

Collaboration Along the Afghanistan-Pakistan Border

The 2,430km border between Afghanistan and Pakistan is mountainous, porous, and fraught with conflict. It is characterized by the illegal trafficking of goods, drugs, and persons. Dialogue and collaboration – on topics such as customs procedures, counter narcotics operations, and facilitation of trade - are nearly non-existent, with relevant actors unwilling to set foot in their neighbor's country. Suspicions are high and trust is low.

In this context, the Collective Leadership Institute (CLI) was asked by the [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime \(UNODC\)](#) to facilitate an [Art of Stakeholder Collaboration](#) workshop focused on building trust between customs officials, anti-narcotics police, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs representatives from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Instead of running another technical training, UNODC recognized the value of having a training focused on the human dimensions of change. Ten public sector participants from Afghanistan and 11 from Pakistan attended the 4-day training in May 2018 in Cambodia (a neutral location). In a predominantly male sector, there was only one female participant. With no common language, translation and interpretation were integrated throughout.

Based on a pre-workshop survey, the [training was tailored](#) to participants' strengths and needs. Like all of CLI's trainings, it combined conceptual inputs, practical application in teams, and personal learning and development. The core methodology was based on CLI's [Dialogical Change Model \(DCM\)](#), which has been applied for more than a dozen years in diverse sustainable development initiatives around the world. The DCM helps change agents design and implement successful stakeholder engagement, dialogue, and collaboration processes in complex and challenging contexts.

During our workshop, the importance of this kind of collaboration was made all too clear when multiple terrorist attacks occurred on both sides of the border. Among those killed in one attack was a participant's close border guard friend. The risks of working in security were very present within the group, as were sympathy and solidarity. Building on this trust, cross-border teams developed concrete stakeholder engagement initiatives on:

- (1) sharing of customs data,
- (2) mitigating smuggling of narcotics, and
- (3) promoting railway trade and travel,

that laid a foundation for onward collaboration.

In addition to warm remarks of gratitude to participants, interpreters, and facilitators in our closing circle, participant feedback demonstrated that our goals of building trust and developing a common language for dialogue and collaboration had been achieved. One hundred percent of participants said the workshop would "make a difference" in work with their stakeholders and 100% said they would recommend the workshop to colleagues and partners. When asked why, participants offered responses like:

#SDG: 
(<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>)



- “The workshop was very helpful and taught us many frameworks to initiate and execute meaningful dialogue.”
- “[The workshop was] helpful for resolving complex issues.”
- “My colleagues and partners need to know the art of collective leadership to better do their jobs.”

Given the concrete results and strong encouragement from participants, UNODC has decided to sponsor a second training for the same group on [The Art of Leading Collectively](#) in Siem Reap, Cambodia from 15-17 August. The training will focus on sustainability transformation through collective leadership, which is the capacity of a collective to catalyse change for the common good. Working with the [Collective Leadership Compass](#), the goal is to invigorate “patterns of aliveness” at the personal, team, and systems levels, strongly based in our human capacity to engage in dialogue and transform differences into progress.

CLI will run an “open course” on collective leadership, meaning that individuals and teams may sign up with their cases and projects, in [Siem Reap from 10-13 October](#) again. Join us with your team to invigorate your collaboration system!



CLI Contacts:

Sabine Heckmann (sabine.heckmann@collectiveleadership.com)

Dominic Stucker (dominic.stucker@collectiveleadership.com)