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I-ACT
INITIATIVES FOR ADVANCING
COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

Deliberative Forums on Human Rights: A Short Introduction

Bianca Ysabelle Franco and Nicole Curato



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I-ACT is a Project of The Asia Foundation made possible by the generous support of the American People through USAID. I-ACT uses a strategy of behavioral science-backed Diagnosing, Prototyping, and Institutionalization to fully understand Filipinos' appreciation for human rights and meaningfully engage them in efforts to protect civil and political rights.

The authors' views expressed in this handbook do not necessarily reflect the views of the USAID, the United States Government, or The Asia Foundation.

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Glossary

Deliberative forum

a civic engagement strategy designed to bring communities together to diagnose a problem

The learning phase

the portion of the deliberative forum wherein participants learn more about the topic from a diverse set of experts

The deliberation phase

the process design of the deliberative forum which is malleable to fit the forum's aims and purposes

Pre-deliberation interviews

conducted to build rapport with participants and to gain baseline data about their views on the issue at hand

Post-deliberation interviews

conducted to debrief the participants and to learn about their overall impressions on the conduct of the forum

Executive Summary

What happens when ordinary Filipinos are given the chance to discuss the Philippines' campaign against illegal drugs in a context governed by norms of inclusiveness, mutual respect, and collaboration? What issues will they cover? Can they overcome hyper-partisanship and anti-intellectual discourses that have shaped the Philippine public sphere in the past few years? Can we count on the collective wisdom of ordinary people?

This manual draws from the experience of a group of researchers and academics in implementing two deliberative forums on human rights from May to June 2021. Over three days, randomly selected Filipinos from all over the country coming from different walks of life were given the opportunity to listen to and engage with experts, deliberate with a diverse group of people about how the anti-illegal drugs campaign can be improved, and reflect on their own views.

A deliberative forum is a civic engagement strategy designed to bring communities together to diagnose the challenges of human rights. The goal is to create a safe space where participants coming from diverse backgrounds can exchange their views, listen to each other, and develop empathetic understanding to overcome disinformation and group polarization.

Deliberative forums take many forms. Deliberative polling and citizen assemblies are some examples. These forums have an established track record, based on scientific evidence, that when ordinary citizens are given the opportunity to engage in a respectful and reasonable discussion, they can process complex information, discuss morally divisive issues, and understand the perspective of the other.

A deliberative forum has two core design features: to serve as a [mirror and a filter](#). Like surveys, its composition aims to *mirror* the wider society by

drawing a representative sample of participants based on their demographic characteristics. Randomly selecting participants to join the forum is a way of operationalizing equality in deliberation — that everyone has an equal shot at getting a seat on the table. It is also a celebration of the role of ordinary citizens in democracies. While electoral politics emphasizes the need for leaders with special qualities, a deliberative forum celebrates the collective wisdom that ordinary citizens can generate, not because of their special abilities but because of their diversity. As [philosophers](#) put it, diversity trumps ability.

As a *filter*, a deliberative forum aims to distill participants' opinions to [considered judgment](#). This is what makes a deliberative forum a distinctive methodology. While surveys, focus groups, and interviews uncover what people think about an issue, a deliberative forum uncovers what people think about an issue when they have the chance to learn more about it, weigh different arguments, and reflect on their own views. Put another way, a deliberative forum captures the views of ordinary citizens when they are placed in a context conducive for reasoned discussion. The aim of deliberations is not to reach a full consensus, but to crystallize the extent of participants' disagreements and understand people's underlying reasons for their views.

The use of deliberative forum in policymaking has taken off around the world. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) calls this the "[deliberative wave](#)" or the surge of deliberative processes used for policymaking. Citizens' assemblies, deliberative polls, and citizens' initiative reviews have become institutionalized in countries like Belgium, Brazil, Colombia, Ireland, Mongolia, the United States, and the United Kingdom, among others. Topics covered in these deliberations range from changing the constitutional provision on same sex marriage, abortion, and crafting society-wide policies on climate change.

In Colombia, deliberative forums are incorporated in peace processes to facilitate conversations between former guerillas and paramilitaries. All these examples signal that deliberative democracy is not a pie in the sky but a real-world political project that has taken off in different parts of the world.

This bespoke design addresses the I-ACT Project's objectives of (1) building an evidence base for social and behavior change strategies and; (2) increasing citizen engagement in support of human rights through social and behavior change interventions.

Summary of Steps

Step 1: Assembling the Project Team. A project team with clearly defined roles and diverse backgrounds provides the backbone to the deliberative forum. The team's different backgrounds can lay bare each other's blind spots and offer critical reflections from different perspectives.

Step 2: Recruitment. Deliberative forums should be composed of a diverse group of ordinary citizens. Conditions for recruitment may include the following considerations: gender, age, socioeconomic status, and, for national forums, geographic location.

Step 3: Providing Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). Filipino Sign Language (FSL) interpreters may be hired to provide live interpretation of the deliberation. All videos presented must also include subtitles.

Step 4: Framing the Charge. Identifying "the charge" (or the topic) of the deliberative forum is a boundary-setting exercise. The charge provides structure to the forum as all phases of deliberation are oriented toward addressing the charge.

Step 5: Selecting the Venue. The most important principle in selecting the venue for the deliberative forum is inclusiveness. Practical considerations

involve organizing transportation, providing childcare assistance, and for online deliberations where a selected video conferencing application is the venue, sending internet allowance and gadget support.

Step 6: Designing the Learning Phase. The learning phase allows the participants to improve their knowledge about an issue from selected experts before the deliberations. In selecting experts, diversity should be prioritized to present the different sides of the issue at hand.

Step 7: Designing the Deliberation Phase. A carefully designed process is essential to promote effective deliberation. Examples of designs are in Appendices 1 and 2 for reference.

Step 8: Setting up the Social Media Group. Setting up a private social media group is helpful to build rapport with the participants and keep them updated about the activities.

Step 9: Contacting the Participants. The project manager is the primary contact representing the team. Constant communication with the participants is key to building rapport.

Step 10: Providing Internet Allowance. The participants should be provided an internet allowance before the deliberations, and this amount should be consistent with global standards. The participants should also be given the option to rent a device or receive support to move to a location with stable internet connection, if the budget allows.

Step 11: Building Rapport with the Participants. The social media group should only include team members and experts, if they prefer. As part of the rapport-building exercise, each team member must introduce themselves to the group by posting a selfie.

Step 12: Conducting the Pre-Deliberation Interviews. The pre-deliberation interviews allow the project team to know the participants better. These interviews can provide baseline data about the issues that will be tackled in the deliberative forum.

Step 13: The Learning Phase. The learning phase is the first day of deliberation. The asynchronous activity involves watching the expert testimonies posted on the private social group.

Step 14: Facilitating Deliberation. The main role of the facilitator/s is to keep participants focused on the task, which is to deliberate on the issue at hand. Neutrality should be kept in mind by the facilitators and sharing of personal views should be avoided.

Step 15: Developing Recommendations. Facilitators should help the participants come up with concrete recommendations to address the issue at hand.

Step 16: Debriefing and Evaluating the Forum. On the part of the project team, debriefing and evaluation are incorporated throughout the process of designing and implementing the deliberative forum. The goal is to learn from each other's experiences and document insights informing future deliberative forums.

Step 17: Conducting Post-Deliberation Interviews. The post-deliberation interviews must be conducted in the four days immediately after the last day of deliberations. These interviews can be an opportunity for the interviewer to ask participants if they have any issues in the conduct of the forum and revisit some unresolved issues from deliberations.

Step 18: Sending the Honorarium to the Participants. Providing honorarium to the participants is not about paying them for their participation. Rather, it is about recognizing the value of their time and effort.

Step 19: Exiting the Field. The project manager must close or delete all the social media groups and chats set up for the purpose of the deliberative forum. Video conference recordings and interview audio files should be kept in an external hard drive, not uploaded online.

Introduction

This document is a short introduction to convening deliberative forums on human rights. It provides an overview of how these forums can be designed, implemented, and evaluated. It also conveys lessons we learned from previous forums conducted for the I-ACT Project.

As a short introduction, this document focuses on the “basics” of running deliberative forums. It is by no means a comprehensive introduction to the art and craft of democratic deliberation.

These steps are not prescriptions of “how-to” run a deliberative forum. We recognize that there is no single template for running deliberative processes, for they are convened with different aims and purposes. These steps are best appreciated as a narration of what we did when I-ACT commissioned us to run two deliberative forums on human rights. Each forum was designed to have 24 participants. The first forum focused on Metro Manila and Cebu, while the second forum focused on Davao.

Box 1: Examples of Deliberative Forums

There are many types of deliberative forums convened for different purposes. Here are some open-source publications that provide information on these forums.

1. The [OECD's report](#) on innovative citizen participation provides a comprehensive overview of the rise and increasing popularity of deliberative forums around the world.
2. [Involve.org](#), a UK-based public participation charity, has a rich catalog of different methods for citizen engagement, including deliberative methods such as citizens' juries, citizens' assemblies, citizens' panels, and others.
3. Latin America is home to many deliberative forums covering a range of issues from rural development to sports and culture to public health. The [LATINNO database](#) compiles numerous examples of deliberative forums in countries who experience similar issues with the Philippines.
4. [Participedia.net](#) provides a global inventory of deliberative processes around the world.
5. [Participo](#) is OECD's Medium page that showcases case studies and reflections on implementing representative citizen deliberation. Though the cases mostly focus on Europe, the issues that are covered find resonance in the Philippine context, such as [COVID-19 lockdowns](#).

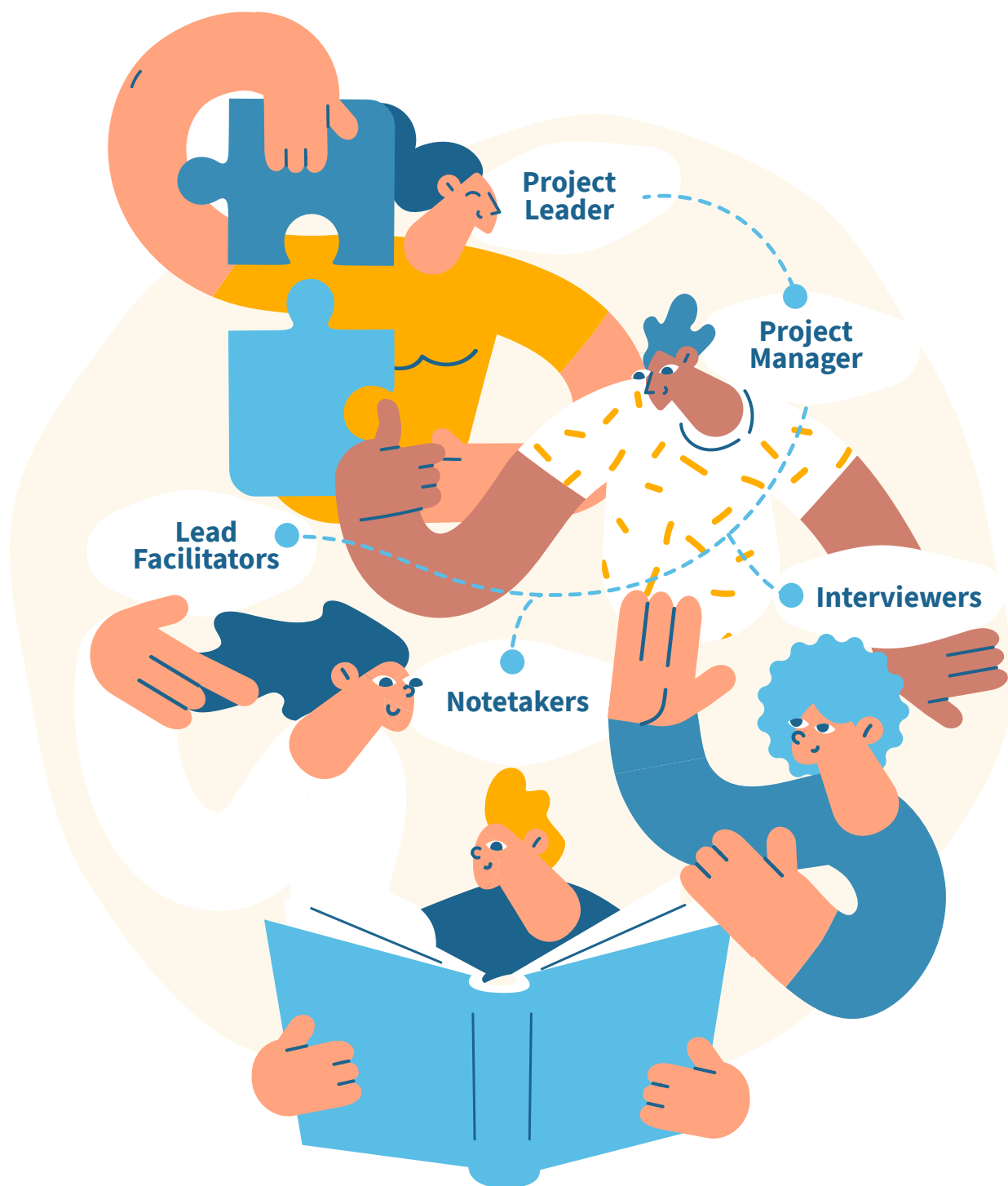
Step 1: Assembling the Project Team

A project team with clearly defined roles and diverse backgrounds provides the backbone to the deliberative forum. Clearly defined roles allow team members to focus on specific tasks and deliver the aims of deliberation. Members of the project team include the following (Table 1):

Table 1: Project Team Roles and Functions

Role	Function
Project Leader	• Responsible for the overall design of the deliberative forum • Provides training, advice, and debriefing to the project team • Evaluates evidence to improve the design of subsequent forums • Looks after the well-being of the project team
Project Manager	• Oversees the implementation of the deliberative forum • Primary contact for all participants
Interviewers	• Administer questionnaires to participants one week before and after the forum • Introduce the project's aims and the rights of participants • Help participants familiarize themselves with the video conferencing platform • Debrief participants after the event
Lead Facilitators	• Enforce the norms of deliberation • Keep participants focused on the task • Maintain the participants' energy levels • Ensure that the event starts and ends on time
Backup Facilitators	• Assume the role of lead facilitators in breakout groups • Take over the part of lead facilitators in case of last-minute changes
Notetakers	• Alert the project leader and facilitators of emerging themes that can be probed during plenary sessions and breakout groups • Provide feedback to facilitators based on their observations

Diagram 1: Project Team Structure



Aside from having clearly defined roles, diversity is a resource for thoughtful design and implementation. Project members from different backgrounds can lay bare each other's blind spots and offer critical reflections from different perspectives. Speaking different languages is also a resource, especially in multilingual settings. Some deliberative forums have participants who do not speak Tagalog or Bisaya, in which case facilitators can serve as translators.

All project team members were briefed on the project's research ethics, especially anonymity, confidentiality, and gender-sensitive approach.

Step 2: Recruitment

The next step involves recruitment. First, deliberative forums are composed of a diverse group of ordinary citizens. Often, participants in a deliberative forum are drawn from a representative subset of the wider population. Depending on the forum's focus, the "wider population" can refer to a country, city, *barangay*, purok, or any other community (e.g., a deliberative forum in the human rights community). There are several ways of drawing a representative subset of the broader population though ultimately, participant recruitment is guided by the principle that a deliberative forum should *mirror* the composition of the wider society. Typically, organizers follow sampling procedures used in surveys and focus groups where participants are randomly selected based on their demographic characteristics, such as age, sex, geographic location, and socioeconomic background. Additional selection criteria may be added, such as participants' views on the issue under discussion. That way, the sample represents both demographic and discursive diversity.



Ideally, the recruitment must begin around six weeks before the deliberation. Participant recruitment may be subcontracted to reputable research organizations. Conditions for recruitment may include the following considerations: gender, age, socioeconomic status, and, for national forums, geographic location. Views on human rights may also be a consideration in recruitment to ensure diversity in demographic characteristics and perspectives.

Depending on its purpose, a deliberative forum can be as small as 12 people, as in citizens' juries, or as large as 150, as in citizens' assemblies. Whatever the number, it is essential to recruit more than the expected number of participants so that there are "buffers" in case some participants back out.

Step 3: Providing Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)

In the spirit of democracy and inclusivity, all members of the population should be represented in the deliberative forum. Thus, certain practicalities must be considered to accommodate PWDs.

The project manager, with the help of the recruitment agency, should assess the pool of participants ahead of time. If the need arises, the project team may hire Filipino Sign Language (FSL) interpreters to accommodate the respondents who are hard of hearing. For participants who are visually impaired, the project manager may request the assistance of a family member throughout the deliberative forum. It is also important to provide subtitles in any of the videos to be presented to the participants.



Step 4: Framing “the Charge”

Framing “the charge” or the topic of deliberation is critical to the forum’s design. The charge provides structure to the forum as all phases of deliberation are oriented toward addressing the charge. In the case of I-ACT’s deliberative forums, our project team decided to frame the topic of deliberation in this manner: *What can we do to improve our society’s campaign against illegal drugs?*

There are several reasons for framing the charge in this manner. First, we were careful not to use the terms human rights, civil society, and extrajudicial killings (EJKS) because we recognize that some participants prefer not to discuss what they consider to be sensitive topics. Second, we also purposely used the term “our society” to set the collaborative tone of the discussion.

Identifying the topic of deliberation is a boundary-setting exercise. It concedes some premises, which, for some human rights advocates, may be problematic. For example, the term “campaign against illegal drugs” may be considered inappropriate because it concedes that a campaign against illicit substances is a legitimate exercise. It does not, for example, create an opening to question why some drugs are illegal in the first place. The term “improving” may also be problematic, for it presupposes that what the campaign against illicit drugs needs now is not a radical overhaul but reformist tweaks.

Nevertheless, the team made these design decisions for two reasons. First, a reasonable charge needs to be understandable to all participants. For example, the term “campaign against illegal drugs” is specific enough for participants to understand the topic of deliberation while rejecting the campaign’s framing as a “war” with casualties. Second, a reasonable charge is welcoming of different perspectives. Calling for ideas to “improve” the status quo does not exclude the voices of those who are satisfied with the current policy while inviting criticisms from those who do not support it. The team can address some of the weaknesses of the charge’s framing through design interventions.

“

**First, a reasonable charge needs to be
understandable to all participants.
Second, a reasonable charge is welcoming of
different perspectives.**

”

Step 5: Selecting the Venue

Selecting the venue of the deliberative forum is a crucial design decision. Some deliberative forums were held in symbolic spaces. For example, in Mongolia, a deliberative poll was conducted in the [government palace](#) in Ulaanbaatar, while Ireland's citizens' assembly was held at the [Dublin Castle](#). These venues communicated the significance of the deliberative forum.

Other forums, meanwhile, are held not in grand spaces but spaces familiar to participants. Some hold it in schools, churches, or community spaces where participants feel comfortable. Our first deliberative forum on the drug war in 2019, for example, was held at the Ateneo de Manila University; while our deliberative forum on Marawi rehabilitation was held in a modest restaurant in the Mindanao State University's commercial center.



We considered it essential to frame the forum as a special event — a day away from participants' everyday lives — to focus on the task. The pandemic, of course, imposed restrictions on the venue of the forum. Both I-ACT forums were conducted online, using a selected social media platform and video conferencing application.

Regardless of the deliberative forum's venue, one principle remains important: inclusiveness. Participants have various considerations in joining a deliberative forum. Some cannot miss a day's work while others worry about childcare. Practical issues such as finding transportation to the venue or securing a good internet connection to log in to the selected video conferencing application could be barriers to participation.

When forums are designed in-person, considerations include organizing transportation for participants, catering, and providing a room where children can stay as parents join the forum. Another consideration is ensuring the venue is accessible to people from all walks of life. Considerations regarding the venue's accessibility also includes assessing the physical space for amenities that cater to PWDs. The organizers must conduct advanced ocular visits to ensure the availability of ramps, amply sized doorways, and restroom availability.

“

Regardless of the deliberative forum's venue, one principle remains important: inclusiveness.

”

For online deliberations, participants may opt to rent a laptop or purchase a microphone or earphones when their devices do not meet the technical requirements of video conferencing. In some instances, additional support was given to participants who had to travel downtown to secure an internet connection following quarantine restrictions. All participants were given internet allowance for five days: three days for the deliberation, and two days for pre- and post-deliberation interviews. Using the technology participants already use (e.g., social media) is a way of ensuring inclusion.

Participants are given honoraria to recognize their efforts and acknowledge the opportunity cost of spending a day deliberating instead of earning a living. Participants can be given the option on how they prefer to receive the internet allowance and honoraria.

Box 2: Online Deliberation

The pandemic left deliberative practitioners with little choice but to conduct the forums online. Here are some reflective pieces and reports that put forward insights on this experience.

1. [“The Pandemic has Pushed Citizens’ Panels Online”](#) by the OECD’s Claudia Chwalisz provides an overview of how the pandemic affected the conduct of deliberative forums.
2. [“#LockDownDebate: Rapid Online Deliberation on Contract Tracing”](#) explores the opportunities afforded by digital technologies to conduct quick deliberations on the most pressing issue of the day.
3. The [Digital tools database](#) prepared by Involve provides a comprehensive list of tools that can be used for digital deliberation.

Step 6: Designing the Learning Phase

“

Article 3, Bill of Rights, then Miranda Rights. Based on my personal experience, I know a lot of people who are into drugs. I know several people arrested for drugs. The police did not administer the Miranda Rights to them and I realized I should know the Constitution. So yeah, Atty. Mercado was an eye opener.

”

— *PAM, A 45-YEAR-OLD CORPORATE EMPLOYEE ON ONE OF THE EXPERT VIDEOS*

A deliberative forum allows participants to improve their knowledge about an issue before discussing it with their fellow participants. The learning phase can be done in several ways. For example, some deliberative forums provide reading materials that present different sides of an issue. Others invite experts to provide evidence during the deliberative forum and interact with participants during small-group deliberations.

The selection of experts for the deliberative forums on human rights prioritized diversity. We wanted to showcase different ways in which civil society groups respond to the campaign against illegal drugs. We deliberately did not invite experts representing the state (e.g., a representative from Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency or the Philippine National Police) because these discourses are already amplified in the public sphere. Instead, our focus was to allow participants to hear alternative voices to broaden their understanding of the issue.

Given the limitations of online deliberation and experts' time, we invited experts to record an eight- to ten-minute video. The videos explain the different ways in which their groups or professions take part in the campaign against illegal drugs: from promoting legal advice and education to producing a rap album that spotlights ordinary Filipinos' experiences on the brutality of the drug war. We asked the experts to keep their comments short, engaging, and informal. We also asked them to be on standby in case participants have questions about their testimonies. Participants were invited to engage with expert testimonies using the comments section.



Step 7: Designing the Deliberation Phase

Because effective deliberation rarely takes place naturally, the process design encourages participants to behave deliberatively. There are several ways to promote deliberative behavior through a process design. (Appendices 1 and 2 provide the run sheet used in the deliberative forums we convened for I-ACT.) Here are some examples.



1. **Introductions and greetings.** Introducing oneself to the group may seem mundane, but this social exercise helps build participants' confidence. Usually, facilitators ask participants to identify what they are proud of where they live. Framing the introduction in this manner reveals participants' pride of place and sets the positive tone of the discussion.



2. **Norm setting.** Norm setting is one of the most essential tasks in a deliberative forum. Instead of organizers telling participants how to deliberate, they should formulate and agree on the discussion rules. That way, participants who digress on these norms can be legitimately called out. Facilitators are also more confident in moderating the discussion as participants have agreed on these rules.



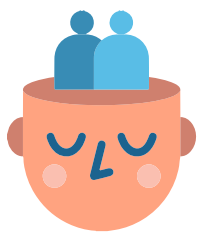
3. **Points of pride and points of shame.** Deliberation, at its core, is a process of weighing different views. To facilitate the process of weighing, small-group discussions can begin by asking participants to identify points of pride and points of shame about the policy under discussion. For example, participants in I-ACT forums shared that feeling safe to walk in the streets late at night is one of the proudest achievements of the campaign against illegal drugs. At the same time, the extrajudicial killings are the most shameful part. Through this approach, participants can begin realizing the extent of their agreements and disagreements with the group.

“

For me the iron fist is effective because there are those who are given a second chance but return to drug use. It's better to eradicate them from the world. In that way, it will serve as a lesson for others to stop their nonsense because their lives are at stake. They will be afraid to get killed.

”

— MEL, A 37-YEAR-OLD CALL CENTER AGENT ON HIS SUPPORT FOR THE DRUG WAR



4. Empathy exercise. Deliberating on divisive issues could benefit from an exercise in perspective-taking. In small-group deliberations, participants could be asked to step in the shoes of, for example, families who lost their loved ones from extrajudicial killings and see the anti-illegal drugs campaign from their shoes. Participants are then asked to take the perspective of families who lost loved ones from drug-related crimes and ask them to reflect on what constitutes a reasonable policy. This exercise invites participants to view the issue beyond their own lived experience and imagine the reasons behind people's views on the issue.



5. Visioning exercise. At the end of the deliberative forum, participants could be asked to generate a list of recommendations that can input how the status quo can be transformed. A visioning exercise can support participants in thinking about their “ideal” policy and help them craft their recommendations. Specifying their ideal policy is a way of revealing the values they cherish and articulate their aspirations. In the I-ACT forum, it is through the visioning exercise that participants' views were clarified: Everyone preferred an anti-illegal drugs campaign that prioritizes social interventions rather than punitive approaches. Participants were then asked to identify the obstacles in realizing their ideal policy. This exercise allowed participants to reconnect their aspirations to practical limitations, identify the weaknesses in the system, and assign accountability to institutions that need reform.

Box 3: Practicing Deliberation

The newDemocracy Foundation regularly publishes research and development notes on designing deliberative forums and building capacities for participants to engage in reasoned discussion.

1. [Enabling National Initiatives to Take Democracy Beyond Elections](#) provides a step-by-step guide on how to deliver deliberative forums (See Chapter 4).
2. Many people may cast doubt on the ability of ordinary citizens to discuss political and moral issues in a short span of time. The research note [Concerns about Citizens' Abilities](#) discusses strategies that empower citizens to handle complex and technical issues.
3. How can citizens' critical thinking skills be developed during deliberations? In [“Enhancing Citizen Jurors' Critical Thinking Capacity,”](#) the newDemocracy Foundation drew on their practical experience of training citizens to think with clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, and logic.

Step 8: Setting up a Social Media Group or Network

The deliberative forum is a five-day engagement including pre- and post-deliberation interviews, the learning phase, and the two days of deliberation. Therefore, it is vital to build rapport with the participants and keep them updated about the activities. In the two I-ACT forums we convened, the project manager set up a private group in a social media platform to post updates about the deliberative forum. In addition, a week before the forum, the project team started uploading self-introductions to encourage participants to do the same (see Step 12). The online group is also the mechanism for the asynchronous deliberations that occur the day before the deliberation sessions.

The recruitment agency should send the list of recruited participants around three weeks before the deliberative forum. The list should also include links to the participants' social media profiles so that the project manager can easily reach them. It is ideal for the list of participants to be organized in the following manner (Table 2):

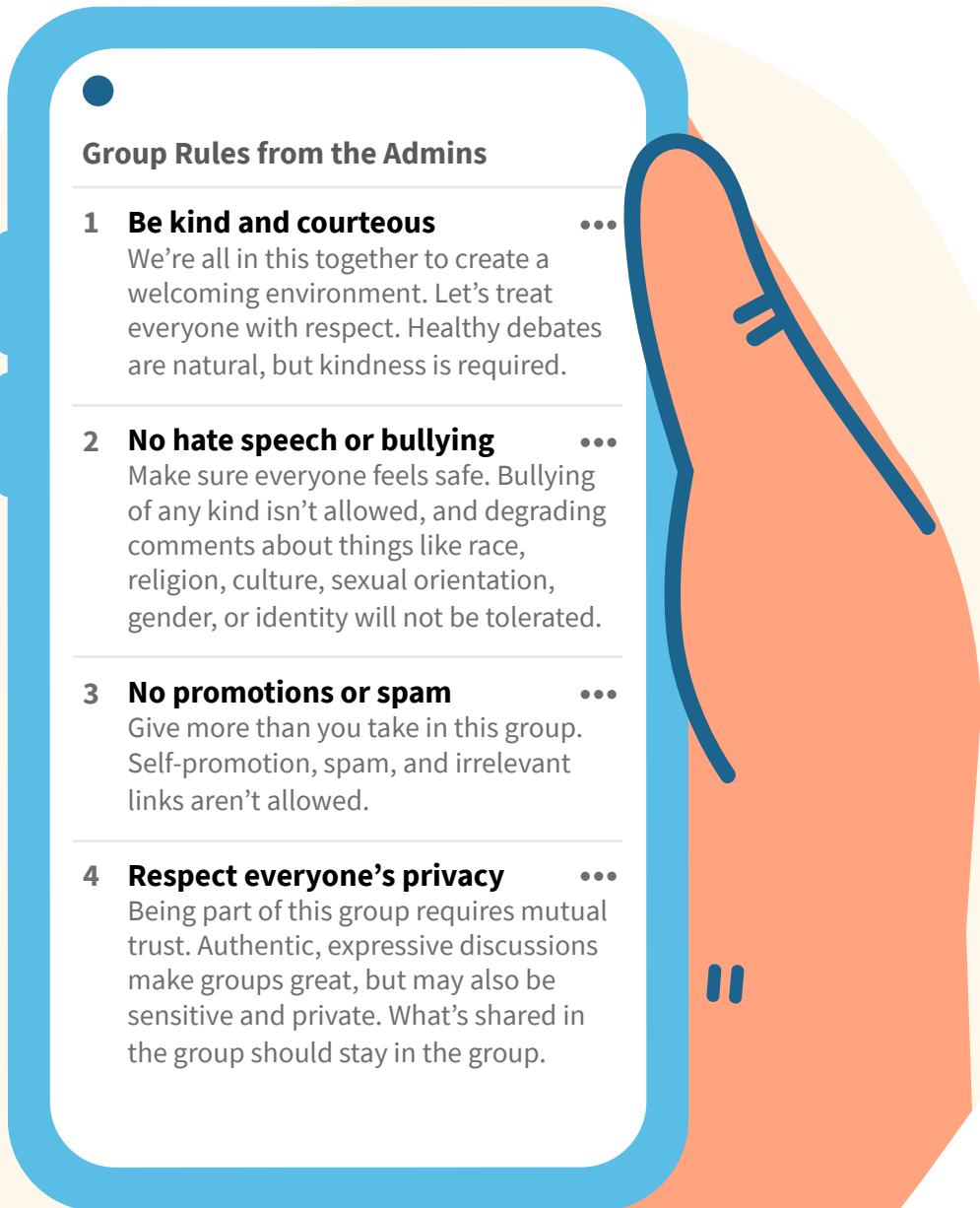
Table 2: List of Participants and their Details

Persona (Optional)	Name	Contact Number	Email Address	Social Media Profile	Location	Age	Sex	Socio-economic Status	Occupation

A group description should be available to the participants in order to set the tone and manage expectations. The following is the group description which was translated in Tagalog and Bisaya:

This group is for the participants of the upcoming deliberative forum on June 12-13, 2021 (Saturday and Sunday), from 2 PM to 5 PM. The forum will discuss drug reform in the Philippines. Please stay tuned to this group for updates about the forum and go over the materials in preparation for the forum. Thank you very much and see you soon!

The following group rules are automatically generated by the social media platform used for the I-ACT deliberative forums. The rules were translated to Bisaya for the Davao group.



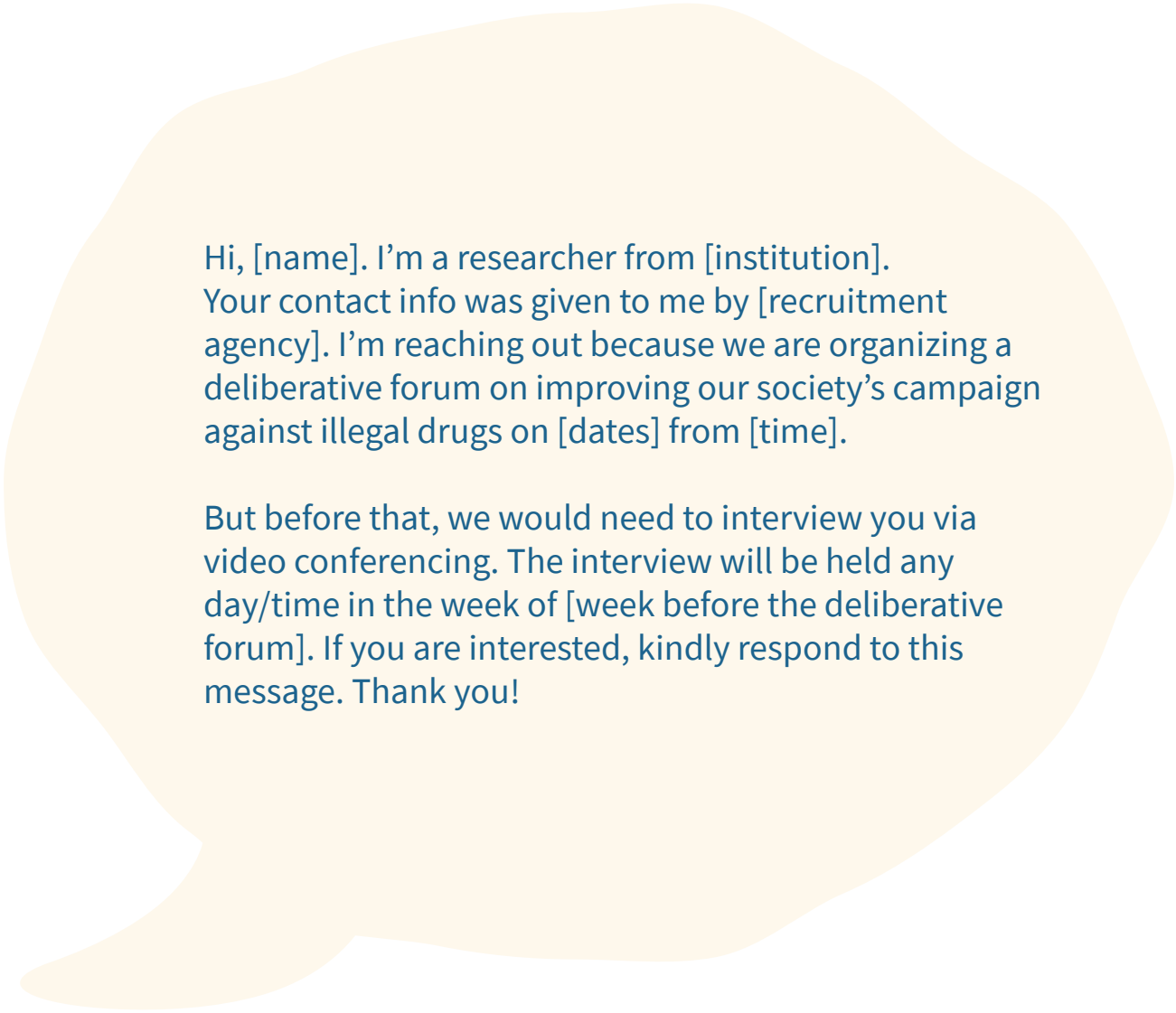
Group Rules from the Admins

- 1 Be kind and courteous** ...
We're all in this together to create a welcoming environment. Let's treat everyone with respect. Healthy debates are natural, but kindness is required.
- 2 No hate speech or bullying** ...
Make sure everyone feels safe. Bullying of any kind isn't allowed, and degrading comments about things like race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender, or identity will not be tolerated.
- 3 No promotions or spam** ...
Give more than you take in this group. Self-promotion, spam, and irrelevant links aren't allowed.
- 4 Respect everyone's privacy** ...
Being part of this group requires mutual trust. Authentic, expressive discussions make groups great, but may also be sensitive and private. What's shared in the group should stay in the group.

Whether the deliberative forum is conducted online or face-to-face, setting up a social media group with the participants may still be helpful to conveniently update them about the activities.

Step 9: Contacting the Participants

Once the list of participants was turned over, the project manager then sent each of them the following message in a mix of Tagalog and English:



Hi, [name]. I'm a researcher from [institution].
Your contact info was given to me by [recruitment agency]. I'm reaching out because we are organizing a deliberative forum on improving our society's campaign against illegal drugs on [dates] from [time].

But before that, we would need to interview you via video conferencing. The interview will be held any day/time in the week of [week before the deliberative forum]. If you are interested, kindly respond to this message. Thank you!

The project manager must constantly communicate with the recruitment agency should they encounter issues in contacting the participants. Once the participant responds that they are willing to participate in the project, they are sent the link to the private social media group.

Step 10: Providing Internet Allowance

Participants should also be sent an internet allowance before the pre-deliberation interviews. In addition, they should be provided an amount consistent with global standards, which they can use to buy internet data for the five days of their participation in the project.

In the deliberative forums on human rights, each participant may opt to rent a device or receive support to move to a location with a good internet connection. Especially during the pandemic, cashless transactions are ideal. It is best to use any of the available applications to send the internet allowance to the participants. When available, the online bank transfer method can also be used. Ideally, each participant should receive their internet allowance a day before the first day of their participation.

For face-to-face deliberative forums, providing internet allowance is not necessary.



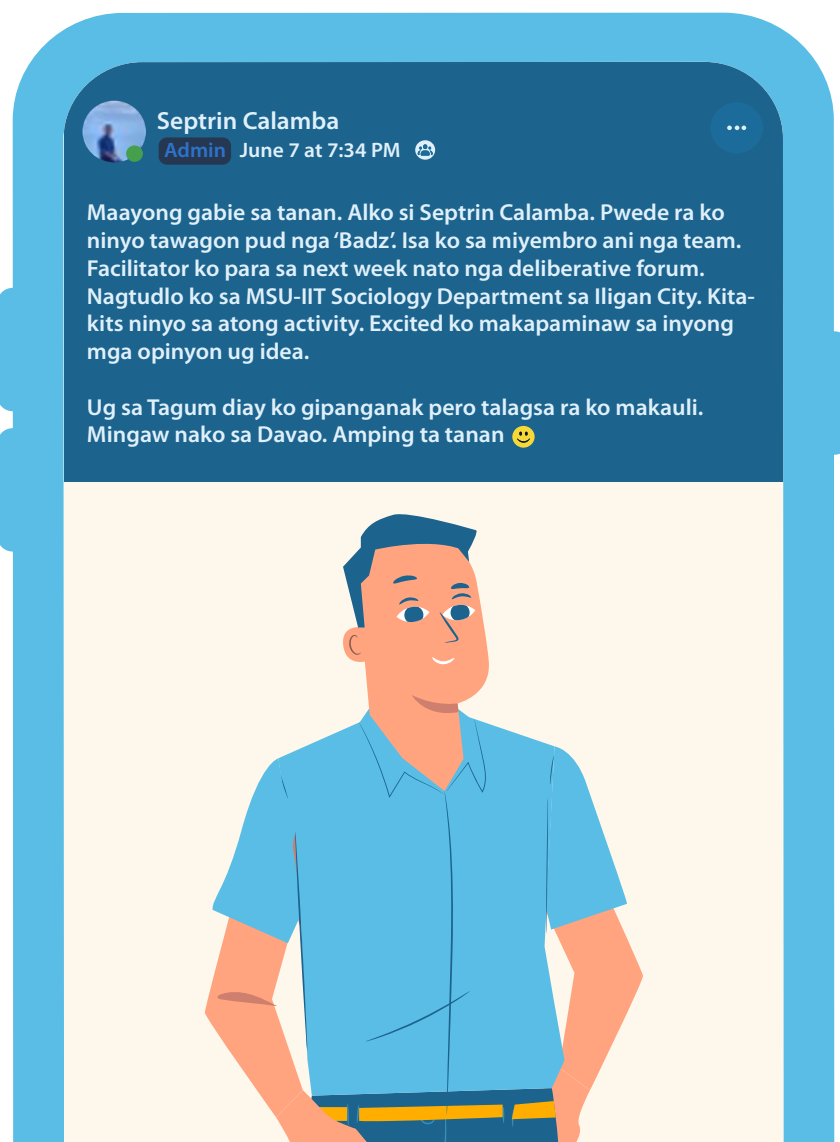
Step 11: Building Rapport with the Participants

The project manager serves as the primary contact of all the participants. Therefore, the team member assigned to this task should be prepared to answer questions about the duration of the interviews, the schedule of the deliberation sessions, and other concerns.

The day before each of the participants' schedule of pre-deliberation interviews, the project manager reminds them of their interview schedule by introducing them to their interviewer through a group chat. In that way, the project manager can monitor the communication between each interviewer and participant.

Reminders should also be posted to the social media group to keep the engagement going. It is also essential to post a schedule in the social media group which includes all the important dates of the project. In each post, all the participants must be tagged to notify them.

The social media group should only include team members and some of the experts, if they prefer. Each team member must introduce themselves to the group by posting a selfie with a caption stating their role in the project and their hobbies and interests. Participants should also be encouraged to post their selfie and caption. And to boost the engagement in the group, project team members can react and comment on the participants' posts.



Step 12: Conducting the Pre-Deliberation Interviews

Each interviewer is in charge of setting up the online video call with the participant assigned to them. The pre-deliberation interview also serves as the dry run for the synchronous deliberation sessions, which will also be done via video conferencing. By using video conferencing application to conduct the pre-deliberation interviews, participants can familiarize themselves with the application. The interviewers also provided technical assistance to the participants by showing them the features of the video conferencing application.

During the pre-deliberation interviews, interviewers explained the aims of the project and the participants' rights to anonymity, confidentiality, and data security. They also assured participants that the forum is a safe space. It is not a quiz (as participants often worry that they do not know enough about the issue) or a debate, but a free discussion without judgment.

The pre-deliberation interview also served as an opportunity for the project team to know the participants better. Aside from confirming their demographic profile, we tried to get a sense of their views on human rights through a photo-elicitation exercise. We showed them iconic pictures of the “drug war,” including images of the Pieta published in the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and *New York Times*, a photo of President Rodrigo Duterte holding pictures of suspected narco politicians, a meme from the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency, and a trailer of Alyx Arumpac's *Aswang*.



Pieta photo of Raffy Lerma

We asked participants to interpret what they see in the images and then solicited their immediate reactions to the pictures. Instead of directly asking participants their views on human rights, photo-elicitation uncovered their visceral reactions to contentious issues. This approach is helpful in two ways. First, it is an indicator of whether there is a diversity of views in the group. Second, it provides baseline data on how participants view human rights before the deliberative forum.

In face-to-face deliberative forums, participants are at the venue (e.g., hotel) a day before synchronous deliberations. Pre-deliberation interviews can be conducted then.

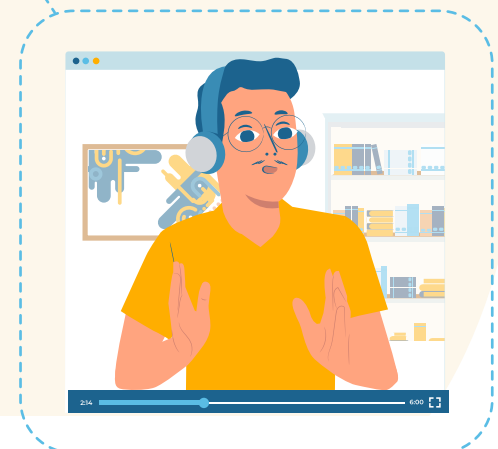
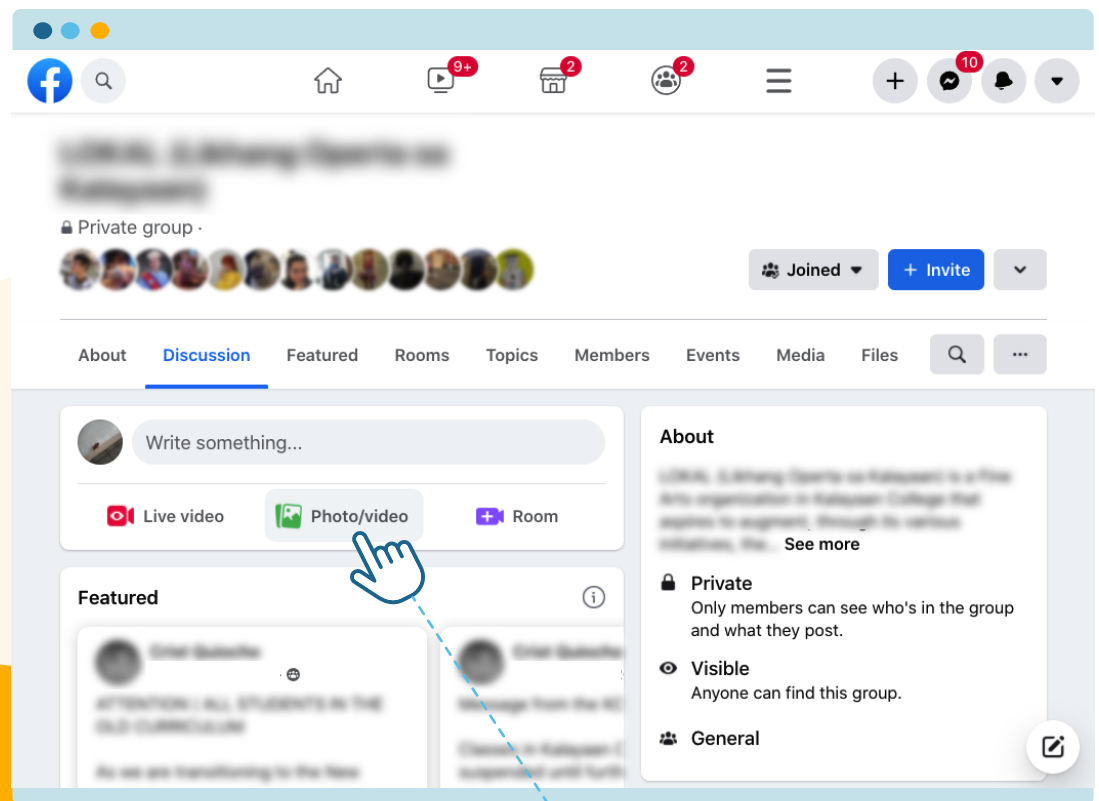
Box 4: Using an Online Form-Generating Tool

The project team used an online form-generating software to efficiently encode the responses from the interviews. For transparency, the interviewer shared their screen during the video call to show the participant that they took note of their answers in real-time. This method replaces the need to transcribe each interview, and by using a form-generating software, the responses are automatically encoded in a spreadsheet. It is important to note that despite using this software, the interviewers still administered the interview guide and used probing questions not included in the digital form.

Step 13: The Learning Phase

After the pre-deliberation interviews is the learning phase. The expert testimonies should be posted to the social media group the day before the synchronous deliberations, as mentioned in Step 5. As a reminder, all participants should be tagged in each post. Team members can also send individual private messages to the participants to invite them to watch the expert testimonies. The participants must be encouraged to post their thoughts in the comments section and to reply to each other's comments. This asynchronous activity is the first day of deliberation.

In face-to-face deliberative forums, experts have the option to be present at the physical venue or send in their pre-recorded videos ahead of time. Additionally, a question-and-answer session should be set up where the participants can raise concerns to the experts. This is the live version of social media's comments section. Alternatively, the selected experts may prepare pre-recorded videos and be present during the question-and-answer portion of the forum.



Step 14: Facilitating Deliberation

Facilitators are the managers of deliberation. While the project leader oversees the design of the process, it is the facilitators who primarily implement the deliberative process. Facilitation, of course, is a task not unique to deliberative forums. Focus group discussions are run by experienced facilitators, and so do capacity-building workshops and university seminars. While there are many overlaps in techniques used in facilitating focus groups, workshops, and seminars, deliberative facilitation has the following characteristics.

The main role of the facilitator is to keep participants focused on the task, which is to deliberate on the issue at hand. They are expected to enforce the norms of deliberation, especially the ones participants set in the norm-building session. At the bare minimum, facilitators should give equal opportunity for all participants to speak, pace the flow of discussions such that participants have the time to reflect on different views, and maintain a sense of enthusiasm to keep participants energized and enthusiastic.



Beyond giving all participants a chance to speak in a respectful manner, deliberative facilitation requires drawing out different views from participants and comparing these views to prompt deliberation. In conflict-avoidant cultures, participants do not usually challenge the views of others even though they disagree with them. The facilitator can take the initiative in identifying differences of opinion and clarify the extent of disagreements. Probing is a key skill. Facilitators could ask participants to give an example when they provide abstract arguments. They could invite participants to think deeper by asking “What do you mean?” or “What’s your basis for saying that?” They could also provoke creative thinking by implementing empathy and visioning exercises. They carry the responsibility of seeking common ground and synthesizing the various views put on the table.

Neutrality is a key feature of deliberative participation. Facilitators may tell participants that they have their own views on the issue, but their role is not to defend their personal views but to empower all participants to express their own arguments.

Box 5: Deliberative Facilitation

Effective facilitation is a combination of personal style and commitment in upholding the norms of deliberation. Here are resources that clarify the roles of facilitators in deliberative forums.

1. The podcast series [Facilitating Public Deliberation](#) has nearly 50 episodes discussing the best practices in deliberative forums, with several episodes focusing on the art of facilitating small- and big-group deliberations.
2. Chapter 5 of [Enabling National Initiatives to Take Democracy Beyond Elections](#) identifies the role of facilitators in deliberative forums.

Step 15: Developing Recommendations

“

There should be a law like EJKs but with due process then the public should judge whether they are deserving.

”

— YEEN, A 23-YEAR-OLD ONLINE RETAILER

The second day of deliberations involves coming up with recommendations to address the country’s drug problem. For both the I-ACT forums, the team decided to set up an online poll with the following question to jumpstart the recommendations session: Who are the actors that should play a role in improving our society’s campaign against illegal drugs? The choices were based on the themes that emerged on the first day of the deliberations. The poll results were then presented to the participants, and the breakout rooms were created based on the answers in the poll. The facilitators then probed the participants’ answers and helped them come up with concrete recommendations.

For the Davao group, the team decided to conduct an empathy exercise followed by a visioning exercise (See Step 7). This design intervention was implemented based on the team’s assessment of the results of the first day of deliberations. The full process design for the deliberative forum conducted with the Davao group is in Appendix 2.

Box 6: Video Conferencing Considerations

During the online forums, project team members should be assigned to take charge of the following important tasks: monitoring attendance, recording all the sessions, and setting up the breakout rooms. Further, each person entering the meeting should be verified and the team should be prepared to kick someone out of the meeting should they exhibit inappropriate behavior.

Step 16: Debriefing and Evaluating the Forum

Debriefing and evaluation are critical for all deliberative forums. This applies to both participants and the project team. Participants may be interviewed after the forum to invite their reflections on their experiences and provide feedback to the project team.

On the part of the project team, debriefing and evaluation do not just take place at the end of the forum. Instead, these practices are incorporated throughout the process of designing and implementing the deliberative forum. For example, debriefing and evaluation may occur informally by sharing stories, observations, and sentiments over group chat.

These informal processes provide immediate relief when project team members feel confused about the project or upset when they hear responses from participants that challenge their values. Debriefing and evaluation may also take place in a structured manner. For example, during I-ACT forums, the project team allocated at least an hour after each day of deliberations to evaluate their performance, solicit feedback from others, and unpack their impressions from the forum. Ultimately, the process of debriefing and assessing aims to learn from each other's experiences and document insights informing future deliberative forums.

Step 17: Conducting the Post-Deliberation Interviews

“

There was no talking over one another, everyone listened, everyone asked questions.

”

Post-deliberation interviews may also be an opportunity for the interviewer to ask participants if they have any issues in the conduct of the forum and revisit some unresolved issues from the deliberations. Post-deliberation interviews are vital for deliberative forums on sensitive topics. For example, some participants may share or encounter sensitive stories or arguments which can trigger memories of trauma and cause distress. Interviewers may note these issues and ask participants if they require further support from the project team.

Ideally, the interviewer will be assigned to the same participant in the post-deliberation interviews. Therefore, each interviewer was tasked to contact each of the participants they interviewed for the pre-deliberation interviews to find a common date and time for the post-deliberation interviews. The post-deliberation interviews must be conducted in the four days immediately after the last day of deliberations.

The post-deliberation interviews were conducted with the help of the same online form-generating software used in Step 12. Like the pre-deliberation interview, the software was used to encode the participants' responses efficiently.

During face-to-face deliberative forums, it is ideal for participants to remain in the venue the day after the synchronous deliberations, so that the team may conduct the post-deliberation interviews. Alternatively, the post-deliberation interviews may be done over the phone.

Step 18: Sending the Honorarium to the Participants

“

It is important to note that providing honorarium to the participants is not about paying them for their participation. Rather, it is about recognizing the value of their time and effort.

”

After the deliberative forum, the participants should receive honoraria for their five-day engagement. The project team did not disclose the total amount the participants will receive upon completion of the project. The following is the breakdown of the honorarium (Table 3):

Table 3: Participants’ Honorarium Breakdown

Amount Per Day (PHP)	Total Amount (PHP)	Description
500 per day (for two days)	1,000	For participating in the pre-and post-deliberation interviews
1,500 per day (for three days)	4,500	For participating in the three days of deliberation
300 per day (for three days)	900	Meal allowance for the three-day deliberation
150 per day (for five days)	750	Internet allowance for five days

Only the internet allowance was sent prior to participation. A total of PHP 6,400 was sent to each participant after the post-deliberation interviews. Some participants missed a day of participation due to personal reasons. The appropriate amount was simply deducted honorarium sent to them. It is important to note that providing honorarium to the participants is not about paying them for their participation. Rather, it is about recognizing the value of their time and effort.

Step 19: Concluding the Project

The project officially concludes by closing the loop. After thanking participants for their participation, the project manager needs to delete the private Facebook group used in the forum. Content of the group chat used for debriefing will be downloaded and stored offline before deleting the chat group. Video recordings are also stored offline in a password-protected hard drive. Data security is especially important for deliberative forums on sensitive topics. Further, in all written output, it is standard to use code names for the participants and to omit any personal information that would identify them. If media coverage is part of the deliberative forum's design (e.g., [Deliberative Forum on “Fake News”](#)), the consent of all participants should be obtained beforehand.

Box 7: Optional Raffle Draw

The project team decided to raffle off electric fans after the second day of the synchronous deliberations. After the post-deliberation interviews, the project manager contacted the winners to ask for their complete addresses and contact numbers. The electric fans were purchased online and were directly sent to each raffle winner. This activity allowed both forums, where controversial opinions were shared, to end in a cheerful note.



Evaluating the Output

Here are some questions to consider when evaluating the data from the deliberative forum.

**Recruitment.**

Are participants a representative sample of people affected by the topic of deliberation?

**Remit.**

Is the remit worded clearly? Is the framing not leading or biased?

**Facilitation.**

Did facilitators receive training on how to run a deliberative forum? Were there any situations when some members were dominating the discussions?

**The Learning Phase.**

Did the expert testimonies result in changing the knowledge base of the participants?

**Pathways to Impact.**

Are the participants aware of how their recommendations will be used in the future?

Final Thoughts

Deliberative forums allow citizens to have conversations about contentious topics in a neutral and non-partisan space. It becomes a useful tool especially concerning a polarizing issue such as human rights. Through a guided deliberation, a death penalty supporter can engage with a human rights advocate without putting each other down. Peaceful debates can flourish when political allegiances are placed in the background.

Furthermore, deliberative forums allow citizens from all parts of the political spectrum the opportunity to empathize among each other. Deliberative practices also bridge the gap between ordinary citizens and traditional decision-making bodies. Ordinary citizens can criticize, question, and exchange views with key experts. This a knowledge-building exercise for both groups. Citizens can learn from traditional decision-makers and vice versa. The learning phase also demonstrates the value of conveying authenticity and connectedness to audiences, instead of asserting superiority via expert knowledge.

Moving forward, we should think about ways to scale up these practices of learning, listening, and collective brainstorming — instead of promoting destructive practices of communication. Oftentimes, tensions can be settled when one takes the perspective of the other. While consensus is not the goal of deliberation, the healthier practices of communication are useful in coming up with concrete and actionable recommendations.

Appendix 1: Process Design (Metro Manila and Cebu Forum)

Purpose	Activity
Day 1: Asynchronous via private social media group	
Rapport-building	The project team and participants uploaded selfies to introduce themselves to the group. Three participants did not post selfies, while one concealed his identity by posting a photo with a face mask on.
Learning (~1 hour)	We uploaded five expert testimonies covering different topics: 1. Dr. Jayeel Cornelio of the Ateneo de Manila University provided a critical overview of the drug war's popularity. 2. Atty. Carol Mercado gave a crash course on constitutional rights and on the importance of due process, and highlighted the case of Kian delos Santos. 3. Leni Velasco from DAKILA questioned the politics of war rhetoric and its implications to human rights. 4. Tom Murillo from the Christ's Commission Fellowship shared his "redemption story" from being a drug addict to becoming a lay minister. 5. BLKD, Calix, and Meex discussed the backstory of Kolateral. Participants were also asked to watch the lyric video of Pagsusuma. We asked participants to watch and comment on the video any time throughout the day. We framed this activity as their "homework" to prepare for deliberations.
Day 2: Synchronous via video conferencing	
Expectation setting (~45 minutes)	Day 2 started with introductions. Facilitators explained the purpose of the forum and clarified the rights and obligations of research participants.
Norm Setting (~15 minutes)	Participants set the rules of discussion for the next two days.
Reflecting (~30 minutes)	Participants were given time to reflect on the expert testimonies and share their reactions to the group.
Break (~15 minutes)	All participants received a modest catering allowance.

Diagnosing (~60 minutes)	The bulk of the forum was spent in small-group deliberations. There were three groups, with ten people per group. They were asked to structure their discussions around the following questions: 1. As a Filipino, what are you most proud of when it comes to our society's response to the issue of illegal drugs? 2. As a Filipino, what are you most ashamed of when it comes to our society's response to the issue of illegal drugs? 3. Who are the actors in our society that should play a role in improving our society's campaign against illegal drugs? Phrasing the discussion around questions of pride and shame encouraged participants to consider different facets of the campaign against illegal drugs.
Synthesizing (~15 minutes)	The day concluded with reflections, comments on the conduct of deliberations, and suggestions for the third day of deliberation.
Day 3: Synchronous via video conferencing	
Recap, formation of task groups (~30 minutes)	Day 3 started with a recap of insights from Day 2. Facilitators then organized a poll asking participants to reflect on their discussions and identify an institution they consider to be the most responsible for reforming our society's anti-illegal drugs campaign. The choices are based on the key themes from Day 2. These include: (1) local government/barangay; (2) families; (3) and schools and the church. Task groups were formed based on participants' votes.
Forward-looking (~90 minutes, with 15-minute break)	The discussion in task groups was organized around these questions: 1. Why do you think this institution is responsible for improving our society's campaign against illegal drugs? 2. What values should guide this institution in crafting and implementing responses? 3. What practical reforms can this institution implement? 4. What are the obstacles to implementation?
Synthesizing (~60 minutes)	Task groups report back to the plenary. The plenary was asked to scrutinize each group's recommendations, ask questions, and propose other suggestions. The forum concluded with reflections from several participants.

Appendix 2: Process Design (Davao Forum)

Purpose	Activity
Day 1: Asynchronous via private social media group	
Rapport-building	The project team and participants uploaded selfies to introduce themselves to the group. Nine participants did not post selfies, while two concealed their identities by posting a photo with a face mask on.
Learning (~1 hour)	We uploaded five expert testimonies covering different topics: 1. Dr. Jayeel Cornelio of the Ateneo de Manila University provided a critical overview of the drug war's popularity. 2. Atty. Carol Mercado gave a crash course on constitutional rights and on the importance of due process, and highlighted the case of Kian delos Santos. 3. Father Danny Pilario from the St. Vincent School of Theology talked about the Catholic response to the war on drugs. 4. Tom Murillo from the Christ's Commission Fellowship shared his "redemption story" from being a drug addict to becoming a lay minister. 5. BLKD, Calix, and Meex discussed the backstory of Kolateral. Participants were also asked to watch the lyric video of Pagsusuma. 6. Martina Atienza, a drug war widow, explained how she coped upon the loss of their breadwinner. We asked participants to watch and comment on the video any time throughout the day. We framed this activity as their "homework" to prepare for deliberations.
Day 2: Synchronous via video conferencing	
Expectation setting (~45 minutes)	Day 2 started with introductions. Facilitators explained the purpose of the forum and clarified the rights and obligations of research participants.
Norm setting (~15 minutes)	Participants set the rules of discussion for the next two days.
Reflecting (~30 minutes)	Participants were given time to reflect on the expert testimonies and share their reactions to the group.
Break (~15 minutes)	All participants received a modest catering allowance.

Diagnosing (~60 minutes)	The bulk of the forum was spent in small-group deliberations. There were three groups, with ten people per group. They were asked to structure their discussions around the following questions: 1. As a Filipino, what are you most proud of when it comes to our society's response to the issue of illegal drugs? 2. As a Filipino, what are you most ashamed of when it comes to our society's response to the issue of illegal drugs? 3. Who are the actors in our society that should play a role in improving our society's campaign against illegal drugs? Phrasing the discussion around questions of pride and shame encouraged participants to consider different facets of the campaign against illegal drugs.
Synthesizing (~15 minutes)	The day concluded with reflections, comments on the conduct of deliberations, and suggestions for the third day of deliberation.
Day 3: Synchronous via video conferencing	
Recap, formation of breakout groups (~15 minutes)	Day 3 started with a recap of insights from Day 2. The facilitators discussed the need to revisit the discussion from the day prior on EJKs. The group was then divided into breakout groups to talk about the importance of the threat of killing to the drug war.
Empathy and vision-setting exercises (~30 minutes)	The discussion in the breakout groups was organized around these questions: 1. Is the threat of violence critical to the success of the war on drugs? 2. Empathy Exercise a. Against killings: What can you say to the victims of drug addicts? b. For killings: What can you say to the families left behind by the drug war casualties? 3. Vision-setting Exercise: What in your view is the ideal way to tackle the issue of illegal drugs?
Reporting (~15 minutes)	Breakout groups reported back to the plenary. Each group assigned a reporter to share their group's discussion and other groups were asked to comment/react.
Break (~15 minutes)	All participants received a modest catering allowance.

Forward-looking (~15 minutes)	The participants went back to the breakout groups to talk about their recommendations in improving the anti-illegal drugs campaign. The discussion in the breakout groups was organized around these questions: 1. What are your recommendations in order to achieve this ideal campaign? 2. What do you think are the obstacles to achieving this?
Synthesizing (~45 minutes)	Task groups reported back to the plenary. The plenary was asked to scrutinize each group's recommendations, ask questions, and propose other suggestions. The forum concluded with reflections from several participants.

Acknowledgments

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