REGIONAL LAUNCH OF THE UNESCO FRAMEWORK FOR ENABLING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE

YOUTH ESSAY CONTEST ON ENABLING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE IN EAST AFRICA
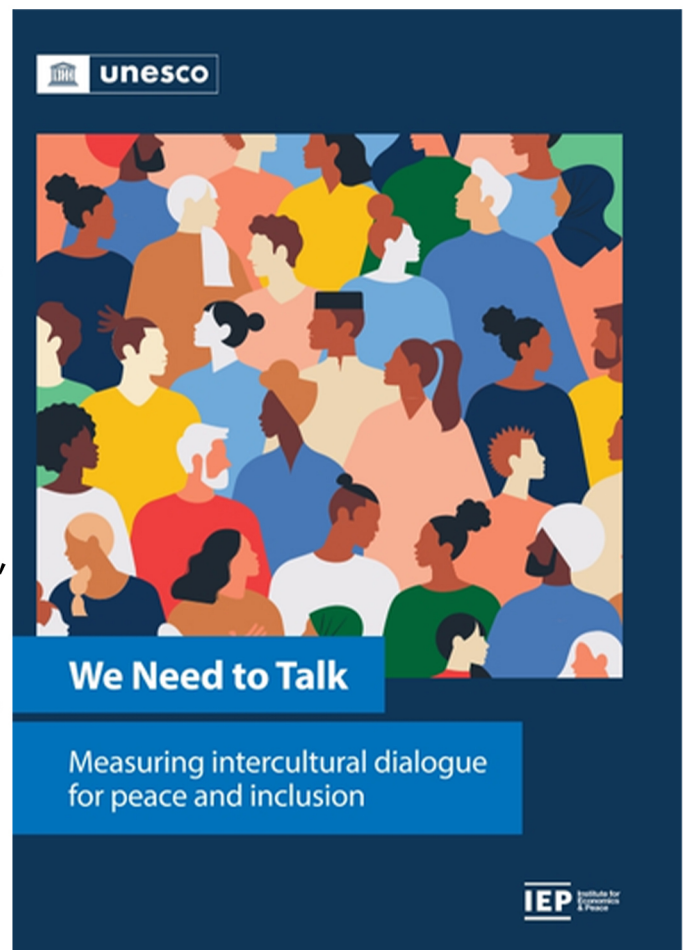
1. Rationale and Contextual Background

We live in a diverse and interconnected world, but we have not mastered the power of our diversity and continue to struggle to communicate across cultures and divides. In the face of global challenges and in the pursuit of peace and human rights, this skill is critical.

Globally, including in East Africa, the management of diversity remains a challenge. East Africa is home to about 350 million people, forming a highly diverse environment of cultures, ethnicity, religion, and race, including through influences, interactions and borrowings that happened over a history of exchanges with the Arab World, Asia, and the West. The region faces persisting challenges in achieving mutual understanding and effective management of diversity, which is exacerbated by competition over scarce resources and the struggle for power.

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We Need to Talk

Measuring intercultural dialogue for peace and inclusion

IEP Institute for Economics & Peace

This situation is fuelling instability within countries and the region, as manifested through social unrest, political tensions, entrenched xenophobia, hate speech, violent extremism, secessionism, terrorism, populism, just to mention a few issues, always often exacerbated in the realm of politics, notably during electoral processes.

To begin to solve these issues, we must rebuild trust and lines of communication. We must develop dialogue and collaboration. Intercultural Dialogue is defined by UNESCO as, 'a process undertaken to realize transformative communication that requires space or opportunities for engagement and a diverse group of participants committed to values such as mutual respect, empathy and a willingness to consider different perspectives.' As an important tool for peace, conflict prevention and fragility reduction and human rights promotion, it builds trust, collaboration, and networks of communication, which are key to finding effective solutions for the challenges we face.

With this background, the East Africa Regional Launch Event of the UNESCO Framework for Enabling Intercultural Dialogue and the publication "We Need to Talk: Measuring Intercultural Dialogue for Peace and Inclusion" offers a great opportunity for creating civic spaces for social engagement and dialogue that include the voices of those often left behind, notably the youth.

2. About the UNESCO Framework for Enabling Intercultural Dialogue and the publication "We Need to Talk: Measuring Intercultural Dialogue for Peace and Inclusion"

Recognizing the potential for Intercultural Dialogue and the need for better data in this area to effectively tackle pressing global issues, UNESCO has developed the UNESCO Framework for Enabling Intercultural Dialogue in partnership with the Institute for Economics and Peace. **Including data from over 160 countries, the Framework serves as a guide on how best to improve the structures, values and processes that enable Intercultural Dialogue.**

Following an extensive research consultation process, the Frameworks was designed using a two-level approach to evaluate the macro- and micro-levels enabling conditions of effective Intercultural Dialogue. The Framework includes 9 domains consisting of 21 indicators. Five structural domains focus on those aspects that reflect the systemic elements of society at the social and institutional levels, defined by policies and legal frameworks. *They include: Stability and Non-violence, Governance and Citizenship, Freedom of Expression, Horizontal Equality and Social Cohesion.* Four supporting domains focus on the principles, values and competencies that impact actions, policies and activities of Intercultural Dialogue based on individuals' interaction and engagement, as well as Intercultural Dialogue working 'on the ground'. These domains are *Inclusion and Representation, Leadership and Organisation, Linkages and Coherency, and Skills and Values.*

Global, regional, and country level data on all nine domains can be accessed through the online platform for the Framework, serving as a guide on needs and priorities in regard to supporting intercultural exchange for policymakers. The first of its kind, the Framework provides stakeholders not only with an understanding of the environment behind intercultural dialogue, but also how to enable intercultural dialogue within their specific context. The Framework also shows for the first time the direct connection between peacefulness, conflict prevention and non-fragility, and human right protection with intercultural dialogue creating an additional incentive for countries to foster this important tool.

Through the Framework, we now understand the impact this work can have with 1.5 billion people currently living in countries where dialogue is failing and risks of forced displacement, violence, extreme poverty, and discrimination are increased. We now know that:

- 89% of all current conflicts are occurring in countries where dialogue is stalling.
- 30% of people in countries where dialogue is stalling live in absolute poverty compared to less than 1% in countries where dialogue is thriving.
- Countries with where dialogue is stalling score 77% lower in terms of gender equality than countries where dialogue is thriving.

Launched alongside the global analytical report, _We Need to Talk: Measuring Intercultural Dialogue for Peace and Inclusion,_ the Framework is the first step in UNESCO's Initiative for Enabling Intercultural Dialogue.

3. Call for Essays: Engaging with young researchers to enable intercultural dialogue

UNESCO remains committed to meaningful youth engagement, with youth embraced by the Organization as both beneficiaries and key partners in co-shaping and co-delivery its mandate to build peace in the minds of women and men. This call for Essays reaffirms the importance of youth voices and agency, and reiterates the value UNESCO attaches to Youth-led knowledge production, their innovative ideas and thoughts to advance mutual understanding and peacebuilding.

Through this intellectual challenge, you are invited to:

- Read UNESCO Global Report on We Need to Talk: Measuring Intercultural Dialogue for Peace and Inclusion;
- Demonstrate understanding through use in your Essay of any one or more of the nine (09) structural and principle domains of the Framework mentioned in section 2 above;
- Using the Framework, present concrete examples from your context of how absence of dialogue, exclusion, discrimination, marginalization and others factors impede better understanding and sustainable peace at community, national or regional levels;
- Formulate clear recommendations that looks into structures, values, behaviours, and processes needed for dialogues to work as an instrument for enhancing social inclusivity and building/sustaining peace in East Africa. You may want to focus on and address any one or more of issues such as:
  - ✓Misunderstandings based on racial, ethnic, cultural or religious/belief differences, etc.;
  - ✓Intolerance, marginalization or discriminations due to disability, sexual orientation, belonging to a minority group, hate speech, etc.
  - ✓Inequalities and divisions rooted in political, economic, or social disparities, etc.

4. Guidelines for Participants

- **Eligibility:** Be a young researchers or young experts aged between 18 – 35, and a national from any of the 13 Member States covered by the UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa (Comoros, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Tanzania, Somalia, South Sudan and Uganda).

- **Language:** The essay can be submitted in English or French

- **Novelty/Innovation:** Essays must be original, innovative and unpublished. Already published works as well as plagiarized entries will be disqualified. If you use quotations, please include the reference at the bottom of the essay (references are not included in the word count).

- **Style and Format:** The essay may be in academic, literary, dissertation style, and must be typed and contain a title. It should be submitted in PDF or MS Word. **Font:** Arial; **Font Size:** 12; **Line and Paragraph spacing:** 1.5, **Word Count:** 1500 – 2500 words maximum

- **Copyrights:** Participants are invited to transfer copyright of the contested essays to the organizer (UNESCO), through signing of an Authorization Form that MUST be submitted alongside the Essay. This will allow relevant use as well as publication of selected pieces.

- **Awards:**
  ✓ **The best three (03) essays:** A round trip from home country to participate in the UNESCO Regional Launch event in Nairobi, Kenya, including accommodation; a UNESCO Certificate; opportunity to make a presentation of the essay during a dedicated session of the Launch event; publication of the Essay on the UNESCO Website; Hard copy of UNESCO publications *"We Need to Talk: Measuring Intercultural Dialogue for Peace and Inclusion"* (2022).
  ✓ **From the 4th to 20th best Essays:** A UNESCO Certificate of participation; Opportunity to participate online and contribute to the event; publication of the Essay on the UNESCO Website.

- **Submission Information:**
  ✓ ALL Essays must be sent to *d.onyango@unesco.org* and *m.karadi@unesco.org* and c.c. to *hc.ngandeu-ngatta@unesco.org*, with the Subject: **UNESCO Essay Contest- We Need to Talk,** and should be submitted by the 20 January 2023 at 23:59 p.m. EAT.
  ✓ Authors must also fill, sign and return an Authorization Form, alongside their submission