Radio Talkshows are a tool with great power to influence conflict in a positive or negative manner.

They have to be used with care, if they are not to exacerbate conflict.

Talkshows can bring people together across dividing lines, and open up debate on difficult issues.

This guidebook has been written with talkshow producers and presenters in mind. It will help the design and production of successful and entertaining programmes which help construct a peaceful future, without leaving audiences with the feeling that things will never change.
Radio Talkshows For Peacebuilding
Nepal
a guide

Adapted to the Nepali context from original book by
Ross Howards and Francis Rolt

Adaptation done by
Community Radio Support Centre,
Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists
Acknowledgement
Community Radio Support Center, Nepal Forum for Environmental Journalists and Search for Common Ground are solely responsible for the content of this Nepali adaptation. However, we would like to express our gratitude to journalist Tika Ram Rai, Pratik Bhandari and Bharat Bhusal for helping us gather relevant Nepali examples for adaptation.


The Authors
Ross Howard is a journalist and international media development specialist, a journalism instructor at Vancouver’s Langara College, author of Conflict Sensitive Journalism: a handbook and coeditor of The Power of the Media, and president of Media & Democracy Group.

Francis Rolt is Director of radio for Search for Common Ground and heads the Radio for Peacebuilding, Africa project. He has worked in radio for twenty years as a journalist, presenter and producer, authored How to produce a radio soap for conflict prevention/resolution Part I, and co-edited Part II (both are available on the Radio for Peacebuilding, Africa website) as well as other several other books.

Search for Common Ground Nepal
Bakhundole, Lalitpur
P.O. Box No.: 24905
Kathmandu, Nepal
Phone: +977-1-5535909
Fax: +977-1-5530171
Email: sfcg nepal@sfcg.org
URL: www.sfcg.org, www.radiopeaceafrica.org

Radio for Peacebuilding Nepal is a project funded by United States Institute of Peace (USIP)

September 2008, First Edition

Nepali adaptation: Community Radio Support Centre, Nepal Forum of Environmental Journalists
Translation: Arpita Nepal
Illustrations: Jitendra Raj Bajracharya
Layout: The Printhouse, Kathmandu

ISBN: 978-9937-9013-0-7
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOW TO USE THIS GUIDEBOOK</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONFLICT</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding conflict</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to transform conflict</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TALKSHOWS</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is a talkshow</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can talkshows help or hinder the transformation of conflicts?</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledging the problems of talkshows</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation and plan</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADIO TALK SHOW FORMATS</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The challenge</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The common formats</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ideas for talkshow formats and content</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The presenter’s basic job requirements</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISSUE AND PRACTICES</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult questions</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practices, solutions and tips</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key points</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Search for Common Ground

Introduction: Search For Common Ground (SFCG) is an international NGO working in the field of conflict transformation and peace building. Established in 1982, we work in 18 countries around the world, including Africa, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. In Asia, we work in Indonesia and Nepal.

Our Mission: SFCG’s mission is to transform the way the world deals with conflict: away from adversarial approaches, towards cooperative solutions.

Our Core Principles
- Conflict is both normal and resolvable
- Conflict can be transformed
- Common ground is not the same as compromise
- Peace is a process
- Humankind is interdependent

Our Tool Box: We use a range of tools to bring people together from across dividing lines so that they can work cooperatively. Our Tool Box includes media (radio, television, film and magazines), mediation and facilitation, training, support to community organizations, sports, drama and music.

SFCG in Nepal: SFCG has been working in Nepal since February 2006 with the aim of providing support to the peace process. We work in close partnership with local and national media organisations, civil society organisations and NGOs.

The program in Nepal consists of a multi-pronged approach, working with various sectors who are key to the peace process, combining media and communications with community peace building work.

2. Community Radio Support Center, NEFEJ

In 2054 BS after a long struggle, Nepal Forum for Environmental Journalists was able to operate the first ever independent Community Radio of South Asia. This opened up many opportunities to the non-governmental and private sector of Nepal. There were many challenges for potential radio broadcasters like issues of legal processes, technical issues, resource mobilization issues, human resource development and planning and policy formulation issues. In order to face these challenges and develop and expand the community radio movement in Nepal, Nepal Forum for Environmental Journalists started the Community Radio Support Center in 2002. This Center started a help desk immediately after its formation to assist enthusiast and potential community radio promoters. With the help of this Center, Radio Lumbini, the first ever community radio outside Kathmandu was initiated.

The Centre started providing necessary documents required before establishing a radio station like concept notes to documents required for obtaining a license, lobbying and other technical support. The center played a leading role in the community FM stations movement in Nepal with its practical and substantial support as well as involving itself in strategizing the sustainability of community FM stations. The Center was proactive in its campaign of having ‘One district, one community radio’. By 2008, with the help of the center, 60 community radios have already come into existence while 60 other organizations are on the process of obtaining a license for community radio. The centre has already produced more than 10 reference materials including defining community radio in the context of Nepal, radio program production, strategic planning for community radio and several manuals. In order to take forward the radio movement in Nepal, the center has been conducting programs and activities like radio grants, lobbying, networking, radio management and human resource development programs and advocacy. In order to institutionalize community radio, under the leadership of the center, Community Radio Broadcasters Association has been established in 2002. In 2007, the centre established a ‘Radio Knowledge Center’ to identify, collect and disburse information on community radio in order to institutionalize community radio knowledge and its impact and share experiences. Currently, the centre is focused on establishing its branches in 15 strategic locations according to the geographical, linguistic, cultural, ethnic and qualitative diversity of Nepal.
How to use this Guidebook

This guidebook has been adapted to the Nepali context for radio talkshow producers and hosts in this country, which is caught in a conflict situation and in the midst of a transition to peace. This book focuses mainly on conflicts between groups, peoples or countries which either are or risk becoming violent. Many broadcasters may be familiar with some of the ideas, but we hope that this guidebook also contains a lot of new and useful material.

Everyone would like to live in a peaceful society, one not driven by hatred and violence, but the question is how to get there? Radio talkshow hosts and producers that do peacebuilding have their own challenges. Therefore, this guidebook is packed with a wealth of examples and tools to help production team discussions on developing talkshows that build to peace. The guidebook contains:

- A how-to guide to analysing conflict;
- Tools and examples of how you, as a radio professional, can help build a peaceful society; and
- Descriptions and definitions of the different types of talkshows and their various strengths and weaknesses.

You’ll also find quotations and examples in boxes, while some important ideas which could be used for discussion are highlighted in the tables throughout. Since this is an adaptation of the original guidebook, most examples that have been quoted are from Nepal. But the issues, discussion and skills have been adopted from the original guidebook as these are relevant to a wider spectrum of conflict affected countries across the world.

Radio Talkshows for Peacebuilding – A Guide is one of a series of guidebooks adapted for radio producers and other involved in making positive radio in Nepal – radio which makes a difference. This guidebook has been developed and produced by Search for Common Ground, Nepal under its project of ‘Radio for Peacebuilding Nepal’ and was done in partnership with the Community Radio Support Centre. It was done in consultation with radio professionals from around the world and from throughout Nepal. You could either read through this guidebook or simply use the tools given here as a reference. Whatever comments, ideas and experiences you will note during the radioshow using this guidebook would help us improve this book. So please, send us your feedback and opinions at crsc@nefej.org.np or sfcgnepal@sfcg.org.
Introduction

Conflict is a primary subject in the media. It dominates news reports and fills up radio talkshows. In fact, radio talkshows feed on conflict; presenters and producers who are hungry for listeners often seek guests of wildly opposing views to shout at each other on air.

These voices may attract an audience, but do such programmes achieve anything else? As talkshow presenters should we be using conflicts and disagreements as a way of attracting listeners? Do we risk doing more harm than good by intensifying the conflict under discussion? Rather than informing and/or entertaining listeners do we leave them angry or fearful or with the sense that conflict will go on forever? Do we risk making violent or destructive conflict seem like an inevitable response to all disagreements, and therefore, destabilize whole communities?

Or could we be trying to have a positive impact on our listeners, which will contribute to a process that will eventually result in peace rather than violent conflict?

Good talkshows require diversity, spontaneity and flexibility. So, there are no absolute rules about how to discuss conflict in a more constructive manner. Certainly, it is a challenge to talk about conflict in a way which is interesting and informative, which offers positive alternatives, and which holds an audience. But as radio presenters we cannot just ignore conflict and assume it will go away. There are reliable techniques and some new skills which can help us, as journalists and presenters, to deal with conflict effectively on air.

The problem is that few radio talkshow presenters are specifically trained for their influential work. Most would agree that they need additional knowledge to help avoid the more dangerous pitfalls and worst negative practices. With nothing more than journalism training it is possible to present a fast-moving, audience-attracting radio talkshow. Unfortunately many such programs contain a lot of talk but very little content. There are presenters who go a step further, who exaggerate the differences and encourage conflict. Sometimes this is inadvertent, but it can also be intentional. This is just as true for commercial as for private, state controlled or truly public radio broadcasters, even if the pressures are slightly different.

Clearly, as presenters and producers we need to be more aware of our role and the content or our shows, and need new skills to help us improve our talkshows. This guidebook represents a step towards building that additional knowledge and practicing some of those skills.
Summary: This chapter takes a look at both theoretical and practical approaches to conflict. Conflict itself is neither positive nor negative, only violent conflict is negative. What’s important is how conflict is managed, so as to ensure that it doesn’t develop into violence. Conflict runs along a continuum from, at one end, interpersonal conflict at work with a colleague (unlikely to lead to violence) to violent armed conflict between militia groups at the other end.

**Understanding Conflict**

For a radio professional to have a positive impact on violent conflict s/he has to understand it properly first.

Diplomats, negotiators and social scientists have developed a sophisticated understanding of conflict but few journalists and presenters know much about it. Journalists make news reports on violent conflict as it happens and presenters talk about it on the air, often without an appreciation of the root causes, knowledge of the different kinds of conflict, or awareness of how it can end. As conflict analyst Johan Galtung observes, that is like describing an illness without reporting on what causes it and without reporting on the medicines that can cure it.

**What is conflict?**

A widely accepted definition of ‘Conflict’:

Conflict is the relationship between at least two parties (individuals or groups) who have, or who think they have, incompatible objectives, needs and interests.

Conflict is a widespread phenomenon, and there are many different types (political, social, economic, religious etc.) all of which may or may not result in violence. They can also be categorized according to the groups or individuals involved (generations, castes, ethnicities, nationalities, etc.). Equally, some specialists describe conflicts according to different phases, distinguishing for example, ‘pre-conflict’, ‘confrontation’, ‘crisis’, ‘resolution’ and ‘post-conflict’.

These categories can be useful because they allow us to analyze a situation, but we mustn’t forget that conflicts evolve; conflicts aren’t static, they transform and even superimpose themselves one on top of another, altering over time and depending on events.
Conflicts are often caused by more than one of these factors. Indeed it is important for broadcasters to remember and to recognize that conflicts are usually the result of a combination of impulses, desires, needs, beliefs and perceptions. In violent conflicts there are often multiple perceptions of causes; they are almost never simple tugs-of-war between two groups. Most violent conflicts result from a whole collection of sometimes widely differing and even incompatible views, ideas, ideals and perceptions.

Conflicts can also result from the clash of beliefs with facts. The ‘Chhaupadi’ tradition which is prevalent in the Far Western region of Nepal is one such example where women, during their periods or after delivering a child, are not allowed to stay in their homes but are kept in a ‘Chhau-shed’ (a structure resembling a cow-shed). Many women develop long term diseases and/or health related problems for having to live in a cow shed when they are most vulnerable in terms of health. There have been reports of women dying due to a snake bites or attacks from wild animals when they are living in such conditions. In this case, conflicts emerge between interpretations of cultural traditions (values). At the same time, there are tangible and physical consequences of the practice (facts). Presenting practitioners with the facts of its physical impact (on women’s health in this case) can create space for a solution to emerge, convincing many that the practice needs to be changed, and/or eradicated.

Most lasting changes in a society are brought about by questioning and debating on the merits of the changes. In short, disagreement or conflict is an integral part of everyone’s life. If conflict is well managed the parties will develop a common approach about the speed and dimension of the changes they want. If it’s badly managed, then the conflict could become violent.

**Violence**

Violence, ‘consists of actions, words, attitudes, structures or systems which create physical, psychological, social or environmental prejudice, and/or which prevent people from achieving their full human potential’.

Physical violence: (or visible violence) is the best known. It’s often the only type of violence mentioned in the media. Visible violence aims to ‘intimidate, constrain, wound or even to kill people’.

But there is also ‘invisible’ violence. This is just as dangerous because it prevents individuals from realizing their potential, and is liable to turn violent.

Generally two main categories of invisible violence are recognized: cultural violence and structural violence.

Cultural violence: describes cultural products which justify or glorify violence. It includes hate speech, religious justification for war, the use of myths and legends about war heroes etc.

Hate speech, where one group speaks of another group as unequal and unworthy of respect, or blames it for current problems and suggests violence to eliminate that group. Hate speech may be used by one country against another country, or another social group (ethnicity, religion, class, etc.).
A second form of cultural violence is extreme religious intolerance of others’ faith and practices. A third form is gender discrimination, which allows or endorses practices against the best interest of women.

Structural Violence occurs when the laws and traditional rules of a society permit or encourage harm against one group. It includes notably, slavery, colonialism, racial segregation, etc. And even corruption, when its organized and systematic, is a form of structural violence.

It includes political or legal systems. For example, ‘Muluki Ain’ (The Civil Code) enacted by Junga Bahadur Rana in Nepal not only discriminated against women and Dalits but also hampered their progress. Similarly, until a few years ago Nepalese from Madhesi origin were not recruited by the Nepali Army. This discrimination was endorsed by the law itself. A commission set by the Government of Nepal (GoN) itself has presented a report that states that there are more than a hundred and fifty discriminatory law/legal provisions against women in Nepal.

Clearly, ending physical conflict isn’t enough to bring long term peace in such cases. The conflict will erupt again if these other forms of violence are ignored.

**How conflict becomes violent**
Circumstances in which conflicts are likely to turn violent are the same almost everywhere in the world:
- Little or no communication between two or more sides who disagree;
- False ideas and beliefs about each other held by the different sides;
- Historical, long-time grievances between the different sides; or
- Uneven distribution of power, and/or resources (such as food, housing, jobs and land).

In cases of the inequitable distribution of resources, it’s important to remember that people involved in violent conflict are very unlikely to accept any arrangement which leaves their basic human needs unmet – not only secure supplies of food, water, shelter and basic medicine, but also identity and recognition.

This is particularly important for radio professionals to understand as it means that people whose needs are unmet should not necessarily be seen as ‘unreasonable’ if they keep up their struggle, even if it seems hopeless or self-defeating. What it means is that some form of structural change has to be on the agenda, to allow those human needs to be met. If there is no agreement on changing these conditions, violent conflict is almost inevitable.

**Ending conflict**
So how does conflict end? Firstly, there are many traditional conflict resolution techniques which are still in use in many parts of Africa and Asia, but most still fall into one or more of the categories outlined below.

Conflict analysts say that conflict between protagonists, whether between those of different genders, villages, militias or countries, can end in at least four different ways.

One side wins (or one-party dominance): Because it is physically stronger, or is financially more powerful, or is supported by some authority such as the courts, one side wins and the
other loses. The loser is likely to be unsatisfied, and may suffer violence and harm. The Supreme Court’s decision on 1 June 1991 can be taken as an example. After the Kathmandu Municipality started using Newari and Rajbiraj Municipality started using Maithali language as official language, Yagya Nidhi Dhal and three other Nepali filed a case in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court decided in favour of Yagya Nidhi Dahal and others, ruling that even though Nepal’s constitution of 2056 had stated that the mother tongue is a national language, no law had been formed and the formal use of languages other than Nepali was banned. Those who filed the petition won, but Newari and Maithali language users felt defeated. Since then they have been celebrating every 18 Jestha as Black Day as a protest.

Withdrawal is another way of ending a conflict, at least temporarily. One or both sides back away, although neither side is really satisfied. For example, in 2007 the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoist withdrew from the government, demanding an immediate declaration of the country as republic and full proportionate election process. As a result the elections, scheduled for October 2007, were delayed. The Maoists later agreed to return to the government when the first meeting of seven parties including Maoist came to a consensus on implementing republic and to elect 60% of assembly members through proportionate election system. Before that, the ruling party, Nepali Congress, had not been in favour of that demand. After that, the Maoists withdrew their stance on immediate implementation of republic and Nepali Congress also withdrew its stance on not declaring the nation as republic in the interim constitution before the constituent assembly. Both parties agreed that they would declare the nation a republic after the first meeting of the constituent assembly.

Compromise is the beginning of a solution to the conflict. For example, the two sides agree on at least a small change, such as sharing the resource about which they quarreled. The share may be unequal but it is temporarily satisfying enough to both groups. Before the former king Gyanendra took the entire regime in his own hand on February 1, 2005, both Nepali Congress and CPN-UML were in favour of the constitutional monarchy. But, the Maoists were fighting for a republic and an end to the monarchy. The Maoists had referred to Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal – United Marxist Leninists as classified enemies. After the step taken in February 2005, the Maoist and mainstream parties changed their stance, signing a 12 point agreement in which they allied to fight against the king. The agreement included a people’s movement and removal of the king. The people’s movement was a success and led to the Maoists agreeing to a ceasefire, entering the government and eventually became part of interim legislature and the government.

Real common ground (or Transcendence), involves both sides achieving a new understanding of their real needs, and finding a new way to share the benefits of cooperation. They respect their differences and recognize their common problems. They work together for their common good. Violent conflict becomes a less desirable way of resolving their differences. This is the most likely way to achieve lasting peace.

After the success of the second people’s movement (organized by a union of seven political parties) in April 2006, a peace agreement was signed between the government of Nepal, and Maoist Chairman Prachanda on November 22, 2006. The government agreed to restructure the nation’s leadership by carrying out constituent assembly elections while the Maoists agreed to put their arms and combatants under the supervision of the United
Nations and enter the political system. After that, with the formulation of interim constitution, the Maoist became part of the Interim Parliament and the government of Nepal.

**How to Transform Conflict**

Peace building techniques have existed for a long time. These are actions which help prevent conflicts from becoming violent.

Traditional techniques include facilitation and mediation between political actors (official and unofficial diplomacy), the creation of local organizations to resolve individual conflicts, judicial mediation, etc.

More recently new techniques have been successfully developed and used. These include the use of sport or other cultural activities in order to build relationships between social groups or between political actors. And among the more important new tools is the media - particularly radio.

**Radio and Conflict**

Of all the audiovisual media, radio is the most direct and reaches the most people. This makes it an essential element in peace building, particularly in South Asia.

Because of the rugged geography, the lack of educational opportunities, and high levels of illiteracy, it is impossible for the print media to be the common medium of communication. Due to minimum income level and limited access to electricity television is also not the most effective medium of communication. That is why radio which is used by most of the population has become the best way of disseminating information and shaping attitudes in peace building process of South Asia.

Radio contributes, significantly to either exacerbating tensions or to reinforcing a culture of dialogue and tolerance. Every radio station plays a role in the way its audience, and therefore society, perceives different groups and the conflicts which bring them into opposition. In Nepal, during the decade long conflict, both the government and CPN-M operated their own radio stations to spread message of hate and fueled conflict further.

It’s not only the famous hate radios and propaganda media which have a negative influence on the evolution of a conflict. For example unprofessional journalism can reinforce stereotypes and tensions. In fact, a large number of radio professionals have a negative impact without meaning to. By using imprecise and sensationalist words many journalists and presenters contribute to increasing tensions and to making dialogue difficult. There are many instances of this in Nepal. For example, during the initial years of conflict in Nepal, many journalists were eager to go through Army helicopters to cover scenes of violence created by the Maoists while many other journalists praised Maoist activities as acts of bravery.

Less well known are those radio initiatives which have had a constructive influence, those which emphasize dialogue and which encourage mutual understanding between ethnic, religious, linguistic or other groups. There are many instances when radio has played the role of the facilitator or mediator in Nepal. Some instances have been cited below:
When the All Nepal Free Student Union (Revolutionary) (ANNFSU – R), affiliated with the Maoists, blamed the Army for the disappearance and arrest of their Assistant District Coordinator Narendra Bahadur Karki in Surkhet, this took the form of a conflict and the whole of Surkhet district had to face days of close downs and strikes. The local FM stations, Radio Bheri, acted as a mediator between the Army division and ANNFSU-R eventually resolving the issue. Similarly, Swargadwari FM in Dang played a major role in raising the issues of widows. Additionally all the FM stations in Nepalgunj played a positive role during religious riots in mid 2007 by bringing together religious leaders and sending messages of commonalities, peace and religious harmony. It is clear that there are a number of instances where Nepali radio has played a positive role, contributing to building peace.

Here are a few examples of positive roles which a radio can take on.

• Be a form of communication between protagonists
• Correct misperceptions by inviting guests and experts to explain themselves clearly
• Humanize all involved;
• Personalize those in conflict by giving them names and voices and airing real stories
• Give protagonists and listeners an emotional outlet, or a new way to see the problem, or an opportunity to hear about solutions and/or positive changes achieved elsewhere.

These are some of the essential roles played by professional conflict negotiators, dispute counselors, and diplomats in trying to resolve conflict. But these are also the everyday roles of professional radio broadcasters. When they do these things, radio professionals mediate conflict.

Conflict transformation techniques for the media

The way in which a conflict is presented is decisive because it encourages or discourages resolution between those involved. Journalists and producers tend to think of a conflict as being a ‘zero sum game’, a battle between two parties for whom there is either victory or defeat. If I win, you lose and vice versa. But the only way of coming out of a conflict is to find a solution in which everyone is a winner (the win-win approach). The way in which we describe or see the conflict is therefore fundamental. At this level, the men and women who work in the media play an essential role.

The tools presented below (conflict map, positions/interests, and facts/values) help us to see conflict in a different way.

Conflict mapping

This exercise helps us to understand conflict more deeply as well as the different factors involved. It helps us, as radio professionals, to think of questions which we may not have thought of before, and helps in better understanding of the conflict situation.

Conflicts are complex and it’s difficult to summarise them; so remember that the objective of the conflict map isn’t to simplify things but to simply allow us to see the situation with more clarity. And this may lead towards resolution.

There are many ways of creating a conflict map. Using such techniques will help to ‘visualize’
Identifying the actors

The first step in any conflict map is to identify who is involved, including individuals, institutions, and organizations. This includes:

- The main protagonists/key actors in the conflict;
- The other parties implicated or associated with the conflict in one way or another (including marginalized groups or external players); and
- Those who are directly affected by the conflict.

Replying to the following question will help in the identification process: Who has an interest in being involved in the conflict?

It’s equally useful to identify the relationships between the parties in the conflict (alliances, breakdowns in communication, confrontations, broken contacts etc.).

Identifying the issue

The second step is to identify the issue that the conflict is about and the way in which each party to conflict relates to it. This includes:

- Defining the problem by articulating what the conflict is about. Sometimes the different parties see the source of conflict separately: write them all down. This exercise helps to demonstrate the complexity of conflict and helps you to understand at what level to work; and
- Identifying the positions (the needs and declared objectives) and underlying interests of each of the parties (see the next section).

Equally, it’s good to identify the fears or concerns and the needs of each actor; at the end of the day, there won’t be a satisfying and durable solution to the conflict if the fundamental needs of the actors haven’t been met. It’s also important to accept the subjective nature of fears and needs. The objective of this exercise isn’t to decide what’s reasonable and unreasonable, but to explore different perceptions of the reality of a conflict. By doing all of this, you will be able to see more clearly what is happening and why.

Positions and Interests

An important skill for radio professionals in discussing conflict is the ability to identify the positions and the interest of the opposing sides.

A position is often where people first focus their attention in a conflict. A position is a statement or action taken to support a claim, or a point of view. It can be a belief about how to get or defend what one side thinks it needs. People can cling to a position, or change their position as they seek new ways to advance their claim.

An interest represents a more fundamental need, and is the real reason for taking a position. An interest may often go unstated but it is real. There is at least one interest behind every position. Sometimes two sides may have positions which appear totally opposed but the interests underneath may have similarities, or even share common ground.
A conflict may be irresolvable as long as the debate focuses only on the positions, without examining each side’s interest. Positions separate the sides whereas interests hold the possibility of bringing them together. However, the different participants, on all sides, to a violent conflict may hold many different positions – and this is partly what makes violent conflicts so difficult to unravel.

**Facts and Values**  
A fact is a truth about the world. It is information which can be observed or calculated, such as cows eat grass, or the height of Mt. Everest (Sagarmatha). A fact does not change, regardless of who presents it. Eventually, perhaps with independent verification, facts become accepted.

A value is different. It can be deeply held personal belief or widely-shared viewpoint, such as: killing is wrong except in self-defense. But values are not verified by fact. They are subjective. A belief that one political party has better policies for farmers than another party is a value. As another example, it is a fact that smoking causes cancer. But the right to smoke in public is a widely held value. Even if they are not verifiable, values may be very resistant to change.

For example, a conflict between two leaders over how many rebel soldiers have been demobilized is a fact-based conflict. The number can be verified, by independent sources if necessary. Similarly, the conflict between the CPN-M and the government on how many weapons the CPN-M have and how many should be kept in the cantonments is a fact-based conflict. This can be verified from the concerned or an independent authority and both parties can accept this fact. But disagreements over allowing or banning polygamy, homosexuality, or abortion are value-based conflicts.

The essential steps for using a talkshow as a peacebuilding tool are to listen for, identify and then act upon facts. The point here is to turn the discussion from being about value-laden, perceived causes of the conflict to being about verified facts and a search for solutions to other facts.

Value-based conflicts are more difficult to resolve. People do not usually give up their values easily. But it may be possible to use agreed upon facts as a starting point to encourage tolerance for different values. It may also be possible to search for other values which both sides share.

For example, there are many non governmental organizations active in removing the ‘Chhaupadi’ tradition in the Far Western region of Nepal. According to this tradition, when women get their regular menstruation cycle or after delivering a child, they are not allowed to stay in their homes. They have to spend that time period in a ‘Chhau-Shed’, an area like a cow-shed. Several organizations are working towards making those communities realize the negative impact on women’s health caused by this practice. They argue the humanitarian aspect of this practice with the communities. Due to the efforts of these organizations many communities have agreed to allocate a separate room within the household to keep the women in during this period.
Sorting out facts from values is an essential first step to positive discussion of a conflict. Well-supported facts can be powerful point of first agreement between the protagonists.

**Finding Common Ground**

Identifying facts, recognizing values, and establishing the real interests behind positions are tools for directing those involved in the conflict away from angry disagreement towards the exploration of common ground. Such techniques can attract listeners precisely because they deal with real conflicts but move the conflicts towards resolution, rather than exploiting them and creating more problems in the process.

This kind of radio requires research and work in advance. It requires applying a basic conflict analysis to identify the sources and forms of conflict. It requires preparing questions in advance to help identify and separate facts from values. It requires careful interview techniques to point the antagonists past their opposing positions towards possible shared interests and common ground.
**Summary:** Radio talkshows are different to ordinary news journalism, and are extremely popular. This type of radio programme can have a positive impact on conflicts and this chapter explores how radio broadcasters can be better prepared to resolve some of the issues which come up regularly.

**What is a talkshow?**
Talkshows are unique. They are not like daily news journalism which pursues facts and balances statements against each other, seeking a clear record of events. A talkshow can consist of invited guests insisting on their facts and their positions, and arguing about the truth. Or it can consist of the presenter encouraging random callers to express themselves on what they have heard on the program, or on a particular issue. Often talkshows are a mixture of both formats.

Unlike news reports, talkshows are dynamic, evolving through the program as viewpoints are expressed and values debated. On talkshows, people talk, they express their opinions, they are in conflict with each other. But it is the impact of the program on the listeners which matters most, not the status of the guests or the personality of the presenter. What is important is how the listeners are affected by what they hear.

If listeners are engaged, and become interested and even excited by what they hear, that is one measure of success. Better still if they gained new information, perhaps new understanding and possibly new confidence in the potential for a positive outcome to the conflict being discussed. A negative result for a talkshow is listeners who feel confused, or angry or depressed at the end.

**Can talkshows help or hinder the transformation of conflicts?**
Presenters and producers should recognize that they cannot single-handedly achieve THE solution to a conflict. But they can open up and widen the debate, and that is one of many essential steps in resolving a violent conflict. Talkshows are a part of the process. Successful talkshows can demonstrate that conflict can be managed, at least between protagonists on the program.

In the short term no single radio program can resolve a war, or even a low-level conflict, or make protagonists do what they are not already half-convinced to do. But in the long term, over months and years, a good talkshow can help change the atmosphere within which a
conflict occurs. It can subtly alter the thinking of a large number of people so that they are less likely to support or engage in violent acts. It can make them more likely to recognize and appreciate common interests and more likely to trust each other. By enabling its audience to counter the ideas of the war-mongers, a good talkshow will help its audience to imagine ways in which peace is possible.

**Acknowledging the problems of talkshows**

Talkshows are not easy to do well. They are a complex, almost frantic exercise in juggling technical challenges plus intellectual issues like differing perceptions of the truth and unpredictable human emotions which motivate guests and callers. And then all of this complexity has to be presented to an audience, in an easily understood way, in a short space of time. And surrounding this whole juggling act are external factors such as the political climate which may or may not favor your efforts to inform the public. In 2005, when former King Gyanendra took over control of the government in direct royal rule, army personnel were deployed at media houses, taking away media freedom. The government labeled the media as ‘the other side’ and all media were closely scrutinized. Due to the lack of information and news, this created confusion among the general public.

After the former King Gyanendra took over direct control of the Government on February 1st 2005, the government put a ban on news production and distribution on all FM stations. This was done to bar the voices of democracy activists from reaching the general public. Some radio stations immediately followed the government’s orders and stopped news production and broadcast. However, the majority of FM stations rebelled and went against this directive. The government looted radio production equipment from Sagarmatha FM and Kantipur FM and sent a letter of warning to Nepal FM. The Supreme Court however ruled against this government decision. However, the Royal government, which put a ban on news flow to the general public, claimed to be democratic. These contradictions caused confusion among the public, and even radio talkshow hosts had difficulty determining the topics and directions of their programs.

Producers may also face commercial pressures against dealing with serious issues. Advertisers may insist nothing controversial that could cause conflict should be heard close to their advertisements. Alternatively, some of us face issues of whether the radio station serves the public or exclusively serves the owner’s commercial and/or political interests. Presenters must also acknowledge their own personal baggage – their personal upbringing, experiences, values and emotions – which influences how they perceive an issue or speak with a guest or caller.

As talkshow hosts, how do we deal with all these questions? One way to respond, is first to recognize that there are issues and challenges which are common to almost all talkshows.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Possible Solution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Structural</td>
<td>These are some of the common challenges that many talkshows have confronted.</td>
<td>These are only some of the way of resolving common talkshow problems, so please let us know your experiences and ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logistical</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phones and Phone – lines</td>
<td>Bad phone lines mean that callers are often difficult to hear, or go silent just as the discussion gets interesting</td>
<td>Don’t depend just on callers; Hear ordinary citizen voices by inviting some of them into the studio to take part in the discussion too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working alone</td>
<td>No assistance. Being the researcher, producer and even technician as well as presenter makes it difficult to do the job well. It makes it particularly difficult to screen calls for abusive or off-topic callers.</td>
<td>Plan your show carefully, and lobby your boss for an assistant, or at least someone such as a journalism student to screen callers. Remind the boss that unscreened callers leaves the show open to abuse and possible danger from highly politically motivated or malicious callers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>No petty cash for taxis and phone cards, or for travel and media subscriptions, hurts the program. It limits the diversity of guests to invite, it prevents sufficient research into the right questions to ask.</td>
<td>Talk with your boss, explain how the program and the station can become more popular by investing a little money in better research and a greater diversity of guests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor facilities</td>
<td>Studio equipment may operate poorly; the facilities for guests may be inadequate. Sometimes it is necessary to have a calming place and a cup of tea to put guests at ease before they on air to discuss traumatic experiences, or to explore common ground with opponents or to face angry callers.</td>
<td>Try to meet the guests before the show in a place where they can relax and get to know you a little, where you can put them at their ease and explore some of the areas you want to discuss on the show. But keep it light don’t interview them. Save it for the on-air show.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Often the most difficult problems are those caused by the political context.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Censorship

Whether by Sedition, Official Secrets or National Emergency laws, or by illegal threat of violence, governments, military forces and powerful figures sometimes believe they have unlimited rights to control what is aired. This is censorship and can result in false information, unbalanced journalism and propaganda. Censorship destroys the credibility and faith in the media. Censorship is the enemy of a free press and is a denial of democracy.

Keep pushing back. Don’t let censors assume you will stay frightened. Imposing real censorship takes time, money and personnel. Constantly test the limits of safely challenging them. Make sure that you and the other radio stations have plans for responding when a journalist or presenter is arrested. Ensure international support from organizations such as IFEX, IFJ, Reporters Without Borders and Article 19, to respond quickly if anything happens to you or other journalists.

## Impunity

A culture of no accountability for foolish or illegal actions means that elected officials and bureaucrats and other primary sources may refuse to speak on air. They often think that they can stop topics being covered in talkshows by refusing to comment.

If a topic needs to be covered we should do it, and state that the invited officials refused to show up or respond. Keep a record of who was invited and of their response, or lack of it. And keep inviting them.

## Corruption

A culture of buying influence may make officials demand cash for comment. Or bribes may be offered to presenters or to their bosses to ensure that only certain opinions are aired.

It’s a fundamental principle of journalism that we don’t pay for comment. If someone wants to be paid they have failed to recognize the value of having their opinions or ideas aired. Professionals do not take bribes. Journalism is not for sale.

## Self-censorship

Past experiences or fear of powerful interest may force officials, sources and journalists to say less than they want. Journalists also censor themselves to avoid losing access to important figures. Self censorship buries the other side of issues, and silences difficult questions. It can also arise because presenters don’t know how to raise subjects which caused violence in the past. Self censorship can start from a bad experience and become a bad habit that destroys professional journalism.

The professional journalistic obligations of accuracy, fair balance and responsibility should overcome the first instinct to hold back, to self censor. An accurate and properly balanced story or program is a good defense against criticism from either side.
### Business Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control</th>
<th>Private owners, including NGOs, and individual commercial owners, often think that because they own the radio station they can dictate the type of coverage and the content.</th>
<th>All radio stations broadcast on the public airwaves and therefore have a public responsibility not to abuse freedom of expression, which is a fundamental right. Fight back carefully against owners’ interference. Resisting the pressure is a part of the job of a responsible presenter.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taboo subjects</td>
<td>Some subjects such as sexual issues, women’s rights, or child labor are not openly discussed, and in some countries even religion</td>
<td>Take things slowly. Be sensitive. Explain to listeners why the issue is important. Use real people’s experiences or suffering to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
<td>Some owners and managers fear harassment or the disfavor of government. They discourage talkshows from presenting controversial subjects. Advertisers may also oppose any controversy in programs on which they advertise, and threaten to withdraw advertising. And there can be intimidation by managers or co-workers who want to avoid all controversy to please special interests. They may withhold support, resources and advancement from a responsible presenter or producer.</td>
<td>Resisting intimidation can be achieved in small steps, by presenting difficult or controversial subjects a bit at a time, over several shows separated by days or weeks. Also, the station should seek other advertisers more in tune with the objectives of the talkshow. Resist intimidation in the workplace by encouraging professional standards among colleagues and emphasizing fair balance in talkshow content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercialism</td>
<td>Advertising can be a good thing but to much of it constantly interrupting a talkshow dealing with serious issues can be a problem.</td>
<td>Popular programs attract advertisers but the integrity and coherence of the program deserves respect. Explain to managers that too many commercials can make a show unintelligible and risk sudden unpopularity which displeases advertisers. Urge managers to use fewer but higher – paying advertisers.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2. Cultural

<p>| Taboo subjects | Some subjects such as sexual issues, women’s rights, or child labor are not openly discussed, and in some countries even religion | Take things slowly. Be sensitive. Explain to listeners why the issue is important. Use real people’s experiences or suffering to |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Youth Radio for Peacebuilding, Nepal</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>or ethnicity are taboo. People can be embarrassed or react angrily to discussing taboos on radio talkshows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate the human implications of taboos. Discuss how old taboos disappeared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trauma</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Again, sensitivity is important. Meet the guests before the show to learn what they can discuss. Remember that they are victims of illegal violence, and make sure that your attitude is sympathetic. Don’t allow other guests or callers to blame them for the violence they have suffered. Allow trauma victims to be accompanied by a friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultural restrictions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring victims of discrimination onto the show to relate their experiences as people, not as members of any caste or group. But it is unacceptable to bring anyone onto a talkshow to entertain listeners with their uneducated accent or unusual opinions. Treat everyone with the same respect. A talkshow should always be a place of equal rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poverty</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take the talkshow to the community; record it in a remote village with everyone gathered around. Allow villagers to use the microphone. Or send a reporter out into the streets or the rural areas with a mobile phone, so people without phones can use it to call in to the talkshow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Personal</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Own beliefs and values</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalism training can help presenters overcome their beliefs and provide a more balanced approach. We need to recognize inevitable prejudices and preferences affecting our own choice of words, and our responses to callers and guests. We need to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
think before responding, and try to get at the positions and the interest of our guests and callers rather than allowing our own opinions, prejudices and ideas to dominate. An angry presenter rarely makes a useful contribution to understanding an issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family and clan</th>
<th>Our own families or clans may disagree with an even handed approach. They may feel that we should take one side in a conflict or the other.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our primary responsibilities are as journalists, not advocates for family or tribe. Who we are and what we believe in private shouldn’t intrude far into the public awareness when we are on the air.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal experiences</th>
<th>Our own experiences are significant to us, and we may want to bring them into the discussion.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Talkshows exist first to inform the audience. We select guests with something significant to contribute, and we urge callers to speak freely. Our role is a facilitator, guiding the information flow and ensuring free expression. We stop being a facilitator if we start relating our own experiences. And audiences may focus on our experiences and opinions instead of learning guests’ and callers’ opinions, and seeing possible common ground. A good talk show presenter never needs to use the word ‘I’.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many presenters say the ultimate challenge is handling talkshow callers. Callers’ remarks can be inflammatory, off-topic, incoherent or terribly long-winded. As one radio presenter said, ‘It is hard to be quick. It takes many callers at least 40 seconds to begin to say what they want to talk about’. It can also be tempting to let a caller talk on and on because there is no one else waiting to speak. But long-winded callers will bore the listeners, which is the worst affliction of a talkshow. Listeners will turn to another station or turn off the radio if the host does not turn off the long-winded caller.

Preparation and Planning
As mentioned initially in this chapter, talk shows are exceptionally challenging jobs. The majority of typical problems that we have just now mentioned show few of those challenges and sometimes the presenter’s courageous, sensitive and always personally disciplined process also reflect those challenges.

However, before exploring for the depth of the conflict related subject matter, almost every type of talk show have two fundamental sides. First, you need to be fully prepared before entering the studio. Second, to come out of the studio proudly, you need to present the program very nicely. The second side entirely depends upon the presenter’s skill. But, all presenters should enter the studio with at least full preparation and self-determination after seeing if all the technical necessities have been fulfilled or not. This will provide a definite facility in the real work of program presentation.

Planning Check –list for a talkshow
- Subject matter or sample for the program
- Fresh and new thought based on the contemporary incident/issue
- Program’s objective, central subject and intention
- Intense discussion with co-worker, news room and experts
- Program’s outline
- Research materials: newspapers/journals, written records, library, web, reading materials and experts
- Perspective, belief, determination and background knowledge on self-interest of the guest on the subject matter
- Supposition of how the audience will take the guest
- Preparatory questions
- Interview with the guest before the program
- To make others concentrate on the program, a written introduction to the radio listeners and phone audience
- Prepared guest for the program incase of the absence of selected guest or cancellation
- Review of the program after its completion
### Peace/War talk show

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common ground oriented</th>
<th>War/violence Oriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opposition sides will be involved in the broadcast to find out the joint background</td>
<td>Opponents will be urged to fight or express harsh views in the broadcast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation for ‘support’ (descriptions for the support of ‘another side’)</td>
<td>Importance will be given to differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate on interests, which will bring forward the beliefs that encourage both sides</td>
<td>Argument will be made on obstinacy rather than on joint interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Differences on fact, belief and perception will be separated</td>
<td>Fact, belief and perception related differences will be pushed into a dilemma</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Oriented</th>
<th>Conclusion/ Outcome oriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both sides will be encouraged to do proactive analysis</td>
<td>One-sided analysis will be done</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People Oriented</th>
<th>Elite Oriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants will be invited to speak by raising issues of how they have been part of a ridicule and/or how conventional views have been enforced on them</td>
<td>Will be allowed to make once side a part of ridicule and/or put conventional views on them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort will be made to bring each participant into a natural state, audiences/listeners will made easier to identify them as human</td>
<td>Governmental declarations and authorities’ (political, managerial or army/national army) issues will only be concentrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limits will be encouraged, subjects will be re-structured in a respected language without weighing</td>
<td>Power and bureaucracy will encouraged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solution Oriented</th>
<th>Conflict Oriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility will be encouraged and uncertainty will be examined</td>
<td>Will be encouraged to focus on determined obstinacy and ‘fact’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants will be called on to explain about their view for future and express their dream and hope</td>
<td>Present situational discussion will be encouraged instead of future related views</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Radio Talk Show Formats
PRESENTER’S JOB REQUIREMENTS

**Summary:** There are many forms of a radio talkshow and all of those can be used in peace building process. In this chapter, the strong and weak points of these various forms have been mentioned. With the presenter’s skill related list, few creative methods on how to make the program interesting without over emphasizing on the context of violence has also been incorporated here.

**The Challenge**

In the earlier chapter, an explanation was made on the structural, cultural and personal challenges face by most of the radio talk show presenters. Fortunately, proper planning and production makes it easier for a presenter to work. One talk show director has said, extensive research and planning makes us capable of taking the program into a right direction by taking advantage of opportunities without confusing ourselves in the talks of the guest.

Identifying the best form for the subject to be discusses is a part of a planning process. For a certain subject of discussion or certain conflict, one format can be more appropriate than another. Sometimes one format can be mixed up with another or new format can be tried upon. Another part of the planning is to evaluate our expertise and skills as presenters and go on improving them. To discuss on the conflict related issues we need additional skills.

Presenting a live or a recorded program is an intellectual and technical challenge for a talk show presenter. To keep attracting the attention of the listeners for one, two or three hours, form and subject matter is important. Topics and interview subjects should be selected carefully and should be contextual to the listeners. Guests should be impressive and not dull; discussions powerful but controlled. The program’s sequence should be appropriate so that listeners can clearly understand the discussion’s logic, but the program should also progress naturally.

A talk show not only attracts listeners but also inspires discussions on the subject being heard through radio. Perfect listeners are those who talk about the subject that they have listened to and want to give their own reactions.

Inspired listeners are given the opportunity to express their reactions by telephone on many programs. Such interactive programs gain value and strength by providing a forum for discussion among the presenter, guests and listeners. Through this there will be an exchange of information and views which could lead to a change in understanding. This is especially important when
there is a full fledged discussion on the subject of conflict. Interactive radio refers creating discussions among listeners and creating chances for them to participate in the discussion.

**The Common Formats**

The most common formats of radio talkshows include round tables, phone-in and face to face. Sometimes all of these formats are mixed and used in one program; hosts start by asking questions of their guests and also taking questions and comments from listeners via phone. Sometimes, as mentioned in chapter two, the managerial, political or commercial pressure also influences in the selection of all aspects of the whole radio program.

Roundtable programs are straight and clear. The presenter invites guests to the studio or on the telephone to discuss a certain subject. Discussions go on between the presenter and the guest while listeners listen quietly. Guests can be independent experts or a members of political parties with different point of views, civil society leaders heads of indigenous communities, or a general citizen. Or, it can be mixture of all these.

**Roundtable Strengths and Weaknesses:**

**Strengths**
- Opportunity to assemble previously isolated or unheard antagonists and marginalized other voices;
- Greater opportunity to obtain clarity, seek follow-up questions;
- Allows for serious in-depth discussion;
- Easier to assemble various perspectives, reveal multiple perspectives on the same issue;
- Easier to ensure a balance of viewpoints;
- Creates safe neutral space for two antagonists to meet;
- Can lower tension by revealing antagonists talking to each other; and
- Can turn participants to joint problem solving.

**Weaknesses**
- Difficulty in finding right guests to make articulate, representative panal;
- Risk of unbalanced dominance by one guest or another;
- Risk of dull, rehearsed conversation;
- Risk of guests being unknown to public, lacking credibility;
- Lack of public voice in comment, reaction and perspective;
- Risk of antagonists taking hard positions, refusing to explore solutions;
- Can reveal and emphasise disagreements; and
- Best used when antagonists have similarity of interests.

The roundtable format itself can be adapted. It can be taken out of the studio into a community, such as a displaced persons camp where community members, leaders and visiting officials are gathered together to discuss hot topics on the programme. Getting roundtables out of the studio and onto the streets can add enormous spontaneity and credibility to a programme.
Face-to-face programmes are a more confined version of roundtables, involving the presenter and only one or two guests. Face-to-face programmes can probe deeply one guest’s viewpoints and positions. Or a face-to-face programme can invite two protagonists such as political or community leaders to discuss the issue which divides them. The presenter, serving as mediator, asks tough questions, but also looks for similar answers which suggest shared interests and the potential for common ground.

Phone-in programmes share the power of talkshows with the public. The presenter gives the listeners a brief voice on the radio, although it is not always controlled or relevant. Phone-in programmes can be a dialogue between the presenter and the listeners, or they can generate a debate between guests in the studio and listeners. They can open up new issues or reveal unresolved questions. The callers can be directed to comment on a specific subject, or they can be given freedom to express themselves freely. Phone-in programmes are an opportunity for presenters to frame or phrase questions differently, to ask callers to think differently, to answer different kinds of questions and to express their hopes.

**Phone-in Programs: Strengths and Weaknesses**

**Strengths**
- A safe place for frightened callers to call in anonymously;
- Democratizes debate, engages the general public without restriction;
- Provides a wide diversity of public views, perspectives;
- Element of surprise, spontaneity;
- Interactive: Callers, presenter and guests can exchange views;
- Provides instant reaction, feedback;
- Humanises issues. Ordinary people speak;
- Gauges public opinion (unreliable);
- Provides public access to experts, authorities, leaders;
- Allows venting or cooling of public emotion; and
- Public pleas can influence antagonists’ positions.

**Weaknesses**
- Dangerous anonymity of callers. High risk of vengeance-seeking accusations, slander and misinformation;
- Callers unfocussed, irrelevant, mischievous unless pre-screened;
- Callers can provoke, inflame tensions with outrageous remarks;
- Risk of technical disruptions such as bad phone lines, background noise;
- Difficult to manage time, control calls;
- Risk of becoming ‘trial by radio’ for guests;
- Reduced time for in-depth exploration of issues;
- Risk of unrepresentative flood of calls organized by one viewpoint;
- Unrepresentative of public lacking phone access;
- Difficult to summarize views; and
- Callers take over the programme, attacking each other.

Blended programmes can involve previously recorded or live roundtable talk and then a live phone-in for listeners to comment on what they’ve heard. Previously recorded street interviews and readings from letters and emails can represent other views and can stimulate
reaction. Or callers can be directed to put questions to specific studio guests in a kind of face-to-face format. The presenter decides how many callers to accept before moving on to another topic and other guests. In this case, the presenter should often remind callers of the topic as the conversation roles on.

**Other ideas for talkshow formats and content**

Roundtables and phone-in programme formats are reliable and enduring, but there is always space for innovation and adaptation. These are some examples collected by Search for Common Ground:

**Listen to Only Them.** Create a programme or a segment where only one viewpoint is invited to speak. This allows a marginalized group, or a group facing public criticism, or which has been victimised by cultural violence, to express itself without fear of immediate harsh reaction. It enables listeners to hear deeper explanations and human feelings. It may reveal some common interests. It requires the presenter to explain repeatedly the purpose of the programme and to control the calls. It must be made clear that there is no bias on the part of the presenter. Reflections by a neutral guest panel member can be added.

In 2004 Studio Ijambo, SFCG’s radio production studio in Burundi, brought together Burundians who, during that country’s darkest hours, risked their own lives to save people of a different ethnic group. The Heroes Summit, based on four years of similar radio programming by Studio Ijambo, demonstrated a different, more human face of Burundi to the country and to the world. The summit gave a voice on country-wide radio and television to these heroes and celebrated them as potential leaders and role models.

**Common Ground Found.** Bring together individuals or groups who unexpectedly reached agreement on an issue in the past. Explore how they did it. Invite callers to provide other similar examples from their own experiences.

**Explore how it works.**

a) Present a well-known, divisive issue and ask expert guests to discuss how conflict resolution techniques could be applied to it;

b) Invite callers to speculate on why it is so hard for the opposing sides to hear each other and cooperate;

c) Invite callers to describe an example of conflict resolution or a new agreement which they have experienced in their family or community. Ask why it was or wasn’t a success.

**Hero and success story:** Present programmes that tries to find out a common ground on major issues. Interview the key mediators who helped both sides. The examples can be from the community.

**On-air facilitation.** Invite guests from opposing sides to describe something they agree on. Invite callers to suggest a statement both sides can agree on. Give a prize from the best statement, or the most important agreement reached.
Look Forward. Invite opposing guests to talk about the future they would like to see, regardless of whether they think it is realistic. Often this will reveal surprising agreement, and the discussion can then move to how to reach that common vision for the future.

Democratise the phone-in show. Phone-in programmes enable an important range of ordinary citizens to join in the debate but are limited to those who have access to telephones. To widen the debate to those who cannot afford the telephone or have no service available, take the programme to them. Conduct the programme there, live or recorded on the streets or in a rural village. Invite the local people to use the microphone or the mobile phone as if it were their own telephone. Invite other callers to telephone to the programme at the new community location. Create a new dialogue involving previously isolated communities.

**The presenter’s basic job requirements**

Regardless of the programme format, there are skills and personal characteristics which are essential for anyone doing a talkshow. Some of these abilities are almost innate or automatic, while others are acquired through education, training, and experience. To cope with the job, a talkshow presenter who is dealing with conflict issues and who wants to have a positive impact should be able to:

- Seek clarification, to re-ask essential questions;
- Focus a debate to highlight a central issue;
- Recognise and emphasise facts;
- Encourage reflection;
- Identify, synthesise and articulate public opinion;
- Rephrase and reframe and issue, approaching it from another angle. This may even include playing a ‘devil’s advocate’ role and expressing the views of another side;
- Direct discussion towards positive aspects instead of just highlighting the negatives;
- Calm fierce emotions, including his/her own, especially through humour;
- Mediate between opponents;
- Identify positions and move antagonists towards discussing shared interests;
- Be broad minded, unbiased and self-controlled;
- Be articulate, confident, and a team player;
- Enliven a serious debate, always remembering that the public is listening;
- Find out and be aware of what ordinary people and regular listeners are talking about;
- Listen patiently to find key information in complicated answers and facts;

One talk show presenter has said- in a conflict situation there are sides, and among the two sides each have the view that their solution can solve the problem. In such circumstance, it is very important to ask the question, ‘why do you believe that the very method should solve the problem?’ The answer of this question will tell about what desire they have and reveal what they are after.
Issue and practices

**Summary:** How to make a good talk show on peace building subject? It is not easy to answer this, but in this chapter, an effort has been made to clarify some of the major issues, discussion and practices. This chapter also gives measures to overcome mental shock and confront anger as well as to give more technical tactics for peacebuilding.

What makes a good peacebuilding talk show? First: To make such program, you need to go beyond the bare essentials of a typical talk show. These include diversity of opinions, clearly defined issues, balanced and courteous conversation, human interest and relevance to public opinion, attractive presentation and clear synthesis of what has been said, and more. But dealing with conflict requires additional skills and knowledge. If there is no conflict analysis, no distinguishing between values, facts, positions, and interests, and no search for common ground any talkshow can exaggerate difference and inflame conflict.

**Difficult questions**

Finding common ground in radio talk show can be an important contribution in solving conflict in Nepal and other conflict afflicted states in South Asia. But, this is an emerging skill, something that most of us talkshow hosts and producers must learn. Being conflict sensitive in talkshows raises new and sometimes difficult questions. Should we deal with unsettling, inflammatory information and accusations? Can a talkshow be responsible without losing its competitive edge and audience? What to do about taboo subject (sex, religion, culture, etc.) What to do about hate speech? The list of challenges is lengthy.

The answers are not always simple and easy to apply. That is why this is a guidebook, not list of rules. We hope that you will use this book to develop your own approaches (and, in doing that we hope you will share your experiences with us). However, there are some issues for peacebuilding talkshows which can be addressed, and there are some effective practices for presenters to follow.

**Professional issues**

Is the radio talk show one form of journalism?
Yes, it should be. Presenters should adhere to the professional standards of accuracy and impartiality and avoid libel and slander. If we do not exercise professional responsibility, we risk only giving our listeners empty entertainment, with very little informational or educational
value. The content should be intended to serve and advance the public interest, which in conflict situations will almost always tend towards peacebuilding.

**Is it necessary for the presenter to consciously take the side of peace?**
The presenter’s role is not to insist on finding a solution to the conflict, but to open up and widen the debate. Conflict resolution is a process, not an incident. Usually a conflict-sensitive presenter is only part of a long process which cannot be rushed.

**Is there anything that should not be discussed in the talk show?**
In most situations the answer to this is no. Almost no issue should be ignored if it is based on confirmed, factual information. Suppressing it will not make it go away. Suppressing it will make people turn elsewhere, perhaps to misinformation or rumors.

Certainly we should consider carefully the appropriate time to introduce a difficult or taboo issue. But the most important step is to analyse the conflict and determine how to discuss what needs to be discussed without feeding the conflict.

One way to discuss taboo subjects is to humanize them – discuss them as they affect real people. Let those affected by taboo subjects describe their experiences. The human side of the story needs to be given equal attention. There are certain codes of conduct and beliefs in societies, but we should not forget the human aspect which includes individuals interests, experience and feelings. At this time, our talkshows must be objectively appropriate and subjectively honest.

While discussing the forbidden subjects, listeners can be enraged. It’s important to take your listeners with you: tell them why you are tackling these subjects and what you hope will come of it. Humanise the issue and ask them if they have had similar, unpleasant experiences with taboos. Ask them how they would want to be treated.

**How to reconcile presenting facts and opinions with censorship imposed by security laws or personal safety concerns?**
As members of the media, our professional obligation to present true information has priority over our patriotic or cultural or family preferences. While in Nepal there is currently no formal censorship, self-censorship needs to be resisted because it forces the media to report half-truths or to avoid issues which are important to the community. It destroys the media’s credibility. However, presenters and radio stations must exercise caution and determine what they can say with safety.

One strategy to deal with hot or politically sensitive issues which pose risks of pre-censorship or retaliation is to introduce them gradually, in small portions over several programmes. This will allow presenters and producers to test reactions.

**Should the presenter always provide the right of reply?**
Concerning factual matters, yes. If misinformation has been presented, an opportunity should be provided to correct it without debate.

**Is the presenter allowed to express his or her views?**
The difficulty for the presenter is that, when he/she expresses his/her view the audience
Youth Radio for Peacebuilding, Nepal

will assume that he/she is supporting one side. Audiences will begin forming opinions in reaction to the presenter, instead of considering and reacting to the guests and callers. The true test of a professional presenter is being tough and fair to all sides – even the ones they agree with.

What to do with hate speech?
Hate speech, of all kinds, must be challenged. It is any form of words directly contemptuous of others and/or which advocates their destruction. If the person utter hate speech is important enough their words may have to be reported. But critical reaction from others should be sought immediately. Hate speech should be put in the proper context – as offensive, dangerous and a potential crime against humanity.

During the decade long conflict in Nepal, it was said that the conflicting parties used code words to spread hatred about one another. The security officials used to do what they called ‘T.O. (Target Out)’ while Maoist fighters used to ‘Go on Operation’ and do ‘Public actions’. Security officials used ‘T.O.’ as a symbolic word which meant arresting and killing Maoist leaders, workers and supporters. Whenever Maoist fighters used to attack police quarter or security camp they used to say ‘Going on operation’ and whenever they had to torture their rivals they used to call it ‘public action’. Likewise, whenever the security officials wanted to express their hatred against Maoist they used the word ‘Jungli’ (Wild) and to express their hatred against the security officials, Maoist used the word ‘Shahi kutta’(Royal dogs). You should not accept all types hate speech even when hidden by code words.

As is illustrated by the case above, individuals often use metaphors and proverbs to avoid directly stating what they really mean – even though everyone understands the hidden message. Journalists and presenters must deal with such metaphors and proverbs immediately, rather than simply repeating them. Offensive or evasive speech hidden in metaphors and proverbs should be challenged by asking the speaker for clarity. Journalists and presenters who recognise hidden hate speech should immediately ask the speaker to explain what they mean in straightforward terms. Use phrases like: “Tell us what you mean by that,” or “what is a simpler meaning?” or “what are you referring to?”

Journalists and presenters should be willing to seem ignorant if necessary to expose hate speech by demanding clarity. This forces speakers onto the defensive and makes them bear responsibility for what they’re saying.

How to deal with extremely sensitive issues such as rape and torture?
Social and cultural pressures often silence survivors of traumatic violence, especially gender violence. The facts about brutal violence cannot be ignored and the community needs to know they occurred. But victims/survivors have rights too. Presenters have to make sure the discussions do not become sensationalist. It is painful for any trauma survivor to relive their experiences. We have to make sure we do not re-victimize those who suffered. Presenters must be aware of and respect how the affect persons refer to themselves – do they call themselves a ”victim” or a ”survivor”
Most survivors of traumatic violence feel more comfortable discussing their experience or views when accompanied by someone they trust. Trauma affects memory, so presenters must be patient and empathetic in seeking information. Be prepared to bring in someone trusted to assist victims and survivors on the air. But most trauma survivors do not need pity; describing their experience and opinions is part of the healing process. Presenters must avoid offering overly sympathetic remarks which make the victim feel powerless again. Presenters, by assisting victims to put their experiences into words, are helping them to reconnect to their community and humanity.

Presenters need to be particularly careful when addressing issues of survivors of sexual violence and of children. The identities of these groups should be protected as they could suffer discrimination or stigmatization for their experiences.

For more understanding of how to deal with trauma, conflict, and tragedy, and the consequences of such difficult subjects for those in the media, see the global network of research and discussion at The Dart Centre: www.dartcentre.org

Anger

Every presenter has had the experience of guests who use angry, threatening language, or callers who use the radio as a personal megaphone for their opinions. There are also guests and callers who argue and interrupt all other conversations. What to do?

- Remind guests who talk simultaneously that nobody can understand what they’re saying;
- Have commercials, pre-recorded public service announcements, or theme music ready to play as interludes while the hot emotions cool down;
- Have letters ready to read as a diversion from hot talk, or as a way of introducing new angles of discussion;
- Have pre-recorded messages ready to play which remind listeners and guests of the topic and the rules for discussion on the programme;
- For phone-in programmes, if possible, screen the callers. A producer or other staff should first receive the phone call, briefly ask the caller what his/her question or statement is and exclude negative callers. And you can always cut off an abusive caller;
- Do not take negative calls personally. Be interested in why they are upset, without encouraging their anger;
- Be ready to interrupt and remind guests and callers when they become disrespectful or stray off the topic;
- Presenters must distance the station from any threats that guests or callers make on air;
- Inject specific facts into a tense dialogue to direct a guest or caller to calm down. Have facts prepared in advance;
- When guests are angry with each other, gently take them back to their last point of agreement; and
- Remember, humour is a great calming device.

Conflict does not only mean war. Nepal still has numerous conflicts despite the progress of the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Communities face conflicts over land, inter-ethnic and inter-cast relations. It is necessary to talk
Youth Radio for Peacebuilding, Nepal

*about all these issues, maybe more than ever.*

**The Peace perspective**
When leaders are exploiting a long-standing conflict or fueling new conflict, don’t focus every programme on them. Instead seek individuals and groups who are cooperating and who are finding common ground.

There are various groups of people who bring unity and break down divisions in society; radio programs should recognize them and give them a platform. For example, youth clubs, schools, community-based organizations, businesses and others are some of the channels and institutions which bring unity in the society. Likewise, there are events such as festivals and religious ceremonies which could advance peace, bringing people together from across dividing lines.

The need to build peace does not end after the conflict is over or immediately after the leaders find their common ground. In fact, the need for peacebuilding radio programming is as strong as ever in Nepal, to support communities to make a transition to peace. Radio professionals should work to identify the root causes of conflict and seek to address them in their programs. When conflicts are transformed, radio presenters could revisit issues to see what progress has emerged from peace as it is likely there would be lessons which would apply to other conflicts.

**Practices, solutions and tips**

**Technical tips**
Avoid large panels of guests for roundtable format programmes. Panels of more than four guests take too long for each guest to speak or reply. Listeners forget who said what. It is difficult to synthesise such a diversity of viewpoints.

Plan and Research your programme. Presenters need to be well informed about what the guests have previously said. Analyse the conflict before the program, to identify structural and cultural violence and to prepare questions about facts and values and interests. It is important to understand the local manifestation of the conflict you are going to address.

Have a specific focus before you begin the programme because you cannot talk about everything. For example, “Human Rights and Elections” is too big a topic for a talkshow. Make the topic more precise: What is the most neglected human rights issue in this election. Focus on local issues.

**Listening Skills**
For peacebuilding presenters, the four magic words are listen, clarify, synthesise, and reframe.

For a talkshow presenter, the ability to listen well is as important as the ability to talk. Listening well is how we learn to ask questions which produce revealing answers. Listening well will help you separate facts from values and will indicate when to redirect the conversation towards common interests.
Skilled presenters also listen carefully to the words of guests and callers to make sure the meanings are clear. Presenters should constantly seek clarification. Mixed messages, incoherent statements and incomplete thoughts should not pass unchallenged.

The test of clarity is the presenter’s ability to summarise briefly the key points which guests or callers have made. If we cannot understand it well enough to synthesise it, our listeners will not understand it either.

Once synthesized, information can be reframed or discussed from other angles which may reveal something new, such as facts which be agreed upon or the route to discovering some common ground.

**Questioning Skills**
Effective questions which help manage conflict depend upon good techniques and content. Many of the techniques are basic to journalism, such as do not ask two questions at once, and always use questions beginning with the words why, what and how because they require full answers. And every experienced presenter should know how to get expanded answers by using phrases such as “that’s interesting: tell me more” or “What was going through your mind when this happened?”

**Using Language Carefully**
As presenters, the precise words we use determine whether our questions help build understanding or reinforce myths and fear.

Conflict-sensitive presenters carefully use words such as ‘massacre’, ‘assassination’, or ‘genocide’, which can all inflame more than inform. We avoid such words as ‘devastated’, ‘destitute’, or ‘terrorised’ because those words take the side of those who see themselves as victims. We try not to use labels such as ‘extremist’, ‘terrorist’, ‘fanatic’, or ‘fundamentalist’ which demonize one group. We identify people or groups by the name they call themselves.

**Key Points**
What makes a talk show program conflict sensitive? A presenter who remembers to:

- Listening critically;
- Detect interests beneath positions, synthesise and reframe; and
- Seek common ground
In 2007, SFCG launched Radio for Peacebuilding Nepal based on its experience managing Radio for Peacebuilding Africa. The project aims to support radio professionals to play a positive role in the peace process and the transition to democracy in the country.

In 2004, Radio for Peacebuilding Africa conducted a major survey of African radio professionals about the use of peacebuilding techniques in radio. Almost 90 percent agreed that peacebuilding techniques on radio are an excellent idea and that it is high time that radio stations use those techniques. Almost two thirds of the several hundred radio professionals who answered the survey also said that conflict resolution is a part of journalistic responsibility.

These are powerful and very encouraging indicators of sensitivity to conflict resolution, and the feeling of responsibility which exists among radio professionals in Africa, South Asia and the rest of the world.

But most of the radio professionals indicated that what they have been doing for peacebuilding on air is not very effective. Perhaps in some cases this is because they are not permitted to use peacebuilding skills very much. In many cases, however, the radio professionals said that they didn’t know enough and they very much wanted more information and training about how to use radio for peacebuilding.

It has become clear that this sentiment is one that reaches beyond Africa and to South Asia and Nepal. As a result, SFCG organized a workshop in 2008 in Kathmandu to translate this book into a Nepali context. The workshop was organized to focus more on conflict related programs and to bring out new solutions for conflict resolution through radio in Nepal. The participants of that workshop – which included radio station managers and radio producers - concluded that for peace building it is important to use radio. Also, the participants of the workshop also accepted that conflict resolution is the duty of radio workers. This Nepali version has been prepared by incorporating the suggestions that were voiced in that workshop.

This book is also a product of radio professionals’ desire to know about radio talkshows and how to effectively deal with conflict within that format. This book is dedicated to the strong belief of the radio workers that radio will be more effective in peace building and Nepal’s transition to democracy.
The Building Blocks of Common Ground Talkshow

**Listen Well**
Be alert to the unexpected. Listen for areas of agreement.

**Be Pro-active**
Suggest areas of common ground. Invite guests to do the same.

**Question Assumptions**
What are your guests’ basic assumptions about the views of the other side? Allow the other side to respond.

**Humanize/Build Trust**
Get to know the people behind the opinions. What in your guests’ lives made them feel so strongly about this issue?

**Counter Stereotypes**
How have your guests personally experienced being stereotyped, misunderstood by the other side in this conflict?

**Promote Dignity**
Reframe issues in respectful, non-judgmental language

**Encourage flexibility**
Identify potential gray areas and explore them with your guests. Invite guests to examine pockets of uncertainty.

**Encourage vision**
Invite guests to express their hopes and dreams. What in your guests’ view is the best that could come out of finding common ground?
Radio Talk Show: Useful lesson for the presenter
(Prepared from the Burundi Workshop of April 2005 AD and Approved with the general revision from the Kathmandu Workshop of February 2008 AD)

• The presenter of the talk show, by being aware of our responsibilities, should accept the power of words and language; they can have instant impact.
• At all times be well-informed about the issues, our guests and the context, and be balanced in seeking interests beyond positions when discussing conflicts.
• Identify the format most appropriate to the issue and structure our programmes appropriately.
• Discuss what is in the public interest, not just what interests the public.
• Challenge all hate speech, even when it is hidden in metaphors and proverbs, by insisting upon clarity and simple language.
• Control our own emotions and ensure our questions are not drive by our own biases and prejudices.
• Apply conflict analysis to the issue before we air our programmes, with the aim of helping the parties find common ground.
• Recognize the importance of framing the discussion of the conflict differently to the way it is usually discussed.
• Have a specific objective in mind, such as bringing new information and ideas to listeners or helping protagonists resolve their conflicts. Every programme should have a purpose.
• Give the public, and not just the traditional antagonists, access and a voice at every opportunity.
• Bring people of conflicting views together from discussion and press them to suggest solutions.
• Be aware the talkshows can reinforce and entrench positions.
• Be aware that value-based conflicts are often the most difficult to deal with, but by identifying the facts behind the values we may help locate common ground.
Radio Talkshows are a tool with great power to influence conflict in a positive or negative manner.

They have to be used with care, if they are not to exacerbate conflict.

Talkshows can bring people together across dividing lines, and open up debate on difficult issues.

This guidebook has been written with talkshow producers and presenters in mind. It will help the design and production of successful and entertaining programmes which help construct a peaceful future, without leaving audiences with the feeling that things will never change.