



network for
CONFLICT PREVENTION
& PEACEBUILDING

DDG DANISH
DEMINEING
GROUP

DRC DANISH
REFUGEE
COUNCIL

Conflict Analysis Guidelines



About the Network

The Network for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (NCPBP) was established in April 2018 joining an international chorus of actors advocating for addressing violent conflicts through conflict prevention and peacebuilding. It was established by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Danmission, CARE, Denmark, Oxfam IBIS, Danish Center for Conflict Resolution (CfK), and the Council for International Conflict Resolution (RIKO).

The Network is aimed at Danish actors, primarily NGOs, but also public and private stakeholders, invested in humanitarian and development projects in the Global South. Its key purpose is to generate and share practical knowledge on peacebuilding and conflict preventive programming and facilitate capacity building among Danish actors. The Network intends to share and build best practices from actors engaged in conflict-affected societies, be that in a thematic, strategic or programmatic manner. Actors engaged in work relevant to the Network have therefore been invited to join the Network since its inception. Any actor or organisation in Denmark, engaged in conflict-affected societies and that wishes to strengthen its conflict prevention and/or peacebuilding capabilities is encouraged to join the Network.

The Network is coordinated by the Coordination Group which currently consists of representatives from Danish Refugee Council (DRC), Danmission, Center for Conflict Resolution (CfK), Conducive Space for Peace (CSP), Oxfam IBIS and The Council for International Conflict Resolution (RIKO).

About DRC/DDG

DRC – The Danish Refugee Council – is a leading, international humanitarian displacement organisation, supporting refugees and internally displaced persons during displacement, in exile, upon return, or when settling and integrating in a new place. DRC provides protection and life-saving humanitarian assistance. DRC supports displaced persons in becoming self-reliant and included into hosting societies – and works with communities, civil society and responsible authorities to promote protection of rights and peaceful coexistence. Founded in Denmark in 1956, DRC currently has 9,000 staff and 7,500 volunteers, with programmes in more than 30 countries worldwide.

Founded in 1997, the Danish Demining Group (DDG) is a specialist unit within DRC. DDG aims to protect communities by reducing weapons-related risks, and through efforts to reduce armed violence. DDG works with conflict management, security governance, weapons and ammunition management and mine action. DDG takes a community-led approach to its work, involving local stakeholders and duty-bearers, as well as national authorities and parties where this is appropriate. This approach lends itself to working effectively in fragile and insecure contexts. DDG has programmes in more than 20 countries worldwide.

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Glossary

Conflict: A normal part of human interaction and that is not necessarily negative. Conflict occurs when two or more parties believe that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes or take action that damages other parties' ability to pursue their interests. Conflict is an inherent part of any change process and is therefore a normal part of development, especially in contexts where development requires changing oppressive power structures and addressing injustice. However, conflict becomes destructive when parties no longer seek to attain their goals peacefully, but resort to violence in one form or another. Violent conflicts are not inevitable: factors take time to take root and there is rarely a single cause. Rather, they arise from a complex set of interconnected issues and dynamics, and run through various stages of escalation and de-escalation in a non-linear fashion. It is violent conflict (latent and manifest) which is the focus for conflict analyses, in order to enable action that 'does no harm' and when possible, contributes to mitigating destructive conflict and building peaceful societies.

Conflict Analysis: The systematic study of the context (often called profile), causes, actors and dynamics of conflict. Conflict analysis focuses on the relationships between actors/ various groups of people. It aims to understand what causes division between groups leading to violence and also looks at what connects different groups and enables them to co-exist peacefully, or at least manage the risk of further violent conflict.

Conflict Sensitivity: The ability of an organisation to:

1. Understand the context in which it operates;
2. Understand the interaction between the organisation's intervention and the context;
3. Act upon the understanding of this interaction in order to avoid negative impacts and maximise positive impacts on conflict and peace.

A commitment to conflict sensitivity is based on the recognition that aid provided in a conflict affected context is not neutral. Aid and how it is administered can either worsen tensions or promote peace in the midst of conflicted communities.

Conflict Sensitivity Assessment: Analysing the interaction between the conflict context and an intervention. The conflict sensitivity assessment builds on the conflict analysis by looking at if the intervention is having a positive or negative impact on the conflict. Further, the assessment identifies ways to avoid an intervention having a negative impact and examines avenues for any positive impact to be exploited.

Context Analysis: An attempt to understand the broader situation, including all economic, social and political factors. A given conflict influences and is influenced by the broader context in which it takes place, but the conflict will have its own important dynamics that should be understood and deserve specific focus and analysis.

CONFLICT ANALYSIS GUIDELINES

‘Do No Harm’: One of several tools for the application of conflict sensitivity to aid policies and programmes. The term ‘do no harm’ is widely used and abused in the aid field. It is often used in a broader sense than originally intended to cover a wide range of issues not related to conflict. The ‘Do No Harm’ framework helps organisations to understand the complex relationships among groups in their context of operation, using Dividers and Connectors (explained below) as an analytical method; helps organisations understand how its programmes and policies will interact with the specificities of its operational context; and gives practitioners a starting place for adapting their interventions to minimise negative impacts of programming and operations and build upon their positive impacts.

Connector: Things that bring people together despite their differences. Connectors decrease suspicion, mistrust and inequality in a society.

Divider: Things that increase tension, division or capacities for violent conflict between groups of people. Dividers increase suspicion, mistrust or inequality in a society.

Local Peace Actors: Local institutions, organisations and individuals who have the legitimacy and capacity to contribute to conflict prevention and management and strengthen inter-group connections.

Resilience to conflict: The mechanisms, capacities, processes, structures, assets and strategies that allow individuals, communities and wider societies to prevent and manage conflict. This also includes a community's capability to resist the influence of actors who seek to sow or exacerbate division between groups of people in a context (spoilors).

Theory of Change describes how and why an organisation aims to create a transformation in a specific context. It is the product of a participatory process which brings together staff, partners and other relevant actors and encourages them to think critically about a specific context, what changes are needed and how these are to be achieved.

Zone of Influence: The area(s) impacted by an organisation or activity, including political, economic, security or other relationships through which an organisation has the ability to affect the decisions or activities of individuals or organisations. Different types of activities have different zones of influence. For example, the zone of influence with respect to procurement or recruitment may be broader than the zone of influence in relation to target communities for direct material assistance.

1. Introduction

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and its specialised business unit, The Danish Demining Group (DDG) have conducted conflict analysis through its programmes in various contexts over time, but there is no clear understanding of the role of conflict analysis in DRC's programmatic work.¹ The lack of streamlined protocol for the analyses has impacted the quality, and the ways the analyses are used varies significantly. A key short-coming often noted by DRC staff is that conflict analyses are treated as stand-alone activities which, once completed, are not used systematically.² Programme staff have stressed the need for better guidance and technical support both in the design and implementation of conflict analysis to ensure it is properly used in DRC programming, external stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue work.³ Also, it is crucial that conflict analysis be worked into programme cycle management procedures and that it is regularly undertaken so as to inform operational adaptation as situations change.

These guidelines provide guidance on how to carry out conflict analysis and make use of it for programming. While the guidelines were developed for DRC programme staff, they were produced in the context of the Danish Network for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding and draw on Network members' inputs. The guidelines aim to provide easy to use, relevant guidance for NGOs, international organisations and partners, who can adapt the guidelines to fit their organisational processes and needs. The document explains why and when conflict analysis is important for a humanitarian or development NGO and shows how conflict analysis can be carried out and used. The document aims to achieve this by:

1. Explaining the importance of conflict analysis for programming and external stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue work (Chapter 1).
2. Clarifying what conflict analysis entails, when and where it is relevant and how to deal with sensitivities related to conducting conflict analysis. It also outlines the guiding principles in carrying out conflict analysis (Chapter 2).
3. Summarising the knowledge conflict analyses are intended to generate, how and by who the necessary information should be gathered and analysed, and a detailed step-by-step description of a conflict analysis process (Chapter 3).
4. Providing guidance on how to use conflict analysis to design and implement relevant and conflict sensitive programmes (Chapter 4).

These guidelines draw extensively on DRC's internal tools, international best practice and common methods for conflict analysis,⁴ as well as DRC and other Network members' experiences of conducting and using conflict analysis.

1.1. Why is conflict analysis important?

Responding to violent conflict is at the heart of international humanitarian response, as NGOs and agencies are committed to ensure their work is conflict sensitive and 'does no harm' and because the International Community recognises the need to: "*stop just dealing with the consequences of displacement, and seriously start tackling its root causes*".⁵

The causes of contemporary conflicts and the displacement situations in which humanitarian organisations operate are multi-faceted, context-specific and require different strategic responses by communities, states, and international stakeholders including humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors. It is critical that action and dialogue among these actors become more nuanced, contextually relevant and evidence based in order to address root causes and achieve durable solutions for displaced persons and affected populations. NGOs working in conflict-affected communities around the world need conflict analysis for three main purposes:

1. To **inform current and future project design**. Conflict analysis should contribute to ensuring that programming is relevant to addressing the needs and challenges in the specific areas your organisation works in. It should do this by generating insights and recommendations upon which intervention strategies can be based and provide directly useful input to the development and review of programmatic Theories of Change.
2. To enable your organisation to be **conflict sensitive** (see glossary). Only by understanding a conflict context can we begin to understand how our interventions interact with that

context and act upon that understanding to ensure that risks of negative impact are mitigated and opportunities to contribute to peace are maximised. Conflict analysis is not a 'nice to have', but a 'must have' when engaging in all conflict affected or conflict prone settings.

3. To inform your organisation's **external stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue**. A conflict analysis provides a foundational understanding of why a given conflict occurred or may occur if certain preventive measures are not put in place. It is a tool for sensitising and raising awareness among internal and external stakeholders and is an important basis for efforts to influence duty bearers and donor policies and practices.

Conflict analyses have to meet two main criteria:

- Be '*fit for purpose*' meaning that the outputs of conflict analysis processes are as directly and practically useful as possible, within existing time and resource constraints;
- Be '*good enough*', meaning that while the conflict analyses may be non-comprehensive they provide reliable insights, and generate actionable and practical recommendations for programming and advocacy.

2. About Conflict Analysis

This Chapter describes what conflict analysis is, when it is relevant, at which levels it can be conducted, what the outputs should be, and which principles should guide it.

2.1. What is conflict analysis and when is it relevant?

Conflict analysis is the systematic study of the causes, actors and dynamics of conflict within a particular geographical context. It focuses on the relationships between actors and the obstacles and opportunities for these to solve differences in a peaceful and mutually acceptable manner. It aims to understand what causes division between groups leading to violence, as well as the sources and drivers of communities' resilience to conflict. In other words, conflict analysis explores both what divides different groups and how conflict escalates and deescalates, as well as what connects them and enables actors to prevent, manage and reduce violence. Conflict analysis must incorporate gender and other intersectional elements (age, ethnicity, etc), considering dynamics in conflict-affected communities as well as structural causes of gender inequality.

Conflict analysis is relevant in most contexts where humanitarian NGOs and agencies operate, including in situations of relative calm with latent or low-scale conflict, such as refugee camps in generally peaceful societies (eg. Tanzania or Greece) or in contexts of outright war such as South Sudan and Syria. Conflict analysis is particularly important when your organisation enters a new context or when there are

significant changes to that context. Contextual changes that do not immediately appear to relate to conflict may still be very relevant if they affect particular groups or power dynamics between groups, which in turn could contribute to rising tensions and/or increasing risks of (violent) conflict. This can be especially true for women and young people, highlighting the importance of integrating gender and other intersectional elements (age, ethnicity, etc) into the analysis. Scenario development, which can be part of a conflict analysis (cf. Chapter 3.1.), can be a useful tool when planning in contexts where important events are forthcoming. For example, scenario development can be useful before an anticipated drought, refugee return process or before significant political or economic events such as elections, devolution processes or large-scale economic development projects.

A conflict analysis should be updated on a regular basis with the involvement of key staff, partners and local stakeholders, in order to ensure that the analysis remains relevant. While this can be done in other forms than extensive written reports, it is important that the updated information be logged and shared with the relevant internal and external stakeholders (depending on the analysis' objective), so that your organisation can maintain its understanding of the evolving context and its programmes' impact on the context. Where staff technical capacity and internet access allows, online conflict analysis tools can be utilised⁶, but this is no replacement for participatory exercises like workshops involving staff, partners and relevant local experts, as these ensure that those who need the information also own

and internalise it. It is a good idea to schedule conflict analysis updates to feed into design, redesign, mid and end-term evaluation periods of programme cycles so that they are done in a timely manner.

2.2. What level should a conflict analysis focus on?

Conflict analysis can be carried out at various levels (local, sub-national, national, regional, global) and it is always important to consider the connections between these different levels, as for example social, political and economic interests of neighbouring countries can be crucial factors driving violent conflict in a local area. Conflict analysis should further analyse intersecting power dynamics, including in relation to gender, age, class, and race. However, it is important to avoid an excessively broad scope of analysis, otherwise it may not be useful for your organisation's programme and external stakeholder engagement purposes. It is important to be aware that local conflict issues and dynamics may not be mere reflections of those at national or regional level, although these generally will play an important part. Similarly, it is important to acknowledge that conflicts within countries can have very important external dimensions, which need to be understood.

It may be most useful to focus conflict analysis on the specific areas that your organisation targets. This is the main 'zone of influence', where activities and operational set up impact (positively or negatively) on local conflict dynamics, and where conflict analysis can help make sure that interventions are as relevant to the local conditions as possible.

2.3. What are the outputs of a conflict analysis process?

When NGOs and agencies do conflict analysis it often leads to the production of long and detailed reports written in a semi-academic style in English. While this may be useful for capturing complexity and detail, it may prove inappropriate for the purpose of informing conflict sensitive programming and providing timely input to your organisation's external stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue efforts. A fundamental challenge is that many intended internal and external audiences rarely read the reports due to lack of time caused by high workloads, lack of prioritisation of quality programming driven by solid contextual analyses, and difficulty to link the report (often produced by either an external consultant or an in-house specialist) to the process of programme design. As a result, conflict analysis reports are often under-utilised and come to be seen as final outputs in themselves, rather than as critical tools to achieving strategic programme objectives.

The outputs from a conflict analysis process should be fit for the specific purpose envisaged by the relevant programme team. It should be as easily and directly useable as possible for programming or/and external stakeholder engagement purposes by the programme team. This aim for the analyses' utility will impact the language, style, structure and format of the outputs. An in-depth multi-levelled conflict analysis report which seeks to capture all the different interrelated factors contributing to conflict may not always be the most useful output, especially if it is unlikely to be read and understood by primary stakeholders like programme and field teams. A shorter more narrowly focused report, a summary of key conflict issues and/or a combination of presentations, workshops or other outputs may be more useful for ensuring shared

understanding of local conflict dynamics among programme teams and other relevant stakeholders (partners, donors etc.).

2.4. When is conflict analysis ‘good enough’?

Donors, implementing agencies and practitioners are confronted with time and resource constraints, especially when they operate in fast-evolving emergency and fragile contexts with high propensity for conflict. It is therefore useful to consider and ask: how can your organisation develop quick and affordable yet credible and reliable analyses of a given conflict setting/context so that your programmes and operations are well-informed, evidence-driven and conflict sensitive?

In many ways, the answer will depend on the purpose of the analysis. However, it is generally agreed that if the organisation does not intend to address conflict factors directly, and will use the analysis to implement humanitarian or development programmes in a conflict context, a ‘good enough’ conflict analysis, considering

Dividers and Connectors, would suffice. If a project seeks to address root causes of conflict and the aim is to conduct programming that will incorporate peacebuilding objectives, a more comprehensive conflict analysis will be necessary.

2.5. Sensitivities and Guiding Principles

Conflict analysis requires a great deal of care and sensitivity due to the highly political nature of the information gathered and the often contested interpretation of events between different groups. It can sometimes be politically insensitive to use the term ‘conflict analysis’ and to raise issues of violent conflict when dealing with governments and other agencies. One way to get ahead of this issue may be to avoid the word ‘conflict’ altogether, and instead rename the analysis as ‘context analysis’ or ‘context sensitivity’, ‘Do No Harm’, or a study on ‘community relations’, especially in a localized study that is effectively focused on learning about group or ‘community’ relations.

Box 1: Guiding principles for conflict analysis that should inform conflict analysis approaches and methods

1. **Defined purpose:** Given the sensitive nature of conflict analysis, the specific purpose (and the resulting information needs) must be clearly defined and communicated at the onset. Working based on a clearly defined purpose will aid decision-making at the analysis design phase, including possible risk-mitigation measures in relation to management of sensitive data.
2. **Demystification and adding nuance:** A key principle for good analysis should be a commitment to demystify commonly held stereotypes and misperceptions, while adding nuance to often over-simplistic and problematic conflict narratives. This means challenging mainstream narratives, defying preconceived ideas and, above all, rejecting simplifications.
3. **'Do No Harm':** Conducting a conflict analysis is an intervention in itself. Research is not a neutral activity and analysis of causes and drivers of conflict involves highly contested issues. It is critical to be conflict sensitive and be guided by the 'Do No Harm' principle at all times.
4. **Participatory and process-oriented:** Participation of local actors in the preparation, implementation and application of conflict analysis is central to ensuring high quality and ownership. Local actors' knowledge is a key source of data and their perceptions, experiences and ideas are essential to generating good analysis and sustainable programmatic interventions. External conflict analysts may not have as detailed knowledge and information as local actors but can guide, facilitate and strengthen the analysis process through questions and observations, remaining observant to the visible and hidden power dynamics in the context. For those actions seeking to contribute more directly to peacebuilding, participatory conflict analysis can be an important starting point in the process of engaging community stakeholders and allows jointly charting the peacebuilding efforts going forward.
5. **Coaching and mentoring staff:** Where your organisation has a strong operational presence, your local field staff play a central role in data collection and analysis (see Chapter 3.2). Because they will often be the ones to use the conflict analysis, field staff should be involved in the conflict analysis process from the start and feel ownership over findings, analysis and recommendations. The conflict analysis process should be an empowering exercise for field staff and the lead conflict analyst should seek to provide coaching and mentoring at all stages.
6. **Multi-perspectives:** A good analysis will provide multiple perspectives from the different actors in a conflict, recognising the importance of both subjective views and perceptions in how conflicts are framed. Because of the risk of bias, data collection and analysis should be based on information from a full range of actors in the geographic area of research (and beyond, ensuring links between the local level and national/regional levels, as needed).
7. **Gender and Diversity Analysis:** A gender and diversity perspective should be integrated in the conflict analysis process, from design, to data collection and analysis. This includes being aware of who was involved in planning and executing the analysis, determining potential ways to access gender-sensitive information and using gender-sensitive questions that can reveal different roles, capacities and vulnerabilities of men and women in conflict (see Chapter 3.1).
8. **Applied programmatic and operational recommendations:** Conflict analysis should inform programme development and review so that your organisation's engagement in a context is relevant, effective, sustainable and conflict sensitive, and so that it provides concrete benefits to local communities. Once the analysis is compiled, presented, and approved, sufficient time and resources should be allocated to adapt interventions to fit the recommendations of the analysis (see Chapter 4). When a conflict analysis is carried out which engages local actors, the results should be shared with them and the outputs of the analysis must be put to good use, in order to provide concrete benefits to local communities.
9. **Ongoing and regularly updated:** Conflict analysis should not be a one-time exercise to be completed during the programme development phase and then forgotten. Rather, the understanding of the conflict should evolve over time, and the documented analysis should be updated regularly as an integral part of programme work (Chapter 4.2).
10. **Joint analysis with other actors:** Better understanding of conflicts and better responses come from joint thinking and planning among those from different fields (local, national and international staff, technical experts from different sectoral fields, researchers, programme and support staff, etc.). This also encourages coherent and coordinated responses.

3. How to do conflict analysis?

This Chapter provides an overview of the key elements of a conflict analysis, including its context, causes, actors and dynamics. The Chapter advises on who should be involved in the process and provides step-by-step guidance on carrying out a conflict analysis.

3.1. What do we need to know?⁸

A conflict analysis should help your organisation understand the causes and impacts of conflict between groups in a specific area, how your organisation can avoid negatively impacting on conflicts and what your organisation may

be able to do to contribute to the management and transformation of destructive conflicts. To ensure such an understanding it is important to analyse **how** conflict manifests, **why** there is conflict, **who** is involved and affected, **what** perspectives and resources drive or enable their behaviour, and **where** and **when** conflict is taking place or is likely to occur. The key elements a conflict analysis should cover include Causes, Context (or profile), Actors and Dynamics (see illustration).

History and contextual factors

To understand a conflict, it is important to analyse the history and contextual factors that have shaped it. This is sometimes referred to as the conflict 'profile'. Establishing a good overview of intergroup relations in the context and understanding how these have changed over time is essential to the process. Conflicts go through different stages and vary in intensity over time. Conflicts may not always be visible or actively violent but that does not necessarily mean that they are not important. Conflicts that are not active or overtly visible must be still addressed in order to prevent an escalation to a point where they cause serious harm to communities and lead to forced displacement. Both violent conflict and stable peace are complex social phenomena. While there are some common patterns it is essential to acknowledge that each conflict context is unique and must be understood independently or else the response will not be relevant. It is equally important to understand why violent conflict emerged, why there have been periods of peace and how conflict has been managed and violence prevented.

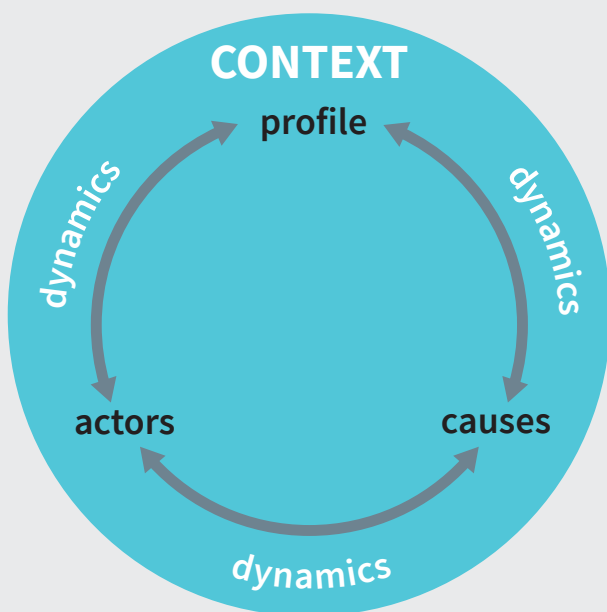


Image 1: Conflict analysis components

Source: International Alert et al. (2004).

To understand why there is conflict in an area, it is important to recognise that most conflicts are multi-dimensional and highly complex. Formal and informal political, economic, social, cultural, environmental and security institutions and structures will need to be identified and analysed as they relate to both conflict and peace.

Contextual factors that will often be important to consider include the following:

- The **relationship between conflict and displacement in and out of the context**. This will include what caused displacement of what groups at what times and how displacement has impacted on inter-groups relationships over time.
- The **impact of conflict and violence** at various levels from the individual to community and national level. It will be particularly important to develop a good understanding of what life is like for different groups of people in the context as this can help informed targeting.
- What are the **methods used in the conflict?** (e.g. exclusion, weakening, intimidation, violence, invitation to dialogue etc.). What are the *types of violence* used and the *targets of violence*?
- The **geographic aspects of the conflict** – including the degree to which different areas have been directly or indirectly affected by violence and if there are areas where communities have been resilient to conflict (so called ‘islands of peace’) and what makes those ‘islands’ possible.

Causes of conflict and peace

Understanding why there is conflict or why communities are resilient to conflict in a particular context is essential to identifying relevant programmatic responses and whether these will focus on working on or in conflict. This involves identifying what it is that divides groups of people, as well as what it is that unites them and makes them resilient to conflict.

Conflicts are multi-dimensional phenomena and should be understood as the result of complex interactions between various factors and actors. It is important to avoid simplistic political and security-based understandings of conflict and be open to the potential importance of a broader set of issues. One way to do this is by mapping out the causes and consequences of violent conflict along thematic dimensions, such as political, governance, economic, security, environmental, gender, social, religious and cultural etc. These categories can be grouped and named in whatever way is most appropriate in the context.

There are different layers of conflict causes. **Structural causes** of conflict are the *pervasive factors that have become built into the policies, structures and fabric of a society and may create the pre-conditions for violent conflict*. Some examples of structural causes include illegitimate governments, poor governance, narratives of clan superiority, competition for resources, lack of equal economic and social opportunities, culture of violence etc. **Proximate causes** are the *factors contributing to a climate conducive to violent conflict or its further escalation, sometimes apparently symptomatic of a deeper problem*. Some examples of proximate causes include an uncontrolled security sector, availability of firearms, human rights abuses, drug abuse, the destabilising role of neighbouring countries, war economy, refugee flows, massive population movements etc. The effects of climate change (including water shortage, food insecurity and more frequent natural disasters) should also be taken into consideration as they may compound the factors that drive violent conflict.⁹ Triggers are single events that may escalate or trigger violent conflict. Some examples of triggers include food cuts in a refugee or displaced persons’ camp; minor disputes between children from different communities that escalate intergroup tensions; failure to make reparation payments between clans; etc.).

The concepts of **Dividers** and **Connectors** are very useful for conflict analysis as they are easy to understand and use in participatory conflict analysis processes and are central concepts in conflict sensitivity analysis (see glossary for definition). The concepts of Dividers and Connectors help identify both causes of conflict as well as sources of resilience to conflict.

Dividers and Connectors are context specific and can change over time. They can relate to the big issues that an analysis of ‘structural’ and ‘proximate’ causes would also identify, and they can be very specific day-to-day issues that divide or connect individuals across conflict lines, such as derogative language (Divider) or a local shop or community centre that helps maintain interaction between people from different groups (Connector). For your organisation to be conflict sensitive, it is important to identify both the ‘big’ issues and the ‘smaller’ day-to-day issues and it can be useful to identify Dividers and Connectors under each of the dimensions (political, socio-economic, cultural, environmental etc.) of the conflict.¹⁰ Alternatively, the Do No Harm framework advises identifying Dividers and Connectors

according to the categories in Box 1. Either approach can work but unless the analysis is done primarily to ensure conflict sensitivity using the Do No Harm approach, this guideline recommends structuring the analysis around ‘dimensions of conflict’.

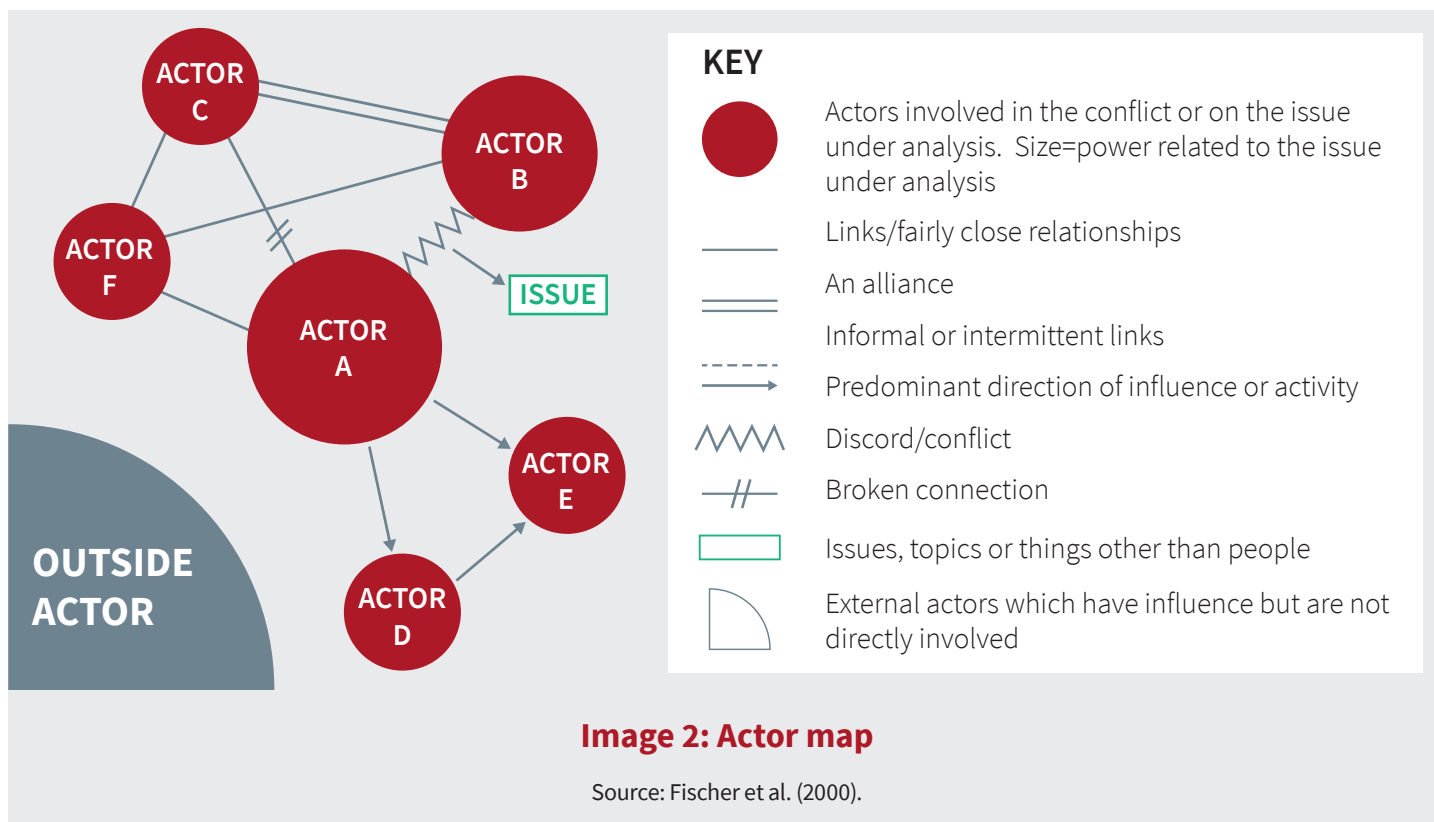
Actor analysis

Conflict is essentially about relationships between and within groups of people. A **conflict actor** can be *an individual, group or institution contributing to conflict, affected by conflict positively or negatively and those engaged in dealing with conflict*. This includes both victims of violence and perpetrators of violence. Developing an overview of who the important actors in a context are, how they see and engage with each other and what divides and connects them is core to any conflict analysis and to ensuring conflict sensitivity and relevant programming. This is sometimes referred to as stakeholder analysis. See one example of an actor map, overleaf.¹¹

The most relevant types of actors will depend on the scope of the study. For instance, if a conflict analysis focuses on refugee and host

Box 2: Categories of Dividers and Connectors according to the ‘Do No Harm’ framework

1. **Systems and institutions:** Formal and informal forces that either connect people or promote difference and division between them. Systems and institutions can either be inclusive or exclusive, perceived as legitimate by all or just by some of the people in a society.
2. **Attitudes and actions:** The things people say and do. People can promote connection or division through their actions or their attitudes. These attitudes and actions can be small scale (how groups interact in a community) or large scale (what national-level politicians say).
3. **Values and interests:** The things that are important to people, their concerns, their principles, and their standards such as shared values and common interests that connect people and different values or competing interests that divide them.
4. **Experiences:** Shared experiences can unite people across lines of division. Different experiences of a singular event can shape people’s perceptions and create positions of division in a society. Community experiences are the source of how that community understands itself and its history.
5. **Symbols and occasions:** Symbols (e.g. the national flag, football team, religious rituals, norm of hospitality towards strangers) and occasions (e.g. holidays) can unite people across lines of division, or further divide them. Symbols and occasions should be analysed not only for what they are, but for what they represent to people and whom they include (or exclude, as the case may be).



community relations, social groups would include the different host communities (as per local understandings of what constitutes the host community), refugees (acknowledging they are not monolithic nor unified groups), different levels of government, different security actors (e.g. police, military), local leaders, traditional authorities, private business and civil society. Identifying potential **spoilers** who are *actors with interest in continuing or perpetuating conflict* is often critical but should be considered carefully and with sensitivity. It should be recognised that conflict actors are always multifaceted and fluid, having different positions and roles in different situations, and that these positions and interests are likely to change over time. It is also important to try and engage those who may be less visible or marginalized in certain ways, such as women, young people, and the elderly. It is also critical to identify local peace actors who are people who have the capacity to strengthen community resilience to conflict and promote peace and stability. However, it is important to bear in mind the potential politicisation of the ‘peace’ label and that such actors, like

others, have multiple and constantly changing positions and roles. Finally, mapping ongoing responses by humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors is vital.

Conflict dynamics, trends and scenarios

To identify opportunities to mitigate and transform conflict, analysis can be used to capture conflict trends (e.g. short-term triggers and longer-patterns) and assess the likelihood for conflict to increase, decrease or remain stable. This requires gathering information on **threats to peace** which are factors that may prove threatening and worsen dynamics in the future and on **resilience to conflict**¹² which are *factors that make the community abler to manage conflicts non-violently and resist efforts by conflict actors to mobilise communities against each other*. Identifying risks of conflict escalation and opportunities to reduce tensions and increase resilience to conflict should be included in conflict analyses. Developing a limited number of possible short-, medium- and long-term scenarios for how a conflict will develop, and assessing how realistic they each are, can be extremely useful.

Box 3: Key actor analysis questions to explore

1. Who are the different groups of people and actors in the context and how can their relationships best be described? What are their interests with regards to the conflict(s)? What are their incentives and disincentives to take up violence or promote peace?
2. How do the different key groups perceive each other? This is important in order to understand what type of action towards the other group will be perceived as meaningful. What is the history of relationships between these groups? What important events have shaped the different relationships?
3. What are the different key actors' capacities to affect the context? How does power influence the positions of key actors and relationships between groups?
4. How do the different actors use Dividers to exacerbate conflict? How do different actors use Connectors to encourage peace?
5. Who have the capacities to influence the conflict positively (local peace actors) or negatively (spoilers)? It is also useful if the analysis can identify Champions of Change in relation to the core problem that your organisation would like to address in the context as this helps in subsequent efforts to develop or review a Theory of Change.

Considerations for gender and diversity-sensitive analysis¹³

Within a population not all persons affected experience conflict in the same way. **Gender** refers to the *socially constructed characteristics of women and men – such as norms, roles and relationships of and between groups of women and men*.¹⁴ While describing the term 'gender' in relation to the socially constructed categories of men and women respectively, it is important to operate with awareness that gender is not binary, that terms and definitions related to gender and sexuality are diverse and continue to evolve. There may be instances where people identify with one or a variety of gender roles.

Gender as an organising principle of social life connects to other principles (class, race, age, ethnicity etc.) and is reflected in all spheres of social life, in families, in communities, in organisations, and so on. **Gender norms** *which are standards or patterns of social behaviour to which people may experience significant pressures to conform* develop in interaction with other socio-

demographic identity markers such as age, class and race. These then create diverse notions of masculinity and femininity in a context and determine the roles, power and resources for females, males and other identities in any culture. This significantly shapes the extent to which people are vulnerable to, affected by, respond to and recover from conflict, and impact their coping strategies and risk of being exposed to targeted violence, exploitation and abuse.¹⁵ It is essential to understand gender norms in conflict contexts as they shape and are shaped by conflict and peace. Gender and diversity analysis explores how the needs, capacities and coping strategies of women, men, boys and girls are impacted differently in the face of conflict.¹⁶ It examines relationships between people of different genders in their diversity – their roles, responsibilities, access to resources, control over resources and the constraints they face relative to each other. Conflict analysis should both identify how the experiences of conflict differ according to gender and diversity factors as well as explore how gendered social norms and structures impact the root causes of conflict. This includes analysing whether and how gender norms may be driving conflict and/or strengthening communities' resilience to conflict.

To avoid simplistic conclusions about the roles of men and women it is important to

There is an increasing recognition that the causes of conflict are gendered, and that applying a gender perspective in any analysis is essential to tackling conflict at its roots.

Conciliation Resources, 2019.

pay attention to the concrete ways that men and women play a role in fuelling conflict or building peace, as well as how the conflict impacts differently on different women and men across diversity factors.¹⁷

Gender-sensitive conflict analysis helps us to understand how gender relations impact conflict and vice versa, and answers a range of key questions, such as:

- The socioeconomic activities performed by women and men. Their tasks, roles and responsibilities.
- The degree to which women and men have access to and control over resources, rights and a voice.

- The self-image of women and men and the (expected) behaviour of women and men, their acting, speaking, clothing, etc.
- The power relations between women and men, women and women, men and men and how these influence and are influenced by conflict.
- The drivers of conflict and violence, as well as opportunities for peace, as modulated by gender roles and norms.

A gender and diversity-lens in conflict analysis should consider the intersection of identity markers, including age and cultural diversity, and how these influence actors' roles in conflict and peace, including their approaches to conflict management and peacebuilding. Cross-cultural

Box 4: Checklist for gender and diversity sensitive conflict analysis

Gender perspectives and other identity markers should be integrated into all stages of a conflict analysis process. The following questions raise gender and diversity considerations for different phases and tasks:

1. Have both men and women (and members of different groups) been actively involved in determining the overall purpose and ultimate uses of the conflict analysis to be produced?
2. Have both men and women (and members of different groups) been engaged in data gathering activities? Are they aware of the gender dimension and able to gather gender-sensitive data? If not, will trainings be provided to increase their capacity?
3. Have the views of both women and men (and members of different groups) been elicited?
4. Have both women and men participated actively in analysing the data gathered and applying the analytical tools and frameworks?
5. Are there practical problems in gathering data, conducting interviews and related tasks which are rooted in gender roles (or in roles of different groups) as practiced in the society and have ways been found to address these problems?
6. Has the resulting conflict analysis been validated by both women and men (and members of different groups)?
7. What does the conflict analysis itself reflect regarding differential impacts of the conflict on women, men, girls, boys, youth, elderly, members of different groups (etc.)?
8. Has the analysis process revealed any gender-based differences (or differences based on other identity markers), in terms of particular roles for men or women (or different groups) in promoting peace or addressing specific conflict factors?
9. Has the analysis revealed specific dynamics of the conflict that empower or disempower women and men (or members of different groups) in certain ways based on their gender or other identity markers? Could these dynamics assist a sustainable preventive action process?
10. Are the outcomes of the gender and diversity analysis followed-up, i.e. are gender and diversity sensitive early response options developed as part of a preventive action plan?

Source: Adapted from Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (2015).

differences in norms, values and beliefs influence how people perceive and resolve conflict.

Conflict sensitivity risks and opportunities

While each conflict context that aid agencies operate in is unique, there are some common patterns that are useful to be aware of (see Chapter 4.2). For your organisation to mitigate risks of doing harm it is important to map out the past interaction between aid interventions (including your own) and conflict, identify lessons learned and develop recommendations for efforts to conflict sensitise your own and other actors' programming in the context.

3.2. Who should do conflict analysis?¹⁸

A conflict analysis should be conducted in a way that maximises the involvement of your organisation's staff in the country (and local areas) as well as local partners when appropriate. This is important to ensure ownership and use of the analysis. For a conflict analysis process to be successful and produce a useful product, it is important to involve people with specialist technical capacity in conflict analysis. The specialist should not be viewed as a conflict expert with superior understanding of the concrete conflict to local actors, but rather as a facilitator of a process of information collection and analysis involving a wide range of local stakeholders. The members of a conflict analysis team should collectively have both strong technical expertise in conflict analysis and strong contextual knowledge.

Ideally the technical expertise is represented by an in-house conflict analysis specialist, as his/her understanding of the organisation will be helpful. A conflict analysis can however be done

by external research consultants, in situations when they may be able to provide a less biased view of the context, or when there is no in-house specialist. When this option is chosen it is important to provide the consultant with clear guidelines for how to engage, involve and work closely with local teams. It is important that their knowledge feeds into data collection and analysis, and that field teams are on board with the analysis, recognize its future use and will engage with the findings and recommendations. Therefore, the lead researcher (whether internal or external) should be aware of the importance of formal coaching and mentoring, which should be explicit in the Terms of Reference and any inception report. A local co-analyst should be identified in the field location who will be involved in planning, implementation (fieldwork), analysis of findings, reviewing of drafts, validation exercises and presentations in the field location and capital. In order to ensure ownership of the process and its outcomes, the conflict analysis should be managed by a senior in-country staff member who can draw on the advice of in-house specialists and advisers.

Profile of research team

The number of people implementing the conflict analysis will differ depending on the scope and budget available. It is important to consider both what professional and language qualifications are required and how the research team members are going to be perceived in the target area. Identity markers including gender, nationality and communal and political identity matter, and team members will need to be able to interview different segments of the local population and not be perceived as biased towards any particular group. In some circumstances, it is not advisable that local people take a visible role in conflict analysis for political and/or safety reasons.

3.3. Step-by-step guide to conflict analysis

The conflict analysis process can be organised into seven main stages. The first is the **preparatory stage**, during which decisions have to be taken concerning the purpose, scope and expected outputs of the analysis, as well as how these should be used. The second is the **process design and planning stage**, where a research methodology is developed and the different analytical stages are carefully articulated and prepared. The third is the **desk study stage** during which existing information and analysis is collected so that the field research stage can be focussed on validating existing knowledge, filling in gaps in knowledge and bringing analysis up to date. The fourth stage is when the **field research** takes place. The fifth is the **data analysis and output production stage**. The sixth is the **quality assurance stage**, which includes validation and peer review processes. The seventh and final stage (which is covered in Chapter 4) focuses on **making use of the conflict analysis** to inform programming and/or policy engagement efforts. In practice the different stages overlap.

The desk study may, for example, continue simultaneously with the field research and the quality assurance stages until the finalisation of the conflict analysis outputs. See illustration and summary of the different stages below.

Stage 1: Identifying the purpose, type and scope of a conflict analysis¹⁹

The type and scope of the conflict analysis required is based on both the intended purpose of the analysis, the type of intervention and the context as well as practical constraints such as resources and time available.

Start the conflict analysis on the right track by holding an initial internal meeting with key programme staff, Conflict Analysts and relevant global advisors or specialists. The meeting should focus on ensuring clarity about purpose, scope and methodology of the conflict analysis, time frames and roles. This information is then captured in a Terms of Reference (ToR) for the conflict analysis which will form the basis for ToRs of the different persons involved in conducting the analysis, including the lead analyst.

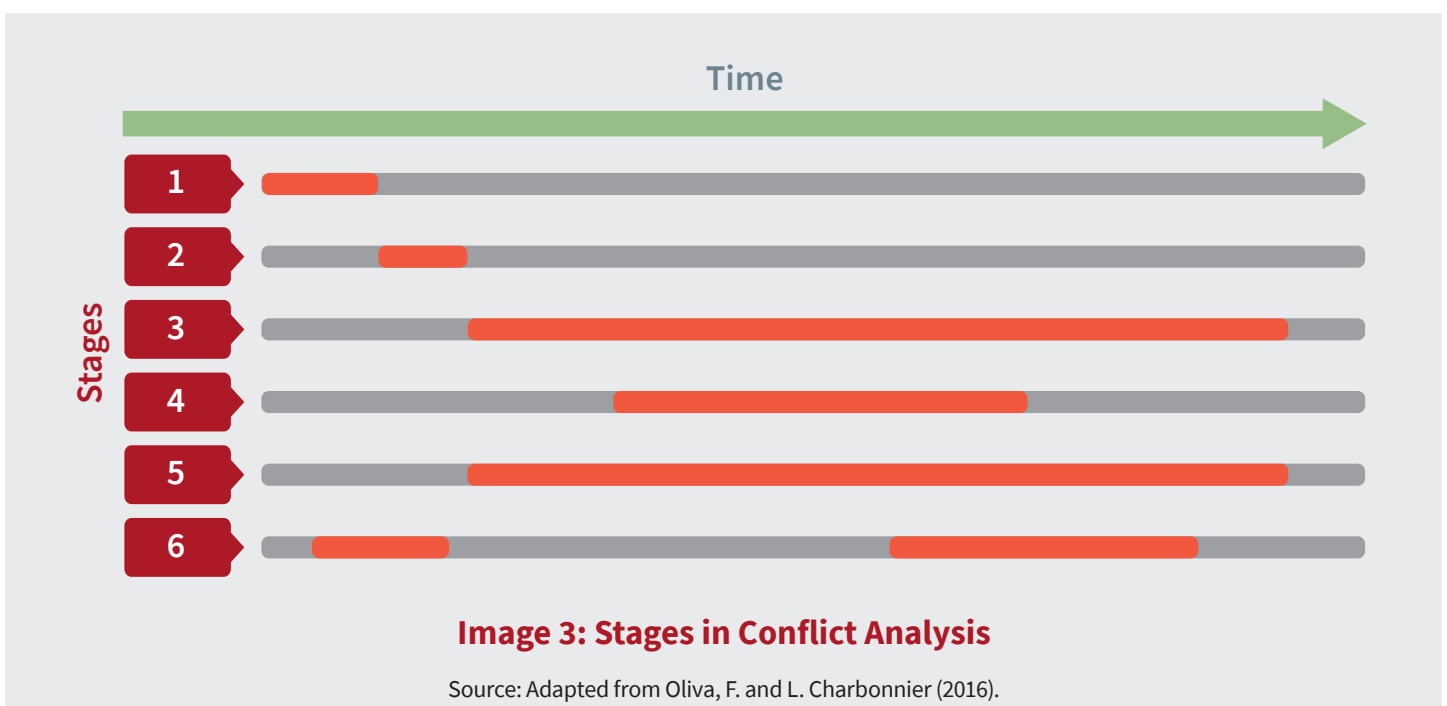


Table 1: Summary overview of the stages and elements of a conflict analysis process

Stages	Elements
1 Identify purpose, type and scope of analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Definition of purpose and objectives. • Identifying the scope of the analysis. • Identify resources: budget, time frame and personnel. • Identifying type of conflict analysis (Rapid or Standard). • Identifying team involved (identification of personnel to be involved, their roles and responsibilities. • Develop the ToR for the conflict analysis process.
2 Process design and planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning of the conflict analysis process. • Methodology design. • Arrangements for safe access for research team. • Ensure staff buy-in and active participation throughout the process.
3 Desk research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collect and review existing literature on conflict and engagement of aid agencies in the target area.
4 Field research: Data collection and initial analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off meeting with field staff and partners (if appropriate). • KIIs and FGDs. • Analysis workshops. • Participatory GIS mapping (if included in the methodology). • Identification of preliminary findings. • Debrief with field team.
5 Data analysis and report write up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data analysis. • Review and finalisation of findings. • Write-up of report and other outputs. • Production of programmatic and operational recommendations on conflict sensitivity, programme/project strategy and external stakeholder engagement.
6 Quality Assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validation meetings in the field locations and in capital city (if appropriate). • Expert peer review.

Source: Adapted from Oliva, F. and L. Charbonnier (2016).

Purpose: Identifying problem and outputs needed

The first step is to ensure clarity about why the specific conflict analysis is needed and how it will be used. Is it to ensure conflict sensitivity of a particular project? Or is it needed to inform a country strategy or programming in a specific area? Or will it inform policy dialogue? Or is it a combination of these? For instance, if your organisation is involved in delivering food or providing shelter in a humanitarian emergency, it will probably be useful to know more about the composition of and hierarchies amongst beneficiaries and map their relationships with other nearby communities (e.g. a stakeholder analysis). Such an understanding would help your

organisation deliver assistance impartially and avoid having its interventions produce unintended negative consequences or misperceptions among parts of the local population.

A good starting point is to identify the problem or issue that makes it relevant for your organisation to engage in a particular context or on a particular issue. For example, if there has been a rapid influx of refugees into an area or existing refugee camp, this may cause tensions among refugees and between refugees and local host communities. Understanding these tensions, how your organisation can avoid exacerbating them and what could be done to mitigate them will not only help you avoid doing harm, but can

Box 5: Stage 1: Guiding questions

- What is the purpose of the analysis?
- How is it going to be used?
- Why is the analysis being undertaken now? E.g. has something changed?
- Which analysis has been produced so far and is it still relevant?
- Which specific relationship/s or conflict(s) do(es) the analysis examine?
- What are the particular issues that the analysis should focus on?
- What is the geographic focus? One community? A district or province? A sub-region of the country? The entire country?
- Do we include regional neighbours? International dimensions? Why are these important for the micro-analysis?
- What is our timeframe for the assessment?
- What is the budget available?
- Is there any event or activity that determines when the outputs need to be ready? (e.g. subsequent proposal submission, elections etc.).

help improve the relevance of your response. Identifying the problem that you are focusing on will help to define the scope of the conflict analysis and to ensure that the conflict analysis can be used for programme/project design (using a Theory of Change approach) as well as for relevant policy dialogue. The problem or issue and what would change for who if the problem was solved should be described in the simplest way possible.

The identification of the study area is an important procedure for any conflict analysis process. This is because effects of conflicts tend to spread beyond the point of origin, making analysis a complex process. In some cases, conflicts assume a national or regional dimension, even if their source was at a very local level. This will affect the types of people interviewed and the type and number of activities undertaken. If your organisation's interventions tend to be at the local level, it makes most sense to focus the analysis at this

level while recognising and analysing important linkages with other levels (e.g. regional and national).

Defining the **scope of analysis** is a significant step in the design phase in terms of determining whether a specific thematic area will be addressed. A poor choice at this stage can compromise the relevance of the analysis. It is absolutely critical to start achieving some clarity about the type of conflict that we seek to understand (refugee-host community relations, land disputes, political crisis, ethnic violence, etc.) or the key issue that we want to tackle (food insecurity, environmental degradation, challenging livelihoods, gender-based marginalisation, etc.). These are important considerations that will help analysts fine-tune the methodology, prioritise issues, dismiss factors and stakeholders that may not be relevant to the analytical level, and generally structure the process accordingly.

Defining the **timeframe** for the analysis will determine how much time can be spent on desk analysis, the methodology, and the time and depth of fieldwork, including in terms of selection of key informants, number of key informants that can be interviewed and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) held, and the number of geographical locations that can be reached.

Identifying the type of conflict analysis required

It is important to closely work with the programme management team early in the process to identify the type of conflict analysis required or realistically possible, considering the needs, purpose, resources and timeframe. A set of criteria and questions can be used to determine whether the intervention and context require a rapid or a more in-depth conflict analysis, alongside more practical considerations such as budget and time limitations. Although the tools used in a rapid and a standard conflict analysis do not

differ dramatically, the limitations in timeframe and budget in a rapid conflict assessment will necessarily lead to limitations in depth and focus.

A **Rapid Conflict Analysis (RCA)** report or briefing note (usually max 10 pages) should not be comprehensive but focus on the most important conflict issues and sources of divisions and connections/capacities for peace. It should identify key findings as the issues to focus on, and propose recommendations. A **Standard Conflict Analysis (SCA)** report (length max 40 pages) should be more comprehensive and offer more in-depth background and historical information that frames and situates the current context. It can also take more space to describe

and analyse perspectives of different actors. It should consider the key sources of division and tension, before outlining resources for peace and areas of collaboration.

A full standard conflict assessment process would take roughly three months from start to finish, which broken down includes two weeks for preparation and inception phase, including desk research and methodology design, two-three weeks in the field, and four-five weeks for the elaboration of outputs (including time allocated for feedback and review, presentations and dissemination, etc.).

A full rapid conflict assessment process should take around four weeks, corresponding to roughly one week's preparation (including desk research and methodology design). Then one to one and a half weeks for fieldwork. Finally, one to one and a half weeks of report writing and producing other outputs, finalisation of report and dissemination. The lead researcher/conflict analyst must be very clear about what s/he is after and how to gather that information.

Box 6: Rapid or Standard conflict analysis?

- Is the analysis needed urgently due to sudden changes in the context (such as conflict induced influx of refugees)? If yes, then the RCA approach is the right one to ensure a quick and 'good enough' output that can inform programming and external stakeholder engagement.
- If there is a possibility that your organisation will work on conflict (aiming to address causes of conflict and displacement), then a SCA is the appropriate approach. If your organisation intends to work in conflict and merely ensure that its programming is conflict sensitive, then a rapid analysis may be sufficient. However, this will depend on the scope of programme response, as a large country programme with multiple sites may still require a standard analysis.
- If the focus area for the analysis is an area where your organisation has been operating for long and is well familiar with but sees a significant shift (for instance when there is a sudden refugee influx into a refugee camp or local area affecting community dynamics and relations) then a RCA may suffice, at least as a first step.
- A rapid conflict analysis can also be used as a screening exercise for new contexts where your organisation plans to begin operations, in order to identify key issues and with a view to potentially carrying out a SCA later.

Stage 2: Process design and planning²⁰

To ensure effective use of time available a realistic and detailed workplan needs to be developed and agreed between the relevant manager and the research team.

Methodology

Research methodologies for information gathering are neither new nor specific to conflict analysis. They draw largely upon participatory research methodologies used in the fields of development and anthropology. Given the nature of the information required and the political sensitivity around it, a qualitative approach to data collection is most suitable for a conflict analysis as these tend to privilege in-depth investigation, understanding and

gathering of a fair amount of data in a short period, also permitting triangulation between different sources. While quantitative data tends to describe, qualitative data allows for greater analysis and explanation.

The main ways to collect primary data will usually include a combination of interviews with carefully selected individuals and group discussions with individuals representing different segments of the local community. Additionally, workshops with local staff, partner staff and other local actors using participatory analysis tools can be helpful. When communities or external stakeholders are consulted as part of the analysis, it is imperative to explain the purpose of the analysis, how the data generated will be used, and confidentiality/anonymity. It is also crucial to make sure that respondents can express themselves in a language in which they are fluent, and to plan for translator assistance as needed. For more information about Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGD), Conflict Analysis workshops and other data collections methods see Stage 4.

Proposed informants

To understand the broad spectrum of conflict issues and scenarios and opportunities and threats to peace, it is important to collect perspectives from as diverse a set of informants as possible. This includes people from the various sides of a conflict (e.g. different communities within a refugee camp and host community members). It is also important to obtain perspectives from individuals of all relevant ages, people in positions of authority as well as those over whom authority is exercised, and both women and men, as they may have different and complementary information and perspectives.

Ethical research principles and data handling²¹

When conducting conflict analysis, it is important to take every measure to safeguard the rights of those involved in or affected by the research. A conflict analysis is also an intervention and must be conducted in a conflict sensitive manner (see section 2.5), carefully considering the effects of the research process and risks for interviewees and communities. The organisation conducting conflict analysis must ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of participants is not adversely affected by the research, and strive to protect their rights, sensitivities and privacy. In conflict-affected contexts, there will often be large power imbalances between researchers and the participants, which reinforces the need to build trust and maintain integrity. It is important to protect the anonymity of participants to ensure they are not exposed to further risks, and to ensure that their informed and free consent is obtained (and documented). Research participants should be given to understand how far they will be afforded anonymity and confidentiality, they must know that participation is voluntary and that they may reject the use of data gathering devices. Data gathered must be safely and securely stored, and processing of personal data must follow the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).²²

Depending on the context, it might be too sensitive to talk directly to actors who contribute to the conflict, including armed non-state groups, the military and in some cases, individuals within the government. Accordingly, it may be necessary to talk to other actors who are adequately informed about the interests of these actors (e.g. representatives from civil society and communities, donors and government actors participating in the focus groups and key informant interviews).

Key people to talk to regarding actor and conflict causes at different levels include:

- **Local level:** Community members, academics, civil society, INGOs, local government and security actors, political actors, etc.
- **National level:** Civil society, think tanks, academics, donors, INGOs, multilateral and regional institutions, and (as far as accessible and doable) government ministries, security agencies, political actors, etc.
- **Regional level:** Civil society, donors, INGOs, multilateral and regional institutions, etc.

It is important to recognise and consider that actors have different biases in the way they portray different issues and present their own positions as well as those of other actors.

Guidance for Data Collection²³

Many of the formal conflict analysis frameworks concentrate on long lists of questions. Such lists can be helpful, but they can also lead to an unhelpfully long and over-complicated analysis.

Emphasis should be on contextualisation and ensuring that the issues that receive most focus are the ones the communities in the target area perceive as the most important, while keeping in mind that there may be broader and higher-level dynamics shaping the context that may not be verbalised or understood by all local stakeholders.

The list of questions in Box 7 could be a starting point for the research team's development of a contextualised set of questions for data collection. It may also be necessary to focus on different questions for different people or groups (e.g. women, youth, religious leaders, business people, etc.). If it is known that there are particular issues of interest such as land issues, ethnicity, religious tensions, youth, gender, etc. then specific questions can be developed to ensure proper attention to these issues.

The interview should start by explaining to interviewees the purpose of the analysis,

Box 7: General questions to frame more specific interview questions

- What are the present and historical conflicts? Were/are these destructive (e.g. were they latent or violent)?
- How has conflict impacted different people/groups? Are there differences across and within groups, genders, age, geographic areas?
- What divides people in the area? What connects them? What are the structural and proximate factors? When looking at this, make sure to take a multi-dimensional focus (political, social, economic, cultural, etc.).
- Who contributes to conflict among the people of the region? Who helps to manage conflict and build peace amongst people? What are their interests and sources of power/influence?
- How do actors use Dividers to provoke conflict? How do actors use Connectors to strengthen resilience to conflict and promote peace?
- What are the sources of resilience to conflict and who are the local peace actors that can be strengthened or built upon? E.g. prominent individuals or groups, traditional institutions, mechanisms for conflict resolution.
- How do/have external actors interact(ed) with the conflict? How have they done harm and contributed to peace? What have been the results (positive and negative)? Are there significant gaps, issues not addressed, groups not involved, etc.?
- How may the current situation develop (conflict scenarios)? What events or conditions in the context could lead to either worsening of the conflict or create opportunities for conflict reduction?

Source: Indicative list of questions in the GSDRC Conflict Analysis Topic Guide (2017), page 13.

how the data generated will be used, and how confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured.

Stage 3: Desk research²⁴

Desk research is a review of existing data and research on the topic or conflict under question. Desk research can be undertaken as a quick form of a conflict analysis if there is insufficient time to contextualise and back it up with fieldwork. There are, however, several limitations to this, most notably when we consider remote locations and field offices where, for the purposes of the conflict analysis, we need to be as specific and context-driven as possible and ensure that our analysis is up to date. Limiting a conflict analysis to desk research can be useful for more general and national-level conflict analysis, but not for micro-level studies that are expected to provide information about specific local dynamics that should lead to well-informed and relevant programming. In most cases, desk research should be undertaken as the first step in conducting a conflict analysis. In particular, desk research compiles existing data and analysis on conflict in the focus region/country/local level in order to provide a contextual understanding for the design of the scope, fieldwork and methodology and helps in identifying gaps that the field research should address.

Desk research should provide an overview of existing research undertaken to date on conflict and related issues in the focus area, including identifying what research actors are already engaged in, what kinds of research has been done, which methodologies have been used, and what are the gaps in existing research. Desk research should provide background information on the historical context of conflict in the area and how these relate to wider national/regional dynamics. It should provide an overview of the key groups of people and main actors in relation to conflicts in the area and identify long term structural and proximate causes of conflict.

Stage 4: Field Research

Introduction and ensuring field team buy-in and involvement

The conflict analysis process should serve to strengthen the field team's skills and abilities in reflecting on the context and how the organisation's interventions interact with it. It is therefore important to organise an introduction meeting with as many of the local staff and partners (if appropriate) as possible to explain the purpose and process of the conflict analysis. This should involve both programmatic and support staff. It is furthermore key to ensure a proper ethical approach to the research, including professional integrity, secure data storage/archiving and establishing trust with research participants. The introductory meeting with the research team should cover these aspects, and they should be reflected in the methodology and research implementation.²⁵

Keep It Simple: Use of Open-Ended Questions

Instead of formal and rigid questionnaires that are to be followed strictly, it is more helpful to have interview guides with sections/headings of the information we would like to collect. One useful approach is to use a semi structured interview format which allows the order of questions to be changed and questions to omitted or added on the spot, based on relevance/appropriateness within the interview process. Under each section there is a list of both closed and open questions which serve to probe key informants as well as remind the interviewer of the areas which should be captured in the discussions. In most cases, it is not important to develop an elaborate set of questions for data collection. If people are willing and able to talk, all that is required are some open-ended probing questions that invite people to share. Such open-ended questions give people a chance to talk about what is most important to them. They essentially invite people to share their perspective or story. On the other hand, closed questions or leading questions can feel like an interrogation, as they usually probe for a yes-or-no answer or a specific response.

In addition to this, it can be very beneficial to start the fieldwork with an introduction to conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity (this would take approximately 2-3 hours) with the field team to make sure everyone understands and appreciates the various uses of a conflict analysis. This will generate buy-in from the field team, as well as their thorough understanding of the conflict analysis process and how it will contribute to the programme. It also increases the chances that they will use the analysis in their work.

Local staff often have a wealth of knowledge about the context to draw from and should be seen as important informants in their own right. In-depth interviews with well-informed staff and a conflict analysis workshop with staff and selected partner staffs can be highly useful. On the condition of a safe space, confidentiality and anonymity, local staff can prove to be valuable informants and analysts of the context.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)²⁶

KIIs are one-to-one interviews with individuals who are knowledgeable about different aspects of a conflict context. These may include long-serving representatives from NGOs and UN agencies, security agencies, political parties, academics, community leaders, multilateral institutions, donors etc. The interviews will generally benefit from being structured around an interview guide to be used flexibly by the interviewer in response to how the interview proceeds. Questions for KIIs should be tailored to each individual stakeholder, and the purpose of the research as well as confidentiality/anonymity be clearly explained at the outset.

When conducting KIIs it is important to observe local protocols and act in a respectful manner, e.g. referring to people by their correct formal title, arriving on time, respecting interviewees' wish to end the interview, dressing

Examples of probes:

- What do you mean when you say...?
- Why do you think...?
- What happened then?
- I'm not sure I understand X... Would you explain that to me?
- Can you give me an example of X?

appropriately, etc. To start, the interviewer should introduce him/herself and any other team member(s) present, explain the purpose of the interview and what will be done with the information gathered. Allow time for the interviewee to make introductory comments if s/he wishes.

Give the interviewee your full attention and use follow-up probes to fully explore a question or topic. Do not be afraid to deviate a bit from the prepared questions in order to explore an important but unexpected topic introduced by the interviewee. Take care not to upset the interviewee, because if s/he becomes upset it can be difficult to recover good rapport.

As the interview draws to a close, consider asking if there is anything else that the interviewee thinks should be kept in mind, any other person that the research team should meet and if the person has any questions for the research team. Finish the interview by repeating how the information will be used and thank the interviewee for his/her time and valuable contributions.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)²⁷

FGDs are critical for conflict analysis to be both participatory and triangulated. FGDs can help ensure that the perspectives of 'ordinary' people are captured and provide an important counter balance to the perspectives and angles of 'leaders' and representatives, whose perspectives and interests may not closely reflect those of the wider population.

The *composition of focus groups* is important and must be carefully considered with respect to the age, gender and diversity of groups in the area. At a minimum, separate FGDs should be held for men and women, as well as for members of the different communities present in the context. When organising FGDs it is important to consider how best to ensure a conducive environment for active participation of all not just a dominant few. **Heterogenous focus groups** are groups that *bring people together across lines of division or conflict*, They are generally the most challenging to manage but can under certain circumstances be extremely useful. **Homogenous focus groups** are groups that *bring people from the same group* together and they can be easier to manage and may generally be advisable, unless the research team is highly familiar with the context and skilled in managing group discussions on conflict issues.

When beginning a FGD, the research team should introduce themselves and explain the purpose and process of the discussion, as well as what will be done with the information gathered. Then there should be a round of introduction by all the participants so that everyone knows who is in the room.

At the start of the group discussion, it may be useful to kick off with some general questions about whether the participants have observed any changes in their community recently or ask about what their hopes for their community. From there, the prepared discussion guide should be used. FGDs can be particularly useful for noting different identity and/or interest groups that exist in the community, how they are perceived and what divides and connects them. The research team should facilitate the discussion as necessary and ask participants to provide specific and concrete examples of Connectors and Dividers.

Remember to get consent from informants:

Participation in conflict analysis research must be based on free and informed consent of those interviewed. The researcher has a responsibility to explain in appropriate detail, and in terms meaningful to the informant, what the research is about, who is undertaking and financing it, why it is being undertaken, and how it is to be distributed and used. Informants must be informed about the extent to which they will be afforded anonymity and confidentiality. Reference to named individuals should be limited as far as possible, and where the purpose of the analysis dictates a need for this, the individuals concerned must give their written consent.

In situations of latent conflict, where there are underlying tensions but little open violence, community members may be reluctant to discuss conflict. This may be because of the sensitive nature of the term 'conflict' itself. Instead of the word 'conflict', words such as 'tensions', or phrases like 'barriers that hinder harmonious relationships,' 'things that make people aggressive,' 'things that hurt people,' or 'things that could threaten our unity in the future,' can be used when appropriate.

It may also be useful to explain the concepts of social contract and social covenant and ask the participants to reflect on the status of these in their present context.

At the end of the group discussion, make sure to thank the participants for their time and contributions. Remind the participants of how the information they have provided will be used and give the participants opportunity to ask questions before ending the session.

Conflict Analysis workshops

Conflict analysis workshops can be highly useful for ensuring the intensive participation by staff, partners, other organisations and other stakeholders. A conflict analysis workshop can be done at any time during the field research but may be especially useful at the beginning,

following the initial introduction and awareness session, as it can then be a useful forum to map key conflict issues to test via Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs).

There are a wide range of participatory tools designed to focus participants' discussions around aspects of a conflict analysis process. Key tools recommended for conflict analysis processes include the following:

- **Conflict Timeline:** A simple tool that can help the analysis team develop an overview of the key events in a conflict. It can also be useful for understanding different stakeholders' interpretations of what caused the conflict and how it escalated and deescalated over time. It is important to remember that stakeholders to a conflict tend to have different perceptions of the conflict's history. In most situations it will be most useful to use the tool with relatively homogeneous groups. Using this tool with different groups and including different timelines in the analysis can be a way to acknowledge that there is no single "truth" concerning the history of the conflict.
- **Actor Mapping:** A popular tool for a group to jointly analyse and visualise the relationships among the different conflict actors and stakeholders in a context. It enables discussion about the relative power of different actors, the character of their relationships, the issues that divide or connect them and helps identify actors who may be able to influence others whose relationships are broken or deadlocked. The tool is easy to use and can be very helpful at the onset of a conflict analysis process.
- **Stakeholder Analysis:** An essential part of a conflict analysis, this entails the development of a conflict profile of the key conflict stakeholders. The stakeholder analysis tool can help understand the different stakeholders' relation to the conflict and the motivations and logics behind their behaviour in the conflict. A stakeholder should capture both the primary conflict actors, as well as the groups that are affected but may have limited influence on the conflict and identify both what they say publicly about what they want (positions), and the interests and needs that underlies these positions.
- **Conflict Tree:** A popular model to show (in the shape of a tree) the difference between structural causes (the roots) and effects (the leaves) of a conflict. The tool is easy to use and is especially useful early on in a conflict analysis process.
- **Dividers/Connectors Analysis:** A method for understanding the conflict context by identifying factors that bring people together (Connectors) and factors that push people apart (Dividers). A Dividers/Connectors Analysis can be helpful both to identify concrete every day issues that cause division between groups or/and contribute to communities' resilience to conflict. It is part of the 'Do No Harm' approach to conflict sensitivity and is a highly recommended step in any conflict analysis process.
- **Power Mapping:** This can complement the stakeholder analysis and help to deepen the analysis of different stakeholders' level of power or influence. The Power Mapping tool can be used to measure the resources available to different local communities and their influence over local level decision making. It can also help rank which Dividers are most likely to lead to violence.
- **Immediate to Long-term Threat Analysis:** For identifying possible triggers of conflict in the short and longer term. This can be useful for

scenario planning as well as for development of conflict prevention interventions.

- **Participatory Mapping:** Participatory Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping can be used as an approach to gather detailed information about specific local areas from communities in those areas, and as a way to ground and validate more general claims about conflict from local actors. Participatory GIS mapping can, for example, help identify where violence has taken place, over what (e.g. natural resources) and involving what specific communities (e.g. villages, neighbourhoods) as well as help map out what has been done and where by aid actors and local peace actors in the past to manage conflict.

It would be impossible to cover all aspects of a conflict analysis (e.g. causes of conflict, actor analysis, opportunities for peace, threats to peace and scenarios) in one workshop due to people's busy schedules, so it is best to reflect ahead of the event on how to structure the discussion, considering the scope and purpose of the conflict analysis. Depending on what the research team wants to get out of the workshop, it may be structured in various ways, e.g. it can focus mostly on causes or actors or scenarios depending on the context.

Participant observation

One of the benefits of a standard conflict analysis is that it allows for participant observation as a data collection tool. Participant observation as a method is common in the field of social anthropology and involves a range of well-defined methods which are rooted in improvisation as a methodology.²⁸ These include informal interviews, direct observation, participation in events, collective discussions, analysis of documents, results from activities undertaken off or online, and life histories.

The short nature of the rapid conflict analysis approach will rarely allow for this unless the lead analyst has extensive prior research experience in the particular area.

Perception surveys

In some cases, perception surveys can be very useful, and when resources and time allow, they are encouraged. Perception surveys can among other things help us understand how fully representative perceptions of KIIs and FGD participants are of a group or community. Perception surveys have limitations as well as strengths. They allow data collection on intangible and hard-to-measure issues and may help to challenge stereotypes. On the other hand, the reliability of the data may be limited, and they measure only perceptions (not to be confused with facts).²⁹

Team work and stocktaking during field research

To ensure that the research team analyses the information gathered on an ongoing basis, it is advisable that the members meet for debriefs at the end of every day. This can help to identify the main themes that emerge during the field work and help determine what gaps in data remain and what information needs to be obtained over the remaining part of the field work. It is also important that the team comes together for a final debrief meeting once the data collection is completed and agrees on the key issues to be included in the analytical outputs. They should consider how the findings should be communicated to ensure to maximise organisational learning while managing sensitivities. Before departing from the field location, the research team should also make sure to present and discuss the main themes and findings with the field team for triangulation purposes and so that such findings do not come as a surprise later.

Stage 5: Analysis and write up³⁰

Following the desk research and field work it is time to make sense of the data collected. Key issues should have been identified during the field work but as the collected data is reviewed new insights and perspectives of the different issues are likely to emerge. As there will probably be a lot of data, it is useful to select a **method for sorting the information**. This can be done in various ways but it is likely to be easiest if it is done in accordance with the anticipated structure of conflict analysis report (see below).

The different participatory analysis tools such as the ‘conflict tree’, the ‘Divider/Connector analysis’, and ‘actor mapping’ (see above) can be very useful in the analysis process and will help ensure strong inclusion of local perspectives. Consider including the illustrations made by the participants of conflict analysis workshops in the workshop reports.

When conducting conflict analysis, it is important to strive for the analysis to be as objective and nuanced as possible but at the same time acknowledge the limitations in understanding and the preliminary nature of any analysis. It is important to recognise that even when

the research is conducted by a well-balanced research team, and when the analysis is based on information and perspectives from a diverse set of informants, no conflict analysis will be an objective description of reality. It is therefore important to be humble and accommodating if the analysis is criticised, and remember that for conflict actors, facts and perspectives can be highly politicised. You must be cautious of what information is selected and how it is used/reproduced in conflict analyses, as this can have legitimising (and de-legitimising) impacts on certain actors or issues.

That no analysis is perfect does not mean that all analyses are equally good or bad. Conflict analyses should ensure as much as possible that the information and claims being made are accurate and as nuanced as possible. Throughout the analysis process, particular attention should be given to triangulation, recognising that while personal accounts and opinions are powerful and useful and may represent specific concerns, triangulation and aggregation are needed in order for key messages to be established. Validation and peer reviews are also important to ensure quality management of conflict analysis outputs (cf. stage 6 below).

Well-founded recommendations are important so that the conflict analysis may be directly useful for programming. However, researchers may not always be best equipped to provide concrete and easily actionable programmatic recommendations, so it will often be necessary for the research team and relevant programme team to discuss and refine these recommendations before the report is finalised. Some programmatic or policy recommendations may require further unpacking through for instance theory of change workshops, conflict sensitivity workshops or advocacy planning meetings.

Outline structure of a conflict analysis report

1. Background and context (including history of conflict)
2. Causes of conflict and resilience to conflict (including Divider/Connector analysis) possibly along different dimensions of conflict (political, socioeconomic, culture, security, justice, etc.)
3. Actors’ analysis (including interests and capacities, relationships and how actors make use of Dividers and Connectors)
4. Conflict dynamics and future scenarios
5. Conflict sensitivity issue
6. Conclusion and recommendations

Conflict analysis outputs

A conflict analysis process is expected to lead to a number of concrete outputs. In most cases, the analysis will result in at least one written document, unless the situation is so insecure that written text would pose a danger. In general some form of written document should be produced to ensure knowledge sharing and management over time. The type of document(s) should depend on what your organisation will be using them for. Documents purely for internal use may look quite different from those for external use. The audience and the purposes of the analysis will also shape and determine the concrete outputs emerging from the process.

The below examples of outputs from a conflict analysis process are not prescriptive or conclusive. Outputs should ensure that your programmes are able to maximise the benefits of the conflict analyses it carries out or commissions. They should be selected based on careful consideration by key programme staff in consultation with relevant technical advisors.

1. **Conflict analysis report:** Standard or rapid conflict analysis.
2. **Conflict analysis brief:** A summarised version of the analysis primarily for communications and policy engagement purposes.
3. **Conflict analysis presentations:** Used as a means of disseminating findings and recommendations from a conflict analysis process to internal and external audiences.
4. **Conflict sensitivity guidelines:** Provides guidance for ensuring that conflict sensitivity risks and opportunities in an area or specific project are detected, monitored and acted on by management in consultation with relevant programme advisors.
5. **Key conflict analysis questions and answers matrix.** This matrix is structured around generic conflict analysis questions and can be used either in the early stages of a conflict

Box 8: Considerations on framing, presentation and language

- **Avoid judging:** A conflict analysis will likely have to accommodate sharply different perceptions about the situation and must find a way to present those views as objectively as possible, without taking a stand or judging views that you may find difficult or that challenge your own values.
- **Sensitive and tactful framing:** Conflict analyses need to strike a good balance between how arguments and findings are framed and presented in order to ensure that the studies do not in any way jeopardise relations with governments, community groups, different actors and parties to a conflict, other NGOs, UN agencies, etc. Much can be said and difficult points can be made as long as these are framed in the right tone.
- **Clear messaging:** To ensure that the intended users understand and remember the most important messages from a conflict analysis, it is important to structure conflict analysis reports in a way that brings the key issues and findings to the forefront. Using section headings that provide substantive statements followed by a short introductory paragraph that present the main point is a good way to enable the reader to quickly understand the main points.
- **Use plain language:** To ensure that the intended audience have as easy access to the content of the reports it is crucial that the text is written simply and in a language the audience understands, using plain language, avoiding jargon, obscure acronyms or overly academic terms/concepts.
- **Use of direct quotations from interviews:** This may be a successful way to portray local voices and perspectives. However, it may mean a lengthier report and be unsuitable for the format intended in a rapid conflict assessment report. If direct, attributable quotes are used, informed and free consent by the interviewee must have been obtained and be documented.
- **Mix text, maps and graphs:** Different people gain understanding from visual presentations or from written descriptions and explanations. Usually a combination is helpful although, again, this may be impossible due to the short format intended in a rapid conflict assessment report. At the very least, if possible, a map of the research area covered should be included.

Source: GPPAC (2015).

analysis process or as an alternative when it is not possible to do a full conflict analysis.

Stage 6: Quality assurance: How do we ensure 'good enough' conflict analysis?

To ensure that a conflict analysis is as good as possible, a process of quality assurance is important. Since it should be a basis for decision making related to programming, it is important to ensure that the analysis is accurate, nuanced, representative and at the very least that it is 'good enough' for the purposes intended. One important way to ensure that the analysis is accurate and endorsed by different stakeholders is to hold at least one **validation workshop**. At a minimum, a validation workshop should involve key local stakeholders in the area, such as staff from your own and other organisations, local civil society actors, government representatives (if possible) and other relevant local stakeholders. It may also be beneficial to organise a validation workshop at country level involving research organisations that have been working in the area, and staff from other NGOs knowledgeable of the local context. The validation meetings are a way

to gain feedback from stakeholders in the target area, build ownership of the analysis and can be used to as a tool to further refine the analysis. In cases where the research findings are very sensitive (e.g. in highly polarised contexts), it may be useful to hold separate meetings with small groups of people representing different viewpoints, rather than a joint workshop.

In addition to validation workshops/meetings, quality assurance of the draft conflict analysis outputs should be done by requesting **reviews by relevant staff**.

It is also recommended to include a **peer review by an external researcher** who has specialised knowledge about the context. This could be an academic or somebody working as a researcher for a recognised think tank. This may entail a few days' consultancy fee, but it can be very good value for money in terms of ensuring that mistakes or omissions are captured, and if the researcher is generally known and respected, it can help ensure that the analysis is perceived as credible.

4. Making use of Conflict Analysis

This chapter outlines stage 7 of the conflict analysis process, demonstrating how the analysis can be used for: 1. Conflict sensitivity assessment and adjustment; 2. Programme strategy development and review and 3. External stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue.

4.1. Introduction

A critical part of a conflict analysis process is to ensure that once the analysis outputs have been produced, these and possible programmatic and policy implications are properly understood by all the relevant staff and intended external stakeholders. Failure to ensure that this is done severely limits the utility of conflict analysis and must be perceived as a critical part of the process. The internalisation of the conflict analysis can be done in different ways. A first step is to ensure that a meeting between the analysis team and the relevant management team to review key findings and discuss programmatic and operational implications and next steps takes place. Following this, two processes should take place: one internal (which is always needed) and one external (which may or may not be needed, depending on the purpose of the conflict analysis).

The internal process is about ensuring that the conflict analysis informs your organisation's programming. The first step is to ensure full and shared understanding of the analysis. To achieve this an initial meeting should be organised for relevant staff to enable the different findings and recommendations to be presented and discussed and agreement on way forward achieved. Such

a meeting can be stand-alone but is ideally combined with one or two workshops needed to use the analysis findings to mainstream conflict sensitivity within the programme/project (Chapter 4.2) and to inform programme/project strategy design/review through a Theory of Change process (Chapter 4.3).

The external process is about ensuring external dissemination and engagement with relevant external stakeholders including duty bearers and donors about the findings of the conflict analysis and the implications these should have for policy and funding.

4.2. Conflict Sensitivity Guidance

As mentioned, aid agencies are increasingly committed to ensuring conflict sensitivity when working in conflict affected areas. This commitment is based on extensive evidence collected by aid practitioners and researchers since the 1990s that aid, (humanitarian, development or peacebuilding) can have significant unintended and negative as well as positive impacts on conflict and communities' resilience to conflict. When aid agencies operate in contexts of scarcity, inequality and intergroup conflict (latent or manifest), they become part of that context. What they do and how they do it can and often do harm by exacerbating existing tensions or undermine the factors underlying communities' resilience to conflict. But aid agencies' engagement can also contribute to reducing conflict and strengthening resilience to conflict by strengthening factors

Conflict Sensitivity is the ability of an organisation to:

- Understand the context in which it is operating in, in particular to understand intergroup tensions and the “divisive” issues with a potential for conflict, and the “connecting” issues with a potential to mitigate conflict and strengthen social cohesion;
- Understand the interaction between its intervention and that context, and
- Act upon that understanding, in order to avoid unintentionally feeding into further division, and to maximize the potential contribution to social cohesion and peace.

and relationships that connect people across conflict lines even when that is not the main purpose of their programmatic engagement. Conflict sensitivity is about ensuring a strong understanding of the context and taking responsibility for both the intended and unintended negative and positive impacts of an organisations’ work. In some contexts, it may not be possible to completely avoid doing harm. Being committed to conflict sensitivity does not mean that your organisation should do nothing in such contexts. It means that you must deliberately seek to understand the dilemmas and trade-offs and make decisions based on the organisations’ values, while doing what is possible to minimise negative impact and maximise positive impact on conflict and resilience to conflict.

The starting point for ensuring conflict sensitivity is a conflict analysis in the area of intervention. This provides the basis for analysing how your organisation’s intervention does or may interact with the conflict context and identify risks of negative impacts as well as opportunity for positive impact that your organisation should act on.

Common ways that aid impact on conflict

The general ways that aid impacts conflict and resilience to conflict are well documented. The pioneering work of Mary B. Anderson and Collaborative for Development Action which

led to the ‘Do No Harm’ framework identified Resource Transfers and Implicit Ethical Messages as the two main mechanisms for the way aid impacts on conflict.³¹

Resource Transfers: Generally, the most significant way that aid actors impact on conflict are through the introduction of resources (food aid, shelter, livelihoods support, training, procurement contracts, jobs etc.) into resource scarce contexts where competition between groups is at the core of conflict. What resources are provided, who benefits from them and how assistance is provided matters to whether aid exacerbates inter-group divisions or reduces them. Resource transfer issues often include:³²

- **Theft or Diversion:** In conflict contexts, aid agency resources can be stolen or taxed by military authorities or insurgents who use them directly, or sell them, to support their war effort. Conflict actors also seek to control who benefits from aid in order to enhance inequalities and patronage.
- **Targeting and Distribution Effects:** When distribution of assistance mirrors cleavages in a conflict (geographically, politically, and socially) it can fuel grievances and deepen the problem. Conflicts between communities may be fueled over locations of projects, targeting of specific groups (e.g. refugees and not host communities), unequal procurement or the hiring of staff. On the other hand, if aid is distributed in ways that encourage genuine collaboration between opposing groups, then aid can help strengthen resilience to conflict.
- **Market Effects:** In conflict contexts, aid agencies’ resources will influence wages, prices and profits. Some people gain, others lose. Assistance can reinforce corruption through multiple layers of subcontracting, for example, or generate competition and conflict over aid resources, often along factional, tribal or ethnic lines.

- **Legitimization Effects:** NGOs’ efforts to gain access to people in need can be exploited to legitimise conflict actors in the eyes of the public. NGOs need to be wary of efforts of illegitimate leaders taking credit for assistance. On the other hand, aid can help provide public legitimacy to legitimate but weak duty bearers and act as an important element of peace and state building.
- **Substitution Effects:** In conflict-induced emergencies when international aid agencies focus on saving lives, it is important to acknowledge that this can free up duty bearer’s resources for the war effort. In many contexts there may be limits to what an NGO can do about that, but efforts should be made to promote joint positions among NGOs, international organisations and donors.
- **Supporting political settlements that are not inclusive:** Striking a deal may be a priority in the short term, but the exclusion of key groups, such as parties to the conflict,

women or youth may enhance grievances and lay the foundation for future conflict.

Implicit Ethical Messages: The impact that the behaviour of aid workers and organisations have on conflict. This includes messages about values and the organisations’ intentions that staff consciously or unconsciously send to other actors in the context. They include the ways that aid workers operate to reinforce the modes and moods of conflict or, alternatively, to establish non-conflictual relations, mutual respect and inter-group collaboration. The ‘Do No Harm’ framework distinguishes between four categories of Implicit Ethical Messages, outlined in the table below.

How to develop a conflict sensitivity assessment and implementation plan?

As mentioned above, there are some general patterns of how aid impacts conflict. These can be useful to keep in mind, but it is important to

Table 2: Categories of implicit ethical messages

Negative patterns of behavior		Positive patterns of behavior
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition • Suspicion • Anger and Aggression (Belligerence) • Indifference • Fear • Telling (people about themselves, what to think, what to do) 	1. Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation and Collaboration • Trust • Calm • Sensitivity (to local concerns) • Courage • Listening (to what people say is important to them, to why they think what they think)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Claiming powerlessness • Impunity • Arms & Power 	2. Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking Positive Action • Responsibility • Rule of Law or Nonviolence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different value for different lives • Ignoring rules • Unfairness 	3. Fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of value • Following rules • Fairness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed • Decision making process unknown • Hide information • Lack of transparency contributes to all above behaviors 	4. Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open • Decision making process shared • Share information • Transparency contributes to all above behaviors

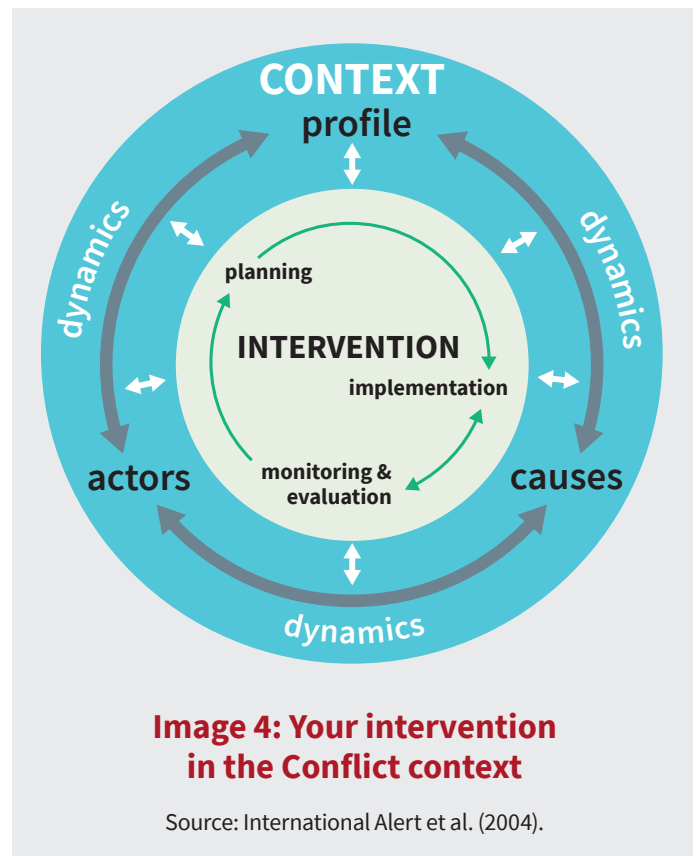
ensure that efforts to ensure conflict sensitivity are firmly based on the analysis of the particular context. The conflict analysis should enable this by identifying key issues causing conflict and the broader mapping of Dividers and Connectors in the particular context, as well as by providing an overview of how aid and conflict have interacted in the past.

Conflict sensitivity assessment builds on conflict analysis by analysing the interaction between the conflict and an intervention (e.g. a project), identifying risks of negative impact by exacerbating division or undermining positive relations, as well as options for contributing to reducing tensions and strengthening positive connections. This analysis should identify how the programme/project design or operational practice or policies should be adjusted and should provide the necessary awareness and guidance for programme management to implement conflict sensitivity recommendations. The process should be participatory involving different staff including those working in the specific target area. It can take the form of a workshop which is either stand-alone following the completion of the conflict analysis or integrated with a Theory of Change (ToC) workshop.

The conflict sensitivity assessment takes point of departure in the conflict analysis, and seeks to identify and understand how your organisation's planned or ongoing intervention interacts with the conflict context. It does so by looking at the details of the programme/project (what, why, who, where, how etc.) and identifies and assesses how the programme/project may interact with Dividers and Connectors (see illustration below).

The assessment examines the parameters of a programme/project, including the following:³³

- **What** is your organisation doing/planning to do in terms of activities/outputs?
- **Why** is your organisation intervening?



- **Who** is your organisation targeting (the beneficiaries and participants) and engaging with (partners)?
- **Where** is/will your organisation be operating?
- **How** is/will your organisation implement its activities?
- **When** will activities take place?

Once the participatory conflict sensitivity assessment has been conducted, the key findings, in terms of risks, opportunities and recommendations need to be captured along with an implementation plan for integrating conflict sensitivity in day to day project/programme management.

How to monitor and manage conflict sensitivity risks and opportunities

To ensure that conflict sensitivity is integrated into your organisation's programme management practice, three things are critical:

1. Regularly refresh the conflict analysis and conflict sensitivity assessment. This is about monitoring the context and the interaction between the context and your intervention.

2. Monitor key conflict sensitivity risks and opportunities identified and assessed in the conflict sensitivity workshop
3. Management decision making should ensure that identified adjustments to the programme/project are actioned using the programme/project specific conflict sensitivity guidance note

Implementation of the conflict sensitivity implementation plan is the responsibility of the relevant project manager. S/he should act on the recommendations of the conflict sensitivity assessment as quickly as possible. Recommendations are likely to include simple action points that can be implemented immediately as well as some that may require monitoring and follow up. Key identified risks should be captured in the programme and/or project risk register and MEAL plans so that they are properly integrated into the project cycle management.

One way to monitor conflict sensitivity is to develop indicators that can be integrated into results frameworks and MEAL plans. Indicators can be process oriented in that they focus on tracking whether important steps such as updating a conflict analysis, reviewing conflict sensitivity risks and training staff in conflict sensitivity have been implemented in a timely manner. Indicators can also focus on measuring change in the context and on the impact your organisation has on the conflict context (positively and negatively). Such indicators would focus on the issues identified in the conflict analysis as most likely to impact on or be impacted by the project/programme.³⁴ An example of such an indicator could be: *'Proportion of people in communities A and B who perceive the project as benefitting both communities equally or one community over the other (rarely, often or always).'*³⁵

Using indicators for conflict sensitivity monitoring is an option with both benefits and limitations. On the positive side, once indicators have been developed and integrated into results frameworks, they will typically be tracked and reported. On the negative side, there is a risk that the monitoring becomes perceived as the responsibility of M&E staff. To avoid this, it is important – especially in contexts where there is real potential for aid to negatively impact conflict – that conflict sensitivity monitoring becomes a standard process and agenda point during country Senior Management Team meetings.

An alternative to using indicators as a way to monitor the conflict sensitivity of a project/programme is to focus on the patterns of impact meaning *the specific ways your organisation's interventions interact with conflict in an area*. Identifying patterns of impact is central to the conflict sensitivity analysis and once done must be monitored. Project/programme management need to review the patterns and act based on the monitoring.

4.3. Programme Strategy Development and Review

A key role of conflict analysis is to inform strategy development and review processes at programme as well as project level. A good conflict analysis also provides important aspects of a baseline against which the impact of an intervention on the conflict context can be assessed. Evaluators tend to look to conflict analysis to help them in assessing the relevance of a programme design for the context, the impacts of a project/programme on the context and whether the implementing actor has been systematic in its efforts to ensure conflict sensitivity.³⁶

As mentioned previously, conflict analysis should be ongoing, form part of the monitoring of the effects of implementation and when relevant lead to adjustment or redesign of intervention strategy in specific locations. This is particularly important in longer duration projects which seek to use an adaptive management approach.

How to bridge the gap between analysis and practical programming?

Linking conflict analysis (and other types of analysis) and practice is a common challenge among NGOs. Conflict analysis, when done well, can be good at identifying and explaining the causes and drivers of conflict and communities' and societies' resilience to conflict, but generally be poor at identifying what exactly to do about it. Agencies often ask conflict analysts to provide programmatic recommendations based on their analysis, but analysts often are not well equipped to deliver useful recommendations at the right level, for programme staff action. Once the conflict analysis outputs are produced, it is important that relevant programme staff take the lead in systematically identifying the programmatic implications of the analysis. This does not mean that the conflict analyst(s) should not remain involved. In fact, it is highly useful to keep the analyst(s) involved during the process of internalising the analysis within your organisation's programme team and deciding on the programmatic implications. When possible, it may also be useful to keep the analyst(s) involved in connection with updating and revising the analysis over time.

The illustration overleaf and narrative explanation provide guidance on the process of making use of conflict analysis in programme and project design and review processes by linking conflict analysis to theory of change development and review.

Theory of change development and review

As mentioned in the Glossary, a Theory of Change (ToC) describes how and why your organisation aims to create a transformation in a specific context. It is a participatory process, which brings together staff, partners and other relevant actors and encourages them to think critically about a specific context, what changes are needed and how these are to be achieved.

At the base of any theory of change should be a good contextual analysis and the clear identification of a problem or problems that needs to be addressed in order to create desirable changes for the people of concern.

The diagram overleaf shows the steps in a ToC development and review process, and is modified to show where and how conflict analysis may contribute to that process. This is further explained in the section below the diagram.

The ToC cycle emphasises the importance of starting by identifying the main problem (step 1). If timed well, the conflict analysis can ensure that this identification process is both well informed and based on a participatory process. When it is the intention that a conflict analysis shall inform a new programme/project, the internalisation workshop mentioned above is a good forum to identify the problems/issues that your organisation should seek to address. For step 2 (factor/actor analysis), the actor and causes analysis of conflict (cf. Chapter 3.1) should be

A simple way of thinking about Theory of Change is as a series of IF-THEN, BECAUSE arguments:

- IF – is the intervention in the context,
- THEN – is the outcome,
- BECAUSE – is the theory explaining why the change will happen.

CONFLICT ANALYSIS GUIDELINES

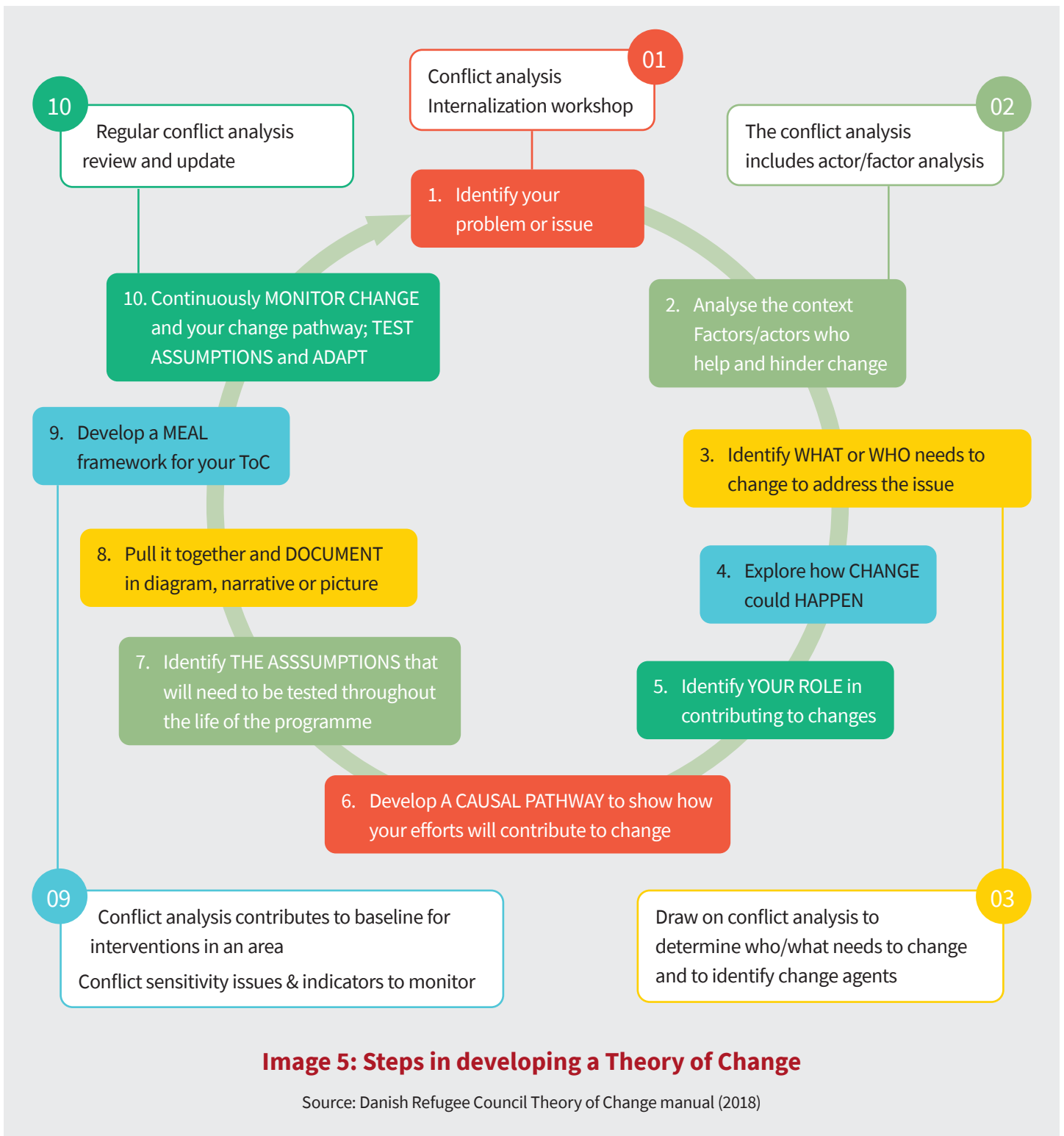


Image 5: Steps in developing a Theory of Change

Source: Danish Refugee Council Theory of Change manual (2018)

drawn on directly to understand the positions, interests and needs of the different actors in the context, the relationships between them and what divides or connects them and why. The factor and actor mapping process conducted during a ToC workshop will further help to ensure that all participants have a good overview

of main contextual issues as they move on to consider step 3 (what and who needs to change). During step 3, the conflict analysis identification of how conflict actors behave will be useful for identifying what and who needs to change, as well as assist in identifying who in the local context may be able to promote such change.

Once step 3 has been completed, steps 4 to 8 of the ToC development process can be carried out without further reference to the conflict analysis. However, step 9 (developing a Monitoring Evaluation and Learning/MEL framework) should draw on the conflict analysis which contributes to the baseline against which the evaluation relevance and effectiveness criteria should be measured. The MEL framework should also include guidance on how conflict sensitivity will be measured. This can be done using conflict sensitivity indicators, or the key conflict sensitivity issues monitoring approach outlined below (see Chapter 4.2).

4.4. External stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue

A good conflict analysis provides a foundational understanding of why a given conflict and forced

displacement occurred or may occur. It is a useful tool for sensitising, raising awareness and engaging local and national authorities, donors and other NGOs around options for preventive action and policy improvements. It is also very useful for strengthening your organisational reputation drawing on a strong contextual understanding as the basis of its programming, and as a relevant partner in policy dialogue.

The extent to which conflict analysis should be used for external stakeholder engagement and policy dialogue will differ and needs to be determined by the relevant management team. Local sensitivities must be considered against the benefits for your organisation and its people of concern. It is advisable that programmes use the opportunity provided by a conflict analysis to engage with donors and trusted organisations about the analysis and what implications for programming, funding and policy should be drawn from it.

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Endnotes

- 1 In this document, whenever reference is made to DRC it includes DDG.
- 2 This state of affairs is not unusual among NGOs. OECD find that aid agencies often fail to ensure that conflict analyses are properly used to influence programme planning and design. OECD (2012): *Conflict analysis and its use in evaluation. In Evaluating peacebuilding activities in settings of conflict and fragility: Improving learning for results* Paris: OECD.
- 3 Survey on the use of conflict analysis with DRC Heads of Programme, March 2018.
- 4 See Bibliography for guidelines and tools drawn upon.
- 5 Dialogue on Protection Challenges: Understanding and addressing root causes of displacement – António Guterres, 16 December 2015.
- 6 One such tool is OPSECA, see: <https://www.humanidev.tech/>
- 7 Adapted from GPPAC (2015)

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- 8 This chapter draws on: Danish Demining Group (2013), GPPCA (2015), Levinger (2013), DFID (2002), International Alert et al (2004), World Vision (2014) and GSDRC (2017).
- 9 Climate change may increase the likelihood of conflict, for example where extreme weather events increase food insecurity and affect the livelihood of vulnerable households in fragile communities. At the same time, a society entrenched in violent conflict is less prepared to mitigate or adapt to climate change. For further analysis on this, see Krampe (2019) and SIDA (2017).
- 10 Levinger (2013), p. 95-100.
- 11 The actor map is drawn from Fischer et, al, (Responding to Conflict, 2000).
- 12 Resilience is a conceptually-loaded word which carries multiple potential meanings in the different fields where it has evolved, from engineering, to ecology, psychology, humanitarian and development aid and peacebuilding). In this guidance “Resilience to conflict” is defined as a person’s or community’s ability to resist, recover from and transform conflict. For a discussion on resilience in humanitarian and development aid and peacebuilding, see Menkhaus (2013)
- 13 This section draws on the following materials: GPPAC (2015), Conciliation Resources (2019), Saferworld (2019).
- 14 See for example WHO: <https://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/understanding/gender-definition/en/>
- 15 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2017): Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action; IFRC (2018): Minimum Standards for Protection, Gender and Inclusion in Emergencies.
- 16 IASC (2017): Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action (section: Assessment & Analysis p.30). For practical guidance and examples see for example the Care Rapid Gender Analysis Toolkit developed for humanitarian contexts; available here: <https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/in-practice/rapid-gender-analysis>.
- 17 Conciliation Resources (2015), p.7
- 18 Draws on GPPCA (2015), section 3.1.
- 19 This section draws on Oliva & Charbonnier (2016)
- 20 Section adapted from Danish Demining Group (2013), pp. 9-10.
- 21 This section draws on the BSA Statement of Ethical Practice (2017) and the European University Institute Guide on Good Data Protection Practice in Research (2019)
- 22 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/justice-and-fundamental-rights/data-protection/2018-reform-eu-data-protection-rules/eu-data-protection-rules_en
- 23 Section draws on GPPAC (2015)
- 24 Section adapted from Danish Demining Group (2013) and GPPAC (2015), section 2.4
- 25 The BSA Statement of Ethical Practice (2017) is a useful resource, developed for British sociologists but applicable for field research in many domains, and provides a robust set of practical principles.
- 26 Section adapted from World Vision (2014)
- 27 Section adapted from World Vision (2014)
- 28 Cerwonka and Malkki (2007)
- 29 More guidance on perception surveys, and information about their limitations and strengths, can be found in GSDRC (2013).
- 30 GPPAC (2015)
- 31 Adapted from Anderson M. (2000), p.14-5. and Garred, M. (2006), p. 15-31.
- 32 Adapted from CDA (2016) and UK Stabilisation Unit (2016)
- 33 Adapted from UK Stabilisation Unit (2016)
- 34 Goldwyn & Chigas (2013)
- 35 The conflict sensitivity consortium (2012), p.14
- 36 OECD (2012), p.78

