue sessions, the first Public Meeting and the fifth Dialogue session.
4. Supervise participants as they carry out activities during the follow-up period.
5. Plan and conduct the second Public Meeting.
6. Plan and conduct the follow-up Community Consultations.
7. Together with the coordinators and the outside researchers, identify the main results of the Generation Dialogue and the learnings from implementation.

Researchers

The role of the independent researchers is to generate high-quality analysis of community attitudes prior to and following the Generation Dialogue process. Whilst the local partner can be expected to report on the implementation process, only independent researchers can produce an unbiased assessment of results achieved through the Generation Dialogue.

The researchers are responsible for documenting and analysing the initial and follow-up Community Consultations and for preparing detailed baseline and endline reports. A minimum of one male and one female researcher is required to complete these tasks. You can refer to the online tool '[How to monitor and evaluate Community Consultations](#)' for more details on the researchers' roles and responsibilities.

Dialogue expert

The GIZ Sector Programme 'Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Rights' has a pool of experienced Dialogue experts who can provide tailored technical advice and backstopping to your project team while they design and implement their first Generation Dialogue. It is recommended that a Dialogue expert be present at the two workshops at which you will plan and adapt the Dialogue to your specific context and topic. These two workshops will not be 'trainings', at which a Dialogue expert presents while the project team listens, but rather 'workshops' in the literal sense of the word. The Dialogue expert will accompany you and provide guidance as you work your way through the successive steps and adapt the tools of the Dialogue for your purposes.

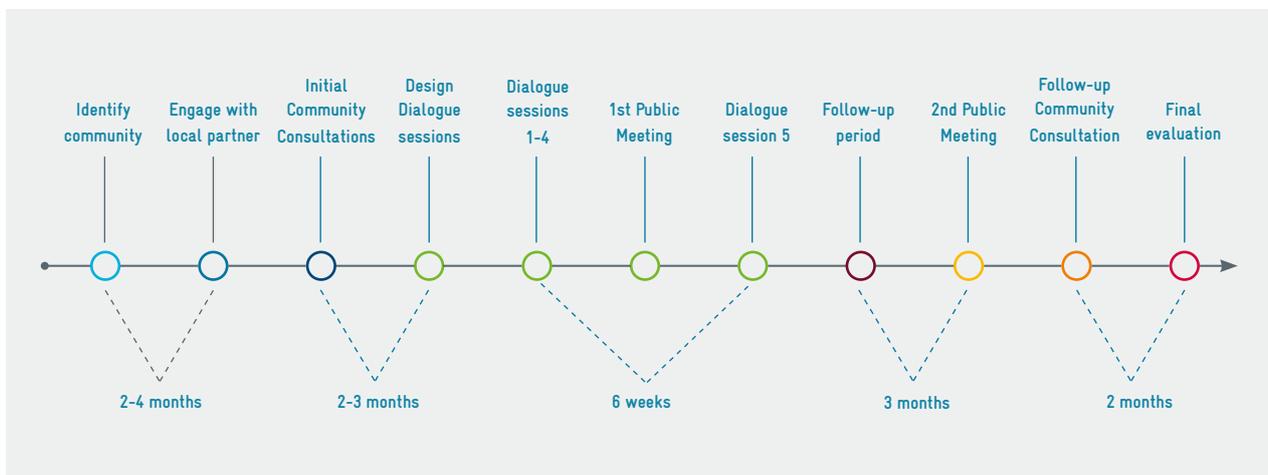


HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

TIMELINE

The time frame for implementation of a Generation Dialogue will depend on, for example, whether your project is already working in and with a particular community, whether it knows and is known by community members, and how ready they are to engage in a Dialogue process. In general, however, you should plan for about one year to adapt, prepare, implement and evaluate a full Generation Dialogue cycle. Depending on the resources at your disposal, you can launch and then support Generation Dialogues in up to two communities at a time.

The following graph illustrates the sequencing of activities of a Generation Dialogue process. The time required for each step or event can vary from project to project and is therefore only indicative.



WHAT NEEDS TO BE BUDGETED?

The set-up and costs for a Generation Dialogue implementation will vary depending, for example, on travel distances, available venues, stationery costs, the way workshops can be organised and the locally appropriate daily rates for facilitators and coordinators. To allow you to estimate what a Generation Dialogue might cost, this section gives an overview of the items to be included in the budget.

COORDINATORS AND FACILITATORS: PERSON-DAYS

For the implementation of a Generation Dialogue you will need 2 coordinators (one female, one male) and 8 facilitators (half of them women, the other half men). If the coordinators can also act as facilitators at the same time, you need only 8 persons in total.

These are estimates of the number of days required for each of them, including the workshops at which the Dialogue team works with a Generation Dialogue expert:

- For each coordinator: 35 days
- For each facilitator: 25 days

RESEARCHERS: PERSON-DAYS AND TRAVEL EXPENSES

To document, analyse and report on the initial and follow-up Community Consultations, 11 person-days, as well as travel expenses for two trips to the Dialogue community, need to be budgeted for each of the two researchers.

GIZ STAFF: TIME AND TRANSPORT

One dedicated GIZ staff member will accompany the first Dialogue process from start to finish. It is realistic to plan the same number of person days as for the coordinators, plus some additional time for the required administrative work, such as budgeting, contracting and reporting. The transport needed for the GIZ staff member must also be taken into account.

WORKSHOP COSTS: VENUE, CATERING AND TRANSPORT

When a Dialogue team implements a Generation Dialogue the first time, the project will need to organise two workshops at which an experienced Dialogue expert supports it in planning and designing its Dialogue. The first workshop, which will last for four days, will happen at the beginning of the Dialogue process. The number of persons taking part will depend on, for example, whether a partner community, coordinators and facilitators have already been selected. The second workshop will last five days. The whole Dialogue team, i.e. the responsible GIZ staff, coordinators and facilitators, should take part in it.

For both workshops, a venue, catering, workshop materials and participants' transport will have to be budgeted.

The Dialogue expert's fees and travel expenses will also have to be covered. The GIZ sector programme 'Promoting Gender equality and Women's Rights' may take over these costs.

INITIAL AND FOLLOW-UP COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS: SIMPLE SNACKS OR DRINKS

Community Consultations are held in each community at the start and end of the Dialogue process. Up to 200 community members will participate in these, in addition to the facilitators, coordinators, and external researchers. The sessions should be held at community venues that are available at no extra cost. Simple snacks or drinks for the participants should be budgeted as well as travel expenses for the researchers.

DIALOGUE SESSIONS: LOCAL CATERING AND STATIONERY

Ten Dialogue sessions (five for the men and five for the women) are held in each participating community. Each session lasts approximately half a day and should be held, if possible, at separate community venues that are available at no extra cost. A simple, locally catered lunch for all Dialogue participants (48), coordinators and facilitators (8-10) should be budgeted. Also, stationery must be included in the budget. The [list of items](#) needed can be found in the Generation Dialogue toolkit.

PUBLIC MEETINGS: SNACKS/DRINKS FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS, RENTING A SOUND SYSTEM

Two Public Meetings will be held during the Generation Dialogue process. Each meeting brings together the 48 Dialogue participants and the 8-10 coordinators and facilitators with a wide spectrum of local leaders and members of the community at large. A centrally-located venue or site (which, season and climate permitting, can be outside) that is large enough to hold 150 people or more should be secured for the meeting, depending on the size of the community, ideally at no cost. For the Public Meetings, drinks and/or snacks for invited community leaders and, where necessary, renting of a sound system should be budgeted.

SUPERVISION MEETINGS: SIMPLE DRINKS AND SNACKS

During the three-month follow-up period after the five Dialogue sessions, the coordinators and facilitators should meet the Dialogue participants on a monthly basis to provide supervision and support. The supervision meetings should be held, whenever possible, at a local venue which is free of charge. For these meetings, simple drinks and snacks for all attending Dialogue participants should be budgeted.



HOW ARE GENERATION DIALOGUES MONITORED AND EVALUATED?

The purpose of monitoring and evaluating the Generation Dialogue is two-fold: to enhance *accountability* by documenting and presenting results to key stakeholders; and to contribute to a transformative *learning process* in which the Dialogue participants identify and start acting upon new pathways of change in relation to the chosen topic.

More specifically, monitoring and evaluation of the Generation Dialogue aims to:

- Track and document how effectively each step of the Generation Dialogue approach is being carried out;
- Identify needs for adaptation of the methods, tools or approach to facilitation that might enhance the Dialogue process and its results; and
- Determine whether the Generation Dialogue has contributed to changes in intergenerational relationships and communication, and how it has influenced attitudes and practices in the community in relation to the topic it was meant to address.



MONITORING GENERATION DIALOGUES STEP BY STEP

The table below illustrates the monitoring activities and related tools at each step of the Dialogue process:

STEP 1 – IDENTIFYING A COMMUNITY	
WHAT?	Prepare a short report which describes how you identified a community and how the final decision takes into account the criteria in the checklist for selecting a suitable community.
WHO?	GIZ project team
STEP 2 – ENTERING INTO PARTNERSHIPS	
WHAT?	Prepare a short written report describing how the partner organisation, coordinators and facilitators were selected, and summarising the key points of discussion with community leaders.
WHO?	GIZ project team together with local partner
STEP 3 – LISTENING AND LEARNING THROUGH CONSULTATIONS	
WHAT?	Document the Community Consultations and prepare a report on your findings, following the guidance provided in the Generation Dialogue online toolkit.
WHO?	External researchers (at least one male and one female)
STEP 4 – DESIGNING YOUR DIALOGUE SESSIONS	
WHAT?	Develop a short report describing the process you followed to prepare your Dialogue sessions and highlight the types of changes you introduced.
WHO?	Dialogue team
STEP 5 – CONDUCTING DIALOGUE SESSIONS	
WHAT?	Debrief each Dialogue session and take notes of what you observed according to the guidance provided in the Generation Dialogue online toolkit. Collate the notes in an overall report after the fifth session.
WHO?	The coordinators
STEP 6 – WIDENING THE DIALOGUE	
WHAT?	Take notes during the Public Meeting and prepare a short report following the guidance provided in the Generation Dialogue online toolkit. Pay particular attention to the responses of community leaders to the special requests presented to them and to the overall atmosphere during the meeting.
WHO?	One of the coordinators
STEP 7 – SUSTAINING THE MOMENTUM	
WHAT?	Repeat what you did at the end of steps 3 and 6. Take notes and prepare short reports on the fifth Dialogue session, the supervision meetings and the second Public Meeting.
WHO?	Coordinators

HOW CAN YOU MEASURE THE RESULTS ATTAINED BY A GENERATION DIALOGUE?

A systematic and independent documentation and analysis of the initial and follow-up Community Consultations, which are held in the format of focus group discussions, can serve as baseline and endline for the Generation Dialogue. Qualified and independent researchers should be contracted for this task because coordinators and facilitators have their hands full organising and facilitating the Community Consultations. Moreover, they are unlikely to have the qualitative research skills needed to document and analyse group discussions which involve inputs from large numbers of participants in moderated formats.

Comparing the views expressed at these two points in time will show how the Dialogue has influenced intergenerational relationships, attitudes and practices in relation to the topic in the community. The tool '[How to monitor and evaluate Community Consultations](#)' describes how the researchers should document and analyse the Community Consultations and in which format results should be presented to the local partner and the GIZ project team.

Where a GIZ project wants to broaden the scope of the evaluation, it can request that the researchers also carry out key respondent interviews with a selection of individuals (e.g. male and female leaders, representatives of local government, religious institutions, health facilities, schools) when they are on site for the Community Consultations. This would help to establish a broader baseline and endline for assessing the outcomes of the Dialogue.

Another option is to commission a qualified research institute to carry out a more comprehensive comparative study involving two communities in which the Generation Dialogue has taken place (intervention sites) comparing them with two similar communities where the Dialogue is scheduled to be implemented, but has not yet taken place (control sites).

JOIN

THE GENERATION DIALOGUE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE!

Every implementation of the Generation Dialogue sheds new light on different aspects of the approach. As teams adapt it to their context and for the specific topics they want to address valuable insights are generated which are of considerable interest to the Sector Programme 'Promoting Gender Equality and Women's Rights', its pool of Dialogue experts and other projects implementing or planning to implement their own Dialogues.

Therefore make sure to share your learning, evaluation results, questions, adaptations of the tools and other feedback with the Sector Programme at spgender@giz.de. The story of your adaptation can then be added to those already online at the [Generation Dialogue website](#).



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