

# Running a Continuing Indaba Event

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This is a standalone event for a gathered group of people coming to a neutral venue such as a conference centre or a retreat house. It may have specific outcome in mind, for example the Primates' meeting of 2011 sought to define what it was to be a Primate in the Anglican Communion, and the Anglican Women's Empowerment (AWE) Indaba, to equip women as agents of transformation. It could be a meeting of House of Bishops or a youth conference.

## What is it that is different about an Indaba based conference?

Conferences often feature guest speakers accompanied by small groups meeting for discussion. Conversations may continue through meals and in social contexts – such as evening drinks. It is often the times for discussion and networking that are most valuable.

An Indaba based conference places mutual listening and relationship building to the fore. The relationships between the delegates are the greatest priority and they are the deepest resource.

Key to an Indaba conference is an understanding that:

- the concerns of the participants are best articulated by the participants
- the resources for mission are held within those meeting
- future action is strengthened by long term relationships formed through the Indaba experience.

## Outcomes

The outcomes of conferences are hard to access. The influence of visionary speakers can be very powerful, but the experience of the Continuing Indaba programme is that Indaba shaped conferences energise all for mission, because they allow the framing of the agenda to be in the hands of the participants; the resources are found from within the team and the outcomes are determined by those who will have responsibility for action, in partnership with those on a common journey.

## Designing a Continuing Indaba conference

The principles of Continuing Indaba need to be clearly understood and consistently put into practice. The participants need to journey together, pray and worship together, read the scriptures together and speak and listen honestly. Design of the process should to reflect all these aspects.

## Communication prior to meeting

The invitations should indicate that this will be a Continuing Indaba event. Participants need to be clear what they are coming to: this is especially significant if this is a regular event such as a diocesan clergy conference which has typically featured speakers and discussion groups. The convenor – which in some cases can be an organising committee – needs to be clear on the purpose of the Indaba and encourage confidence in the event.

## The venue

The venue needs to be appropriate for the event. It needs to have space for plenary, for worship, and for small group meetings. It should be a neutral venue for all those coming.

## The welcome

A host needs to welcome the participants and set the agenda for the event. This is best done by the convenor and the lead facilitator together.

## Practicalities

There should to be a clearly identified person who is responsible for all the practical arrangements.

## Commitment

Continuing Indaba, in any form, requires commitment to the whole journey. It is difficult to form relationships and develop the space to have honest conversation if people come and go. In an Indaba conference, commitment is to being present for the whole time and not to slip away to take a phone call or reply to an email.

Commitment is not only to be in formal sessions together but also to relaxation time, building relationships.

## The life of a group

The life of the group must begin with the development of relationships. There is a need to bring the home context into the space occupied by the group: this can be done by the participants bringing objects or pictures explained and shared with the group. The life of the group should include:

- time, so that people can develop relationships.
- worshipping together
- time to study the Scriptures together – for resources see the worship and bible study guides.
- an experience that is new to all. It can be an activity or a visit and it is best if it is slightly uncomfortable for all. It should be a requirement, not an optional time where some can slip away to 'do their emails' or phone home.
- time for communication with home, clearly defined and stuck to by all.
- down time for those who need to process thoughts on their own.

The group needs to establish a life together where all can be heard equally. If one voice becomes dominant then the facilitators will need to challenge this, so that all voices can be listened to. Once relationships are established, framing questions can be introduced and considered by the group.

## Recording

It may be possible to record conversation through the use of flip charts etc. However, serious reporting back includes reporting the energy of the group. There may be three things the group wanted to say, but one of those may have been observably more important to them than another. A skilled recorder will be able to convey deeper meaning. The reporter will need to check with the group that their record is faithful.

## **Action**

There is an expectation that the result of the Indaba will be action because the participants will have developed the action plan.

## **Responsibility**

The responsibility for the out working of the result of the Indaba will be with the participants and convenor in partnership.