

5 PREPARING FOR CONVERSATION EVENTS

MODULE



Thorough preparation ensures that Conversation Events run smoothly and meet the intended project objectives. Preparation includes arranging all the practicalities and logistics, communicating with participants and stakeholders about the plans, preparing for the facilitation of the Conversation Events, including preparing resources and materials needed, and finally, double checking that all preparations have been made.

This module provides guidance on the following:

- What logistics must be organised?
- How to prepare materials for Conversation Events
- How to monitor preparation?

What logistics must be organised?

Practicalities and logistics vary from project to project and are influenced by many factors, including the most efficient use of your capacity, budget, and resources (human, financial, and time). A checklist helps to ensure that all the preparations and logistics needed for every Conversation Events Set are carried out. [See Section 6](#) for a *Logistics Checklist*.



Face-to-face Conversation Events

Location and venue

- **Availability:** Together with stakeholders and community representatives, identify suitable locations in which to hold the Conversation Events. The 'right' venue is one that is accessible and where participants feel comfortable. In reality, however, options may be limited, so work out what is best in the situation and what is available given the schedule and timing of the Conversation Events.
- **Access:** Try to find a venue located in an area that is easily accessible to participants, either by walking to it or using public transport. It should have secure parking for vehicles/bicycles. Make arrangements for people with special needs including, mobility, sight, hearing, and childcare needs.
- **Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE):** Consider issues such as: Will participants feel safe in this environment? Are there any safety or health hazards? Is it clean and free of clutter and dust? What is the noise level like? Is there good ventilation? Is it warm in winter and cool in summer? Ensure the health and safety of the setting so that participants feel secure and comfortable.



Photo: Framaja Photography.

Example from a Responsive Dialogues project



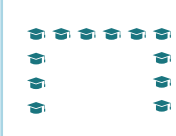


In the **Zambia** project, most of the Conversation Events were held in community healthcare facilities (one was held in a school). The healthcare facility setting had positive and negative implication:

Positive: Accessible and familiar venue. Healthcare facility staff could more easily participate in the Conversation Events.

Negative: In one high volume facility, rooms were changed due to unavailability, a lack of privacy, and a noisy environment. Timing was also changed to holding the Conversations Events during the week to holding them on the weekend.

- **Physical space:** Sufficient physical space is needed for plenary sessions and break-out groups. If indoors, try to ensure adequate temperature control; if outdoors, ensure undercover space. Ensure a sufficient number of tables and chairs, and that they can be moved for different layouts (see the diagram that follows). Check that toilets and exits are fully accessible and working.
- **Set up of the room:** Ensure that the room layout is suitable for optimum participation. Make sure that everyone can see the presenters, flipcharts and screens, that they can share with others on an equal basis, and won't feel intimidated or singled out, for example, if they need special facilities or arrangements due to physical or other reasons.
- **Seating arrangements:** This can affect participant interaction, motivation, and relationships. Each type of seating arrangement may be used to achieve different purposes, as shown in the diagram that follows.

Different seating arrangements

				
<p>Traditional may be better for a lecture than participatory Conversation Events.</p>	<p>Roundtable may work well for whole-group participation or partner conversations.</p>	<p>Horse shoe or semi-circle encourages engagement between facilitators and participants directly opposite each other.</p>	<p>Group pods are designed for small group discussion.</p>	<p>Pair pods are designed for working in pairs.</p>

- **Equipment:** Check whether the venue always has sufficient electricity, Wifi/ internet access, projector, screen, microphones, flipchart boards, and other equipment you need.
- **Facilitation resources:** Ahead of each Conversation Event, facilitators prepare the room – ensuring that all flipcharts, posters, and other resources are ready and on the wall/s where necessary.
- **Materials:** Prepare all materials needed well in advance and check translation or other adaptation needs for each participant group (see below).
- **Double check:** All logistics and practicalities at least twice!

Online Conversation Events

Most Conversation Events Sets happen **face-to-face**, however some may happen **online** or virtually, such as in the Thailand Responsive Dialogues project where two virtual Sets took place. Conversation Events, sessions, materials, and so on needed to be adapted for online usage. You might need the expertise of a skilled online facilitator to help with this, and you will still require several facilitators to take up different roles during the online Conversation Events, such as recording, taking notes, and assisting with breakout rooms.

Organising virtual spaces requires the same attention to detail as preparing for face-to-face Conversation Events. Some issues to consider:

- Which is the most accessible communications platform to use, such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams?
- How will you ensure that everyone has 'access rights' to the chosen platform and that they are trained on how to interact on that platform?
- Which are the most appropriate Whiteboard Apps to work with, such as Jamboard or digital collaboration platforms, like Miro? What training do you need to provide on how to use these?
- How will you ensure that facilitators, presenters, and participants are set up with good technical support?
- How will you ensure that there is sufficient internet coverage and access, and that participants have sufficient data?
- How will you ensure constant electricity? Do you need an inverter?

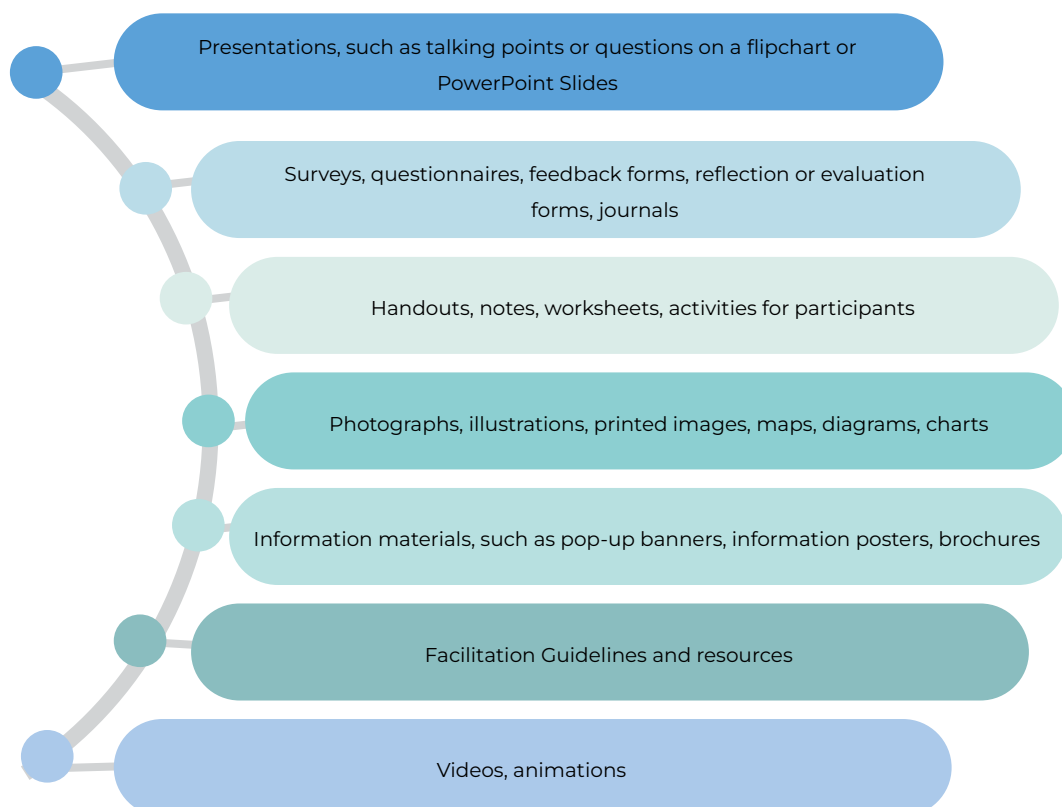
Communication and relationship building

Keep informing all relevant people about the plans and communicating with participants, local and other stakeholders, as well as experts and anyone else who you will invite to specific Conversation Events and sessions.

Tell them about the logistics, such as the venue, the schedule and times of Conversation Events, transport, accommodation plans, and what will be provided, for example, stationery, snacks and meals, childcare, and so on.

How to prepare materials for Conversation Events?

Examples of materials you might need in the Conversation Events



Once you have collected materials and resources, begin to assess how suitable they are for different participant groups and contexts, and what needs to be adapted, translated, or developed as new material.

Differences between developing and adapting material

Developing new material is a time-consuming, lengthy and expensive process. It requires skilled writers, editors, illustrators, photographers, and designers who understand the topic, audience, purposes, context, and so on.

Adapting existing material is less time-consuming, and is sometimes a shorter and less costly process. You decide what needs to be changed, added, or deleted. For example: does it need to be translated and/or rewritten into plain language or in a more user-friendly style? Does it need more visuals? Do the main talking points or questions need to be created on a flipchart or PowerPoint? Depending on what needs to be done, you don't always require experienced writers, editors, illustrators, and so on.

Most often, **materials need to be translated** into a local language. This is a time-consuming process, needs to happen well in advance of the materials being used, and the translations need to be double and triple checked to ensure that they retain the integrity and meaning of the original, and that there are no errors or inconsistencies. Remember too for printing purposes that translations often take up more space on a page.

NOTE

Once material is developed, adapted, or translated, it still needs to be adapted for different Conversation Events Sets or translated for different participant groups.

The chart below outlines one way to assess whether the materials you have gathered can be used as is, or if they need to be adapted or completely rewritten. See [Section 6, Monitoring Form for Materials used in Conversation Events](#).

Example of how to assess materials gathered

Areas of consideration	General materials development principle	Examples of what may need adaptation or rewriting
<i>What topic do you want to present? (content)</i>	Content is relevant to topic, purpose, and audience	Information checking and updating, translation
<i>Who do you want to use the material with? (audience)</i>	Material is appropriate and user-friendly for audience	Translation needed Rewrite in plain language Change examples from urban to rural More representative images
<i>Why do you want to use the materials? (purpose and aims)</i>	Material effectively communicates aims and messages	Adapt to fit purpose, aims, focus Translate so that aims and messages are clearer
<i>Where, when, and how will the materials be used? (context)</i>	Material is suitable for the context in which it will be used	Adapt from online use to face-to-face (or other way round) Adapt/translate for use in under-resourced community
<i>What style and approach will you use to help you communicate the messages and purposes? (approach/method)</i>	Material has appropriate approach to communicate messages and purposes	More participatory, inclusive, and sensitive to issues of diversity, gender (e.g. in language, images, content)

Areas of consideration	General materials development principle	Examples of what may need adaptation or rewriting
<i>What do you want the materials to look like? (design)</i>	Material is well-designed and easy to read and use	Shorten materials Redesign to make more user-friendly
<i>What resources do you have? (human, time, and money)</i> <i>What are your constraints? (human, time, and money)</i>	Material is effective given resources and constraints	Change from colour to greyscale (black and white) for printing Adapt/translate rather than develop new materials Use Word and don't go through production process



Who is involved in materials development?

There might be a skilled writer or editor in your core implementation team, or you might consider contracting someone in. If you have the budget, you might also bring in an artist and a production team to help with design and typesetting.

If the material is to be used by the facilitators, then either involve them in the writing process, or ask them to be reviewers of drafts and to assist with piloting and getting feedback on the materials.

Example from a Responsive Dialogues project

The chart below is from the **Zambia** project, showing the type of material prepared for Responsive Dialogues.

Type of material created/adapted	What was it about? (content)	Why was it developed? (purpose)	Who was it developed for? (audience)	Who developed it?	Who designed it?
Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and Urinary Tract Infection (UTI) posters	Information on UTIs and antibiotic misuse	To sensitise community members on UTIs and antibiotic misuse	Community members (participants)	Eden staff	Graphics designer
Pop Up banner	Information on UTIs and antibiotics misuse	To sensitise community members on UTIs and antibiotic misuse as well as promote visibility of the project	Community members (participants), stakeholders, and partners	Eden staff	Graphics designer



Type of material created/adapted	What was it about? (content)	Why was it developed? (purpose)	Who was it developed for? (audience)	Who developed it?	Who designed it?
Brochures	Information on Responsive Dialogues, UTIs, and AMR	To sensitise community members and project participants on the project, UTIs, antibiotics and AMR	Community members, health facility staff, and project participants	Eden staff	Graphics designer
Animation videos	Information about UTIs, taking medicines without prescriptions, listening to friends, not sharing UTI with husband, antibiotic resistance	To sensitise community members on the dangers of taking antibiotics without prescriptions and the effects of listening to friends on which medicines to take	Participants	Eden staff	Graphics designer and animator

Sample material developed by **Zambia** Responsive Dialogues project.



Image: Zambia Responsive Dialogues project.

Examples from Responsive Dialogues projects



Image: Thailand Responsive Dialogues project.

Both the **Thailand and Malawi** projects sub-contracted a visual artist to help capture the Conversation Events process and key messages.

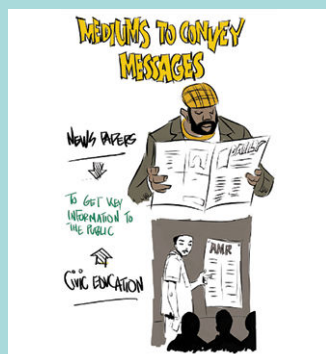


Image: Malawi Responsive Dialogues project.

In the **Malawi** project, a graphic artist captured the key messages that were co-created by participant groups, as well as the mediums through which they would be disseminated.

How to monitor preparation?

Some monitoring issues to consider regarding preparing for Conversation Events:

- Practicalities and logistics are organised and prepared well in advance of Conversation Events, and are double checked to ensure all is in order
- The most efficient and effective use is made of the project's capacity, budget, and resources (human, financial, and time) to prepare the logistics
- All aspects are monitored to ensure that participants are well taken care of
- There is ongoing communication with all those involved about plans
- Materials and resources are developed, adapted, or translated and are ready well ahead of Conversation Events.

Checklist of guidance in this module

Tick completed activities/tasks and those that still need completion.

Activities	Yes	To do
Logistics are organised prior to running Conversation Events		
Materials are prepared and ready to be used		
Preparation is monitored		

