Call for concept notes - Facilitating Dialogue Events

LACLEARN invites local, regional, and international organizations to submit proposals aimed at facilitating dialogue events; these may be either virtual or in-person as appropriate. These dialogues are intended to capitalize on existing research, including LACLEARN-funded research initiatives, and explore the impacts of "tough-on-crime" (*mano dura*) policies in Latin America (with a special focus on Central America). LACLEARN seeks to amplify various perspectives - local voices and grassroots perceptions, regional experiences, and international perspectives – through these discussions and thereby promote democratic civic spaces in the region.

While this grant opportunity will contribute to a greater understanding of *the implications of Mano Dura policies for democracy, human rights, inclusion, and governance* (DRG), it should also consider the following themes as appropriate.

Themes for Dialogue Events

- **Mano Dura Predictors:** An examination of failed security policies or strategies that laid fertile ground for extreme measures.
- **Narratives on Mano Dura Approaches:** Analyzing the communication strategies and effects on public perceptions related to Mano Dura policies.
- **Alternatives Policies to Mano Dura Approaches:** Identifying and promoting alternative, evidence-based approaches and/or security policies that respond to the current needs in the region.

Other grant considerations:
Cross-cutting issues for proposed dialogues may include the trajectories of Mano Dura policies, their gendered effects, social costs (economic, well-being, etc.), and overall impact on democratic resilience.

The specific agenda for the dialogue events and intended audience (regional and international) would be co-created upon award.

The grantee will be expected to collaborate closely with other LACLEARN grantees currently engaged in focused research on tough-on-crime policies.

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to propose a strong mix of speakers and panel participants which highlight expertise on the subject while also offering opportunities to local or regional voices who may have fewer platforms to have their perspectives heard.

Resulting Illustrative Products May Include:

- *Event Summaries*: Detailed reports from each dialogue event, encapsulating key discussions, diverse viewpoints, and notable insights on the impacts and implications of Mano Dura policies.

- *Stakeholder Engagement Report*: Documentation of the engagement and contributions of various stakeholders (civil society, media, international and local experts) in the dialogue events, reflecting the multiplicity of perspectives on the issue.
- *Best Practices for Dialogue Infographics*: A guide or framework developed from the events, outlining effective practices for facilitating dialogue on sensitive policy issues such as Mano Dura.

Proposals should present an implementation and communication strategy that accounts for challenging political environments; it should also describe processes for participants selection, outreach, and facilitation strategies that foster trust and consensus building among participants. Conflict sensitivity and do no harm approaches are highly desirable.

Analytical Priorities for Dialogues:

- Capacity to exercise strategic convening power for dialogues.
- Conceptualizing the impact of Mano Dura beyond an exclusive focus on the security implications/results, centering analysis on the effects for DRG issues
- Embedding local and regional perceptions and narratives stemming from complementary research inputs.
- Highlighting evidence-informed policy or pragmatic alternatives to Mano Dura policies.

About LACLEARN

The LACLEARN Grants Under Contract (GUC) component is intended to support LACLEARN's objectives with complementary work in the LAC region. The grants funded through this program will contribute to the achievement of LACLEARN's programmatic objectives:

1. Provide support for rapid response to crisis situations, including short-term democracy, human rights, and governance (DRG) programming through local organizations to promote inclusion, participation, citizen-responsive approaches, and transparency/accountability during the transition phase.
2. Pilot innovative DRG technical approaches, implement research, disseminate DRG learnings, support democracy, human rights, and good governance, or other learning and analysis objectives.

Additional information regarding LACLEARN can be accessed here:
https://developmentpi.com/news/laclearn-fy24-annual-program-statement-for-grants-under-contract

Background

In recent years, Central America has seen a resurgence of "tough-on-crime" policies, characterized by mass incarceration, extended states of exception, and heavy reliance on military forces for public security. Notably, in El Salvador, the government has aggressively advanced pro-Mano Dura narratives, gaining significant public support despite evidence suggesting that such policies may exacerbate conflict dynamics, undermine the rule of law, and impede human rights. This trend, exemplified by the so-called "Bukele model," is gaining traction across the region.

These policies, while sometimes effective in the short term, have historically shown limited long-term success in addressing crime and violence. They pose significant challenges to democratic stability, including the suppression of civil society and media, erosion of interpersonal trust, and centralization of power in the executive branch. The popularity of tough-on-crime narratives, often irrespective of their long-term effectiveness, underscores a need for comprehensive research to understand and potentially mitigate their adverse effects on democracy, human rights, and governance.

In response to the growing traction of Mano Dura policies in Central America, LACLEARN is undertaking a comprehensive approach to analyze and understand the broader implications of these security strategies. This initiative aims to scrutinize the effects of such policies on democracy, human rights, and governance. Through this activity, LACLEARN seeks not only to deepen the understanding of Mano Dura narratives among governments and citizens but also to explore alternative security policies. A significant aspect of this effort involves identifying practical strategies to mitigate the potential negative consequences of these policies on the rule of law and human rights. To achieve this, LACLEARN is amplifying ongoing research, facilitating policy analysis, and creating opportunities for dialogue by integrating diverse perspectives and forming partnerships with regional organizations.

Available Funds
Subject to the availability of funds, the total level of funding available for awards under this call for concept notes is **up to $100,000**. Each grant should span no more than four (4) months in duration. Concept note submission is voluntary and LACLEARN will not reimburse applicants for expenses incurred during concept note development.

If your organization is interested in submitting a concept note, please send to lacgrants@developmentpi.com.

DEADLINE: May 24, 2024