

Digital Access & Inclusion Audit

Purpose

The Digital Access & Inclusion Audit is designed to guide facilitators in assessing and enhancing digital accessibility and inclusion for interfaith and inter-spiritual dialogues within the Religious & Spiritual Dialogue Framework. It ensures that virtual and hybrid dialogue platforms, tools, and materials are accessible to diverse participants, including those with disabilities, limited connectivity, or cultural and linguistic differences, fostering equitable participation in alignment with the framework's principles of inclusivity, respect, equity, collaboration, and knowledge integration.

Intended Audience

- Facilitators organizing global summits, regional workshops, or local dialogue circles, especially in virtual or hybrid formats
- Community leaders and technical support teams ensuring inclusive digital engagement
- Regional Hubs and the Global Council for Religious & Spiritual Dialogue (GCRSD) overseeing dialogue accessibility

Core Principles

This audit aligns with the framework's five core principles:

1. **Inclusivity:** Ensuring digital platforms accommodate diverse abilities, languages, and cultural contexts.
2. **Respect:** Honoring participants' technological and cultural boundaries.
3. **Equity:** Addressing digital divides to amplify marginalized voices, including rural and disabled participants.
4. **Collaboration:** Engaging communities to co-create accessible digital solutions.

5. **Knowledge Integration:** Incorporating cultural and spiritual wisdom into accessible digital designs.

Audit Overview

The Digital Access & Inclusion Audit includes:

- **Preparation Phase:** Assessing participant needs and digital context.
- **Platform and Tool Assessment Phase:** Evaluating digital tools for accessibility and inclusion.
- **Implementation Phase:** Applying accessibility solutions and testing functionality.
- **Monitoring and Feedback Phase:** Ensuring ongoing inclusivity and addressing issues.
- **Tools and Resources:** Supporting framework tools for implementation.

Digital Access & Inclusion Audit Process

Step 1: Preparation Phase

- **Assess Participant Needs:**
 - Use the [Representation Assessment Tool](#) to identify participant diversity (e.g., disabilities, languages, technological access, rural vs. urban).
 - Consult the [Living Directory](#) to understand community-specific digital needs (e.g., low-bandwidth options for rural areas, sign language for deaf participants).
 - Example: In a Southeast Asian dialogue, note the need for Khmer and Vietnamese translations and screen-reader compatibility for visually impaired participants.
- **Engage Stakeholders:**
 - Collaborate with community leaders, disability advocates, and youth via the [Local Partnership MOU Template](#) to co-design digital solutions.
 - Example: In an African dialogue, consult rural elders and youth tech volunteers to address connectivity challenges.
- **Map Digital Context:**
 - Research regional internet access, device usage, and digital literacy levels using local data or community feedback.

- Identify barriers (e.g., high data costs, outdated devices, language gaps) per the [Regional Customization Framework](#).
- Example: In a Pacific Islands dialogue, note limited broadband in outer islands and reliance on mobile data.
- **Review Accessibility Standards:**
 - Align with W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1) and the [AI Ethics Guidelines](#) for ethical digital design.
 - Example: Ensure platforms support WCAG's Level AA standards, including keyboard navigation and alt-text for images.

Step 2: Platform and Tool Assessment Phase

- **Evaluate Platform Accessibility:**
 - Select platforms (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams) that support live captions, screen-reader compatibility, multilingual interfaces, and low-bandwidth modes.
 - Test for compatibility with assistive technologies (e.g., JAWS, VoiceOver) and mobile devices.
 - Example: In a Latin American dialogue, choose Zoom with live Spanish captions and low-bandwidth settings for rural participants.
- **Assess Tool Functionality:**
 - Review dialogue tools (e.g., [Digital Feedback Dashboard](#), virtual whiteboards) for accessibility features like high-contrast modes, adjustable text sizes, and audio alternatives.
 - Example: In a European dialogue, ensure the feedback dashboard supports braille displays and German audio prompts.
- **Check Content Accessibility:**
 - Ensure materials (e.g., agendas, slides, scripts) are available in accessible formats (e.g., PDF with tagged text, audio summaries, large print).
 - Use plain language and provide translations for multilingual participants.
 - Example: In a South Asian dialogue, provide Hindi and Tamil audio agendas for low-literacy participants.
- **Test Cultural Relevance:**
 - Verify that digital interfaces and aesthetics (e.g., virtual backgrounds, icons) are culturally neutral or co-created, per the [Cultural Appropriation Prevention Checklist](#).
 - Example: In a Middle Eastern dialogue, use a neutral desert background approved by Muslim and Christian participants.

- **Plan Technology Contingencies:**

- Prepare backup platforms (e.g., Microsoft Teams if Zoom fails) and offline options (e.g., USB drives, printed materials) for connectivity issues, per the [Sacred Space Setup Guide](#).
- Example: In an African dialogue, distribute recorded sessions via WhatsApp for rural participants with unstable internet.

Step 3: Implementation Phase

- **Deploy Accessible Platforms:**

- Configure platforms with accessibility features enabled (e.g., auto-captions, keyboard shortcuts, multilingual chat).
- Provide participant guides in accessible formats to navigate the platform.
- Example: In a North American dialogue, share a video tutorial in English and ASL (American Sign Language) for Zoom navigation.

- **Provide Technical Support:**

- Assign tech support staff or community volunteers trained in accessibility to assist participants during dialogues.
- Offer pre-dialogue tech rehearsals for participants with limited digital literacy.
- Example: In a Pacific Islands dialogue, train youth volunteers to guide elders through virtual platform setup.

- **Ensure Multilingual Support:**

- Integrate live translation or interpretation (e.g., simultaneous interpreters, chat translations) for linguistic diversity.
- Example: In a Southeast Asian dialogue, provide live Khmer-Vietnamese interpretation for virtual breakout rooms.

- **Support Asynchronous Participation:**

- Offer recorded sessions, discussion forums, or email contributions for participants in different time zones or with connectivity issues.
- Example: In a global summit, provide a forum for asynchronous input from rural African participants.

- **Test Accessibility in Real-Time:**

- Conduct a pre-dialogue test to verify captions, screen-reader functionality, and low-bandwidth performance.
- Example: In a South American dialogue, test Quechua audio captions with Indigenous participants before the event.

Step 4: Monitoring and Feedback Phase

- **Monitor Digital Inclusion:**

- Use the [Digital Feedback Dashboard](#) to collect real-time feedback on platform accessibility and usability.
- Ask: “Was the platform easy to use?” or “Did you face any accessibility barriers?”
- Example: In a European dialogue, address feedback about small text sizes by adjusting font settings mid-session.

- **Address Issues Promptly:**

- Resolve technical or accessibility issues (e.g., caption failures, connectivity drops) using backup plans or tech support.
- Apply the [Conflict De-escalation Protocols](#) if participants feel excluded due to digital barriers.
- Example: In an African dialogue, switch to a backup platform if Zoom fails for rural participants.

- **Collect Post-Dialogue Feedback:**

- Gather reflections on digital inclusion via accessible formats (e.g., verbal surveys, audio feedback), focusing on marginalized groups (e.g., disabled, rural).
- Example: In a South Asian dialogue, collect verbal feedback from low-literacy participants on platform ease.

- **Document Best Practices:**

- Record successful accessibility strategies (e.g., multilingual captions, offline recordings) in the [Multimedia Resource Library](#), sharing anonymized examples.
- Example: Share how a Pacific Islands dialogue used mobile data stipends to include outer island participants.

- **Report to Stakeholders:**

- Submit a summary report to the Regional Hub or GCRSD, detailing audit findings, solutions, and feedback, per the [Representation Metrics Dashboard](#).
- Example: Report how a Latin American dialogue improved accessibility with Quechua translations and offline materials.

Step 5: Continuous Improvement

- **Refine Digital Solutions:**

- Update platform configurations and materials based on feedback, addressing gaps in accessibility or inclusion.

- Example: Add Thai sign language interpretation to a Southeast Asian dialogue after feedback on deaf participant exclusion.
- **Scale Successful Practices:**
 - Share effective strategies (e.g., low-bandwidth platforms, multilingual support) with other regions via Regional Hubs.
 - Example: Apply African dialogue's USB drive distribution to Central Asian rural dialogues.
- **Build Digital Capacity:**
 - Train facilitators and communities in accessible digital tools, per the [Local Partnership MOU Template](#).
 - Example: In a South American dialogue, train Indigenous youth to support virtual platform access for elders.

Considerations for Implementation

- **Cultural Sensitivity:**
 - Adapt digital interfaces to local norms (e.g., right-to-left scripts for Arabic, oral interfaces for Indigenous communities).
 - Example: In a Middle Eastern dialogue, ensure platforms support Arabic and Farsi interfaces.
- **Power Dynamics:**
 - Prioritize accessibility for marginalized groups (e.g., disabled, rural, low-income) to address digital divides, per the [Representation Assessment Tool](#).
 - Example: In a South Asian dialogue, provide free data stipends for Dalit participants.
- **Accessibility:**
 - Ensure all digital elements meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards, including sensory, cognitive, and physical accommodations.
 - Example: In a North American dialogue, offer high-contrast modes and audio descriptions for visually impaired participants.
- **Youth Engagement:**
 - Involve youth in designing and testing digital solutions, leveraging their tech expertise.
 - Example: In a European dialogue, engage youth to create accessible virtual backgrounds for secular participants.
- **Remote and Rural Engagement:**

- Provide offline and low-tech options (e.g., radio broadcasts, printed materials) for areas with limited connectivity.
- Example: In an African dialogue, use community radio to share dialogue summaries for rural participants.
- **Ethical Considerations:**
 - Protect participant data and ensure ethical digital practices, per the [AI Ethics Guidelines](#).
 - Example: In a global dialogue, use encrypted platforms to safeguard refugee participants' data.
- **Trauma Sensitivity:**
 - Ensure digital spaces are safe for discussing sensitive topics, per the [Truth & Reconciliation Toolkit](#).
 - Example: In an Australian dialogue, provide private virtual breakout rooms for Aboriginal participants sharing colonial trauma.

Appendices

- **Sample Digital Access & Inclusion Audit Report:**

Digital Access & Inclusion Audit Report

Dialogue Title: Pacific Islands Dialogue on Climate Resilience

Date: May 19, 2025

Location: Hybrid – Fiji & Virtual

Facilitator: [Facilitator Name]

1. Participant Needs:

- Diversity: Polynesian, Christian, Hindu participants; 20% disabled
- Needs: Low-bandwidth access, Samoan translations, screen-readers

2. Platform Assessment:

- Platform: Zoom with captions, low-bandwidth mode.
- Tools: [Digital Feedback Dashboard](/framework/tools/spiritual)
- Content: Agendas in Samoan audio, tagged PDFs.

3. Implementation:

- Features: Live captions, Samoan interpretation, asynchronous
- Support: Youth volunteers trained for tech assistance.

- Contingency: Microsoft Teams backup, USB recordings.

4. Feedback and Monitoring:

- Real-Time: Addressed small text size via font adjustments.
- Post-Dialogue: 85% reported platform accessibility; rural par
- Best Practices: Mobile data stipends, audio agendas.

5. Recommendations:

- Add Tongan translations for future dialogues.
- Distribute more offline materials for outer islands.

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- **Facilitator Checklist:**

- Assess participant needs and digital context.
- Evaluate platforms, tools, and content for accessibility.
- Implement accessible solutions with technical support and contingencies.
- Monitor inclusion, collect feedback, and address issues.
- Document and share best practices, refining for future dialogues.

- **Resources:**

- [Dialogue Facilitation Guide](#)
- [Representation Assessment Tool](#)
- [Cultural Appropriation Prevention Checklist](#)
- [Conflict De-escalation Protocols](#)
- [Regional Customization Framework](#)
- [Sacred Space Setup Guide](#)
- [Truth & Reconciliation Toolkit](#)
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