The U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue Group: Make Agent Orange History
Track Two diplomacy and the case of the U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue Group

Syllabus

The Vietnam War left scars on both Vietnam and the United States that were only deepened in the aftermath of Agent Orange/Dioxin being sprayed over millions of acres of forests and farmland in Vietnam. For decades the detrimental health and environmental effects of Agent Orange have been a controversial subject for U.S./Vietnamese relations. In 2007, the Ford Foundation, led by Charles Bailey, the Foundation’s Director of Special a Initiative on Agent Orange, convened the first meeting of a citizen-to-citizen dialogue group who were brought together to raise awareness of this troubling legacy of the Vietnam War.

Since the initial meeting in February 2007, the **U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue Group on Agent Orange/Dioxin** has drawn attention to, and worked toward, possible remedies for a variety of issues related to the devastating effects of Agent Orange/Dioxin. The members of the Dialogue Group have changed over time, but continue to be comprised of private citizens, experts, and policy makers whose collaborative efforts have resulted in a 10 Year **Declaration and Plan of Action**. The plan outlines action steps that will “help to eliminate the public health threat of dioxin hot spots, improve the lives of people with disabilities, restore the defoliated land, and remove a barrier to fully normal U.S./Vietnamese relations.”

This module is based on the case of the U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue Group on Agent Orange/Dioxin and will blend reading and discussion on Track Two and Multi-track diplomacy with role-play simulating the Dialogue Group’s first meeting. The module is divided into four lessons:

**Lesson A** is an introduction of Multi-track diplomacy, particularly focusing on Track Two or citizen-to-citizen diplomacy.

**Lesson B** provides a framework for better understanding Track Two diplomacy by introducing the case of the U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue Group on Agent Orange.

**Lesson C** is dedicated to simulating the first meeting of the U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue Group and gives participants a chance to immerse themselves in the case to gain a better understanding of the challenges faced in coordinating and convening Track Two talks. You will also explore some of the important elements that must be considered in order to lay groundwork for effective and productive dialogue.

**Lesson D** is for debriefing and discussion of the simulation experience as well as the outcome of the actual U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue Group’s initial meetings and recent accomplishments.

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The reading and multimedia material provided with this module, discussion, skills exercises, and simulation will provide an understanding of how diplomacy techniques like citizen-to-citizen dialogue are used to resolve complex and often culturally sensitive problems where direct interactions between governments or organizations cannot be effective.

**Preparation Material**

Articles on Track Two diplomacy are included to provide an overview of the Track Two process. Communication exercises allow for participants to practice skills used in meeting facilitation. Biographical information on the various members of the initial Dialogue Group is provided, along with links to multi-media and print information about the Agent Orange legacy and the process of convening the first U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue Group. The information will prepare participants to represent the point of view of one of the original members—within the context of a simulated first meeting—so they can look critically through the delegate’s lens at the design process for convening the group and the challenges presented in engaging in diplomatic dialogue. Finally, additional resources are listed as recommended reading for those who wish to delve further into the case and issues surrounding the Agent Orange legacy.

Discussions will focus on process and address critical elements of the first meeting including:

- who was selected for the Dialogue Group and why;
- what considerations might have been given to the selection process;
- what considerations must be given to the “first” meeting; and
- who gets to talk first and why details like that are important.

Participants will also explore how to engage the group in building trust, framing issues, and developing convening "procedures" or "group conditions" that they could all agree to in order to begin to address the issues. It will be an invigorating exercise in critical thinking about Track Two diplomacy.

The Schedule begins on page 3.
Schedule

Note: Reading assignments are intended for preparation for the lesson in which they are listed.

Lesson A: Track Two Diplomacy

Objectives: To identify and distinguish between different diplomacy styles (Track One, Track Two, and Multi-track), and recognize and appreciate diversity and varying perspectives.

Assigned reading to prepare for this lesson: (All material can be downloaded from: http://www.peaceinstitute.hawaii.edu/agent-orange-module/lesson-resources.html)


Multi-media assigned to prepare for this lesson:

http://makeagentorangehistory.org/

Informative Web sites on Agent Orange Provided Courtesy of the Aspen Institute:

Make Agent Orange History: http://makeagentorangehistory.org/
The Aspen Institute: http://www.aspeninstitute.org/policy-work/agent-orange
Agent Orange Record—A continuing legacy of the Vietnam War: http://www.agentorangerecord.org/
The Culture Network: http://onevietnam.org/
Life is Beautiful—A campaign to raise awareness and funds for people with disabilities in Vietnam: http://www.lifeisbeautiful.vn/
Viet Fellows—A project of Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy: http://www.vietfellows.org
Vietnam Reporting Project—A project of the Renaissance Journalism Center: http://vietnamreportingproject.org/

Skills Exercise 1: Three Similarities and One Difference – 30 min.
Skills Exercise 2: Shifting Perspectives – 30 min.
Lesson B: U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue Group

Objectives: To observe the application of Track Two diplomacy using the U.S.-Vietnam dialogue on Agent Orange as a case study, and practice reframing and active listening skills.

Prepare for simulation by assigning biographies, and reviewing instructions and proposed meeting agenda.

Assigned reading to prepare for this lesson: (All material can be downloaded from: http://www.peaceinstitute.hawaii.edu/agent-orange-module/lesson-resources.html).


Suggested listening to prepare for this lesson: (Access at http://www.peaceinstitute.hawaii.edu/agent-orange-module/lesson-resources.html).


Other resources for consideration (not provided with module):


Skills exercise(s):

Skills Exercise 3: The Island – 40 min.
Lesson C: Simulation

Objective: Simulate the first U.S. Vietnam Dialogue Group meeting representing the points of view of one of the original members. Exploratory discussion will address basic considerations of meeting procedures and protocols for long-term engagement.

Assigned reading to prepare for this lesson: (All material can be downloaded from: http://www.peaceinstitute.hawaii.edu/agent-orange-module/lesson-resources.html).


Suggested material for preparation for simulation: (Except for video segment, all material can be downloaded from http://www.peaceinstitute.hawaii.edu/agent-orange-module/lesson-resources.html).

Vietnam Reporting Project fellow Thuy Vu: [Video segments].
  http://vietnamreportingproject.org/

Aspen Institute Fact Sheets on U.S.-Vietnam Dialogue Group


Ford Foundation. (2007, June 20). Joint Humanitarian Group is Launched to Build Support to Overcome Agent Orange Legacies. [Format for press release]

Lesson D: Discussion and Summary

Objectives: Debrief simulation. Discuss outcome of actual Dialogue Group and assess basic understanding of the Track Two process.

Assigned reading to prepare for this lesson: (All material can be downloaded from: http://www.peaceinstitute.hawaii.edu/agent-orange-module/lesson-resources.html).


Other reading suggested for this lesson: (All material can be downloaded from: http://www.peaceinstitute.hawaii.edu/agent-orange-module/lesson-resources.html).
