

Side Event: Community of Practice of dialogue facilitators Practitioner's Exchange

2015 UN Forum on Business and Human Rights

Report on the side event organized by the Community of Practice of dialogue facilitators, with the support of ACCESS Facility.

The Community of Practice of dialogue facilitators (CoP) is composed of senior professionals located all over the world who use consensus-based processes to help communities, companies and governments engage constructively to find their way to rights-compatible, interest-based solutions to common challenges.

The CoP exists to:

- Advance theory and practice relevant to its objectives;
- Support members with networking, resources, and opportunities for professional development, including mentorship;
- Expand the pool of highly qualified practitioners in all regions;
- Raise awareness with relevant stakeholders of constructive approaches that prevent destructive conflict, improve working relationships and arrive at rights-compatible, interest-based, value-maximizing solutions.

The objective of the practitioner's exchange was to strengthen relationships between facilitators, experts and organizational representatives dedicated to the evolution and expansion of the dialogue facilitation field, to exchange perspectives and reflect on the field of company-community-government facilitation, and to provide orientation for the CoP's focus in the upcoming year

The session was moderated by the Chair of the CoP, Pablo Lumerman. While the Forum takes place in a formal setting, Pablo chose to take a more informal and intimate approach, which helped to support a candid and constructive conversation.



One of themes that came up in the conversation, is how difficult it is to find trained and experienced dialogue facilitators. One of the reasons the CoP was established, was to identify these facilitators and put them on the radar. With its Advanced Training for Company-Community Mediators in Complex Environments, ACCESS in partnership with the Africa Centre for Dispute Settlement aims to address the need to further expand the pool of highly qualified company-community mediators.

The session was also an opportunity to talk about some of the challenges faced by mediators. One of these challenges is deciding what the boundaries of the negotiations are, and how to decide what to include, and what to omit. One of the more experienced mediators shared that no party can unilaterally determine what the boundaries are. The mediator needs to be sensitive to broader dynamics, have conversations with the parties, and then get the explicit permission of the parties to decide on what boundaries to draw. It is important to negotiate the boundaries of the dialogue so that every person feels safe participating.



The session demonstrated an unmet desire amongst both civil society and companies for more training and knowledge in the field of company-community mediation.

