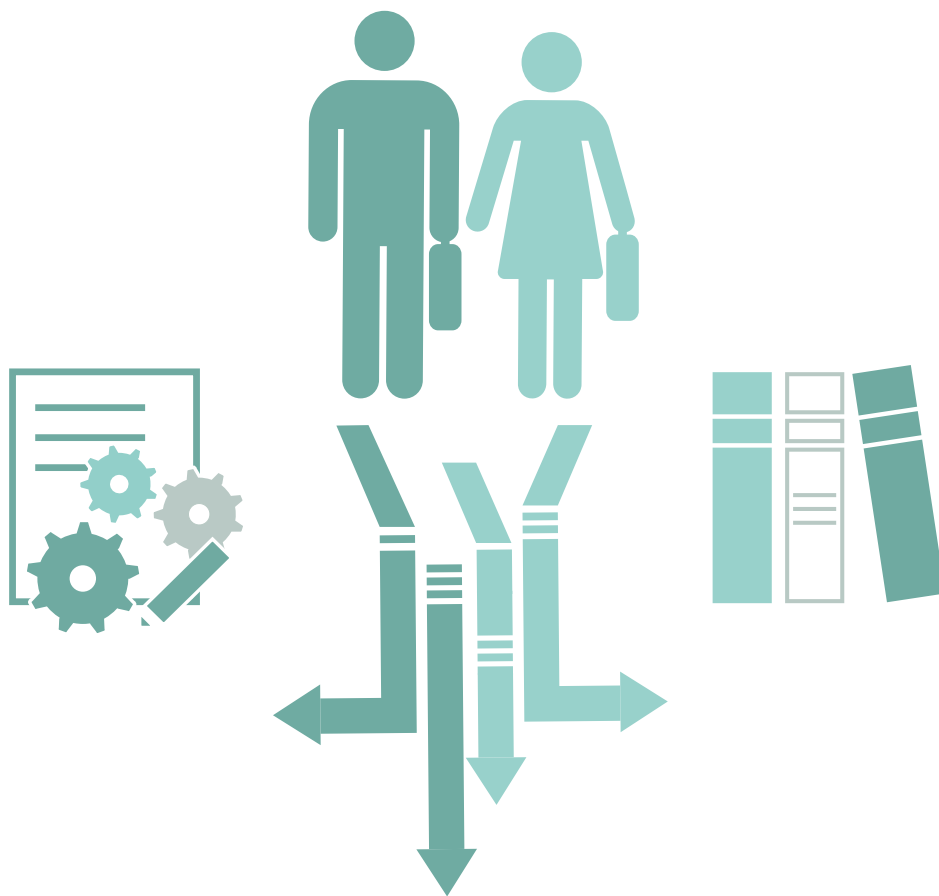


2 Getting Started & Preparation

“consider the purpose and scope of the analysis as well as the resources required to follow it through”



Introduction

This section guides you through the key considerations and practicalities to lay a solid foundation for the conflict analysis exercise. This includes considering the purpose and scope of the analysis as well as the resources required to follow it through. Another step in getting started is to get an overview of existing research materials to start off with a preliminary analysis.

2.1 Determine the purpose and context of the conflict analysis

People perform a conflict analysis for many different reasons and in many different circumstances. The purpose and context of the analysis have a profound influence on how it is done: who does it, where information comes from, and the sensitivities regarding any attempt to characterise a conflict, among other things. Some of the basic purposes of conflict analysis include the following:

- **Conflict analysis as a tool for conflict sensitivity.** In some cases, an organisation does not intend to address conflict factors directly—but does want to ensure that its humanitarian or development programmes are sensitive to conflict dynamics. In this case, a more limited analysis may be all that is necessary, such as dividers and connectors (see Section 6).
- **Conflict analysis as a first step towards programme development.** In this context, analysis is a diagnostic tool for understanding the problem(s), in order to design ways to address them programmatically. Such an analysis is often an internal organisational process among staff, although it can also be done in a participatory manner with key partner organisations.
- **Conflict analysis as preparation for working with stakeholders or parties to the conflict.** Once you have decided to intervene in a conflict, it is important to understand the perspectives of those directly involved—the origins of the conflict, the perspectives of the different parties, their needs and demands, and so forth. Again, this is often done as an internal process, although information is gathered as widely as possible.
- **Conflict analysis as a conflict resolution or transformation process.** This is definitely an intervention—and therefore to be approached carefully. The parties to conflict each have their own view of the causes, history, and current tensions. Often the history and origins of the conflict are themselves contested issues that must be handled sensitively. Joint analysis of the conflict is a common early step in a conflict transformation process.

Each of these purposes implies a different answer to **who** does the analysis; the **sources** of information; **how** the information is analysed, and **how** the resulting analysis is used.

Example 1:

Conducting conflict analysis for programme planning in Sri Lanka

An INGO had been working on peace issues in Sri Lanka for several years. An evaluation recommended that the programme team develop a shared conflict analysis as the basis for forward planning. They hired a consultant to facilitate their analysis process. The staff themselves represented a spectrum of perspectives, so the early steps of analysis were performed internally. Once they had drafted a tentative analysis, they invited partner organisations from a range of viewpoints to participate in a workshop where they commented on the analysis and added rich layers to the understanding of the continuing conflict.



For more on the difference between peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity:

Diana Chigas and Peter Woodrow, *A Distinction with a Difference: Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding*, CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2010.



Lisa Schirch's 'Conflict Assessment, Peacebuilding Planning and Self-Assessment matrix' in the Tools Section of the MSP Manual gives an overview of how these questions can be considered together.

For many purposes, conflict analysis;

- » Will serve as the **basis for dialogue** among stakeholders and planning of conflict prevention actions by a range of actors.
- » Will describe a set of initial or **baseline** conditions, which will be updated periodically to track changes/shifts/trends in the conflict over time, as part of a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system.
- » Provides a foundational understanding of why a given conflict occurred and hence a useful tool for sensitising, raising awareness and **advocacy** work (both for behavioural and policy change).

2.2 Identify the arena or level of analysis

What are the boundaries of the conflict we are interested in? One community? A district or province? A sub-region of the country? The entire country? Do we include regional neighbours? International dimensions? Such boundary questions are partly determined by the purpose, as discussed above. Identifying the study **area/arena/location** is an important procedure for any conflict assessment 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, while, in effect, their source was at a very local level. It is also important to take into account the **conflict phase** in question—whether the conflict to be analysed is latent/frozen, emerging slowly, becoming manifest in various ways, or already resulting in violence.

Conflicts in the Karamoja area of East and Central Africa are a good example. The conflicts have persisted for many years and involve issues of land ownership and use, grazing rights and migration, and cattle rustling, among others. The conflicts implicate four countries, including Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and South Sudan — and identifying the appropriate area of analysis in such a region calls for an extensive understanding of the dynamics of the conflict and how they manifest themselves; otherwise there is a risk of gaining a one-sided perspective.

Intra-state conflicts can be even more complex, in terms of the **entry** point for conflict analysis. The 2007 post-election violence in Kenya presents a good case in point. Where do you begin in analysing such a conflict? Do you start in the communities most affected by the violence? Do you begin with the people identified as being the key instigators of the violence? If so, do you look for these at a local level or national level, or both? The answer may lie, at least initially, in the purpose of the analysis and the likely level of programming, which should also be informed by a **self-assessment** of the interveners. To intervene effectively at the national level, you would need to understand national political dynamics. To intervene in specific local communities, it would be more important to comprehend local tensions and their origins.

Example 2:

Understanding community tensions in Liberia

An NGO was preparing to organise dialogue and negotiation sessions between two ethnic communities that had conducted mutual massacres during the civil war in Liberia. Groups formerly living side by side were now housed in separate though nearby communities, and land use issues were intense. Before bringing elders from each group together, organisers interviewed women and men, youth, and ex-combatants from each group, seeking to understand not only the history, but also the current feelings and tensions.

2.3 Mobilise resources: time, budget and personnel

Conflict analysis requires a plan for mobilising resources—both material and human, as it represents a cost to the organisation in terms of time and funds to carry out the process. Actual costs will always depend on the situation, the composition of the analysis team, and the logistics involved.

BOX 6: POTENTIAL COST IMPLICATIONS

In terms of budgeting, the following are *potential* costs that could occur for an organisation undertaking a conflict analysis exercise:

- Travel to/from the conflict area and local transport.
- Lodging/meals for team members.
- Space for team meetings or workshops.
- Interpretation (if outsiders without local language skills are involved).
- Salaries/fees for additional team members/consultants not already on staff (if needed).
- Expenses of community members or other volunteer participants.
- If survey research/public opinion polling is included, this would represent additional expense.

The largest cost is usually in the staff time devoted to collecting information and then analysing it. At times, organisations are under extreme time pressure, such as meeting the deadline for a programme proposal to a donor, or when the context itself calls for urgent action. Many poor quality or inadequate analyses have been produced under these kinds of pressures. If, for whatever reason, the organisation is forced to produce a rushed analysis, plans should be made to deepen the analysis at a later time, perhaps after a grant is awarded, or as an integrated part of actions taken.

2.4 Examine existing analyses

Prior to any conflict analysis exercise, the conflict analysis team should obtain relevant secondary information about the conflict being assessed and about the general location, to gain an overview of the conflict situation. Such information can be obtained from relevant secondary sources, either from media archives (print and mass media); government or intergovernmental offices; research reports or other NGO analysis efforts. Some conflicts (especially long-term ones) have been studied extensively, and lots of relevant information is available, including the following types of sources:

- **Existing conflict analyses.** Some governments have performed conflict analyses and make them available. For instance, UK Government's Department For International Development (DFID) will often post the results of a Strategic Conflict Analysis, and USAID has started to make the results of their Conflict Assessment Framework available. NGOs and civil society organisations working in the area may well have developed various forms of analysis that can save time. Caution: existing analyses are quite helpful, when available, but they will almost always need to be brought up to date and validated.
- **Government or intergovernmental reports.** Some governments collect information about social issues and conflicts. In some cases, national aid coordinating ministries compile information about groups working in the peacebuilding arena, the World Bank publishes detailed analyses on country or regional basis, and UN agencies, such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), produce similar reports according to sector as well, particularly in large UN mission countries.
- **Journalistic or think tank reports.** It is often possible to find well-researched reports that provide a certain kind of analysis on many conflict areas around the world. For instance,

the International Crisis Group (ICG) produces reports of this kind, along with several other groups.³ Caution: ICG reports are typically cogent analyses based on extensive interviews with local actors. However, they are often limited to capital cities and the perspectives of well-informed people of influence, unless explicitly stating otherwise. ICG reports can have significant political impact, which can lead to controversy when there is disagreement over their recommendations.

Example 3:

Controversy over conflict analysis in Syria

An example of a controversial ICG report was the ‘Popular Protest in North Africa and the Middle East (VII): The Syrian’s Regime’s Slow-motion Suicide’ report of July 2011, in which the ICG concluded that despite “attempts to survive, the Syrian regime appears to be digging its own grave”.

According to some critics, the conclusions of this ICG report assumed a false choice between a military intervention in Syria and doing nothing. Furthermore, some argue that it encouraged the rejection of diplomacy by the international community.

Source Nicholas Noe, ‘When NGOs Call For Military Intervention in Syria: The Case of the International Crisis Group’, The Huffington Post, 15 September 2015.

- **Studies, articles or books.** In some cases, either academic or journalistic literature is available providing historical background and other relevant information on the economy, politics, social conditions, etc. Caution: although the information may be useful for your analysis, these are seldom conflict analyses in themselves. Academic research can be useful on certain questions, although it can also be narrowly focused at times.
- **Indexes and assessments.** There are various indexes that assess conflicts or countries according to a range of factors of conflict and fragility, much of it available on line. Caution: much of the information for these indexes is generated from available international sources or event data—it is not compiled from detailed local knowledge. It can be useful for comparative purposes, but should be used with caution to understand a specific situation.



For indexes see for instance:

‘Positive Peace Report’,
Vision of Humanity

‘Country Indicators
for Foreign Policy’,
Carleton University,
Canada

‘Uppsala Conflict
Data Program’, Uppsala
University Department
of Peace and Conflict
Research

When looking up and using secondary sources, beware of the potential **biases** that may be **embedded in the source**. In particular, to many people Wikipedia can be a place to start looking at specific topics and finding sources, even though they are aware that it is based on open-source information that anyone can edit. However, an awareness of information owners is paramount. For instance, critics point out that less than 10% of Wikipedia editors are female, which can lead to a gender gap also in content.⁴ Even a well-sourced and carefully considered article may still be biased. In any case, you should never rely on a single source of information.

3 ‘International Crisis Group’ <<http://www.crisisgroup.org>>.

4 Emma Paling, ‘Wikipedia’s Hostility to Women’, The Atlantic, 21 October 2015.