

3 Putting a Team Together

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Introduction

An important part of preparing a conflict analysis process is to consider the skills and group dynamics when putting a team together or when working in partnership with other agencies. This section encourages self-reflection on the part of the analysts, by discussing how the analysts themselves have an effect on the research and analysis process.

3.1 Who gathers information? Team considerations

An analysis team is best composed of members with **complementary skills and views**. Some team members should be knowledgeable about conflict and peace programming, while others will be knowledgeable about the context, culture, politics, language, etc. Consider the possibility of a mix of outsiders and insiders from the conflict, recognising that outsiders may be people from the same community but a different ethnic group, from the same country but a different location, or from a different country. Particular attention needs to be given to the perception of bias of the team. Questions to consider include the following:

- How will the team be viewed by conflict actors in the area? Might certain individual characteristics—based on (perceived) religion, skin colour, gender, age group, nationality and language, for instance—expose the team to additional **risks** or **perceptions** of bias?
- Given the **purposes** of the analysis, what are the needed skills, experience, relationships of those collecting and analysing information? Is there any reason to deviate from the norms of a mixed-gender team?
- What is the **appropriate mix** among people who know the context well—and people who are less familiar with the area, but bring other kinds of expertise and perspectives (knowledge of peacebuilding, analytical skills, survey research expertise, etc.)? Do team members have the ability to gather data that is representative of the overall society as relevant for the analysis? Does the team have the needed language skills and local connections?
- What is the **working style** of prospective team members? Do all members: a) demonstrate skills and comfort working in potentially dangerous and politically sensitive situations in a calm, nonthreatening manner; b) employ interpersonal approaches that are transparent, trusting and that evoke trust; and c) exhibit skills for managing conflicts and tension?
- How will the composition of the team affect **access** to certain populations, such as women or minority groups, or to certain stakeholders who may be difficult to reach for a variety of reasons?

3.2 Working in partnership for conflict analysis

Increasingly, programme implementation is undertaken through a series of partnerships. International NGOs (INGOs) almost always work through local civil society and NGO partners. International donors work with a range of partnerships as well. If conflict analysis is to form the basis for strategy development and programme design, all of the organisations that will be involved must work from a **shared understanding** of the causes, issues and actors. They must therefore be involved in some significant way in the development of the conflict analysis.

Partnerships can be positive and mutually beneficial. At the same time, partnerships are a potential source of unintended negative effects. Some INGOs decide to work with a local organisation before they understand how that organisation or its members are perceived by others in the situation—or whom they represent, in political or cultural terms. Similarly, local organisations can feel overwhelmed or dominated by international organisations.

In the Guiding Principles for conflict analysis (Section 1.4) it was noted that **local knowledge and involvement** is paramount for the credibility of any conflict analysis process. At the same time, we have acknowledged that engagement and partnership with **outsiders** can also enrich

the conflict analysis. At times, an outsider is able to raise useful questions, some of which might be too sensitive to be raised by locals. In some circumstances, respondents within a conflict arena might find it more comfortable to open up to an outsider than a fellow local (bearing in mind that an outsider could be someone from a different location within the same country, a different country within the same region, or even from another continent).

What is the appropriate mix of truly local people, partner organisations from elsewhere in the same country, as well as colleagues from other countries in the region or internationally? The answer is partly determined by the **scope and boundaries** of the conflict to be analysed. If you are working with several communities in a local district, most likely local people will be able to handle most or all tasks. If the area of interest is an entire nation, including regional dynamics, then a team including nationals and others from the region may be advisable. If the necessary technical skills are not readily available among insiders (however defined), it may be necessary to engage international experts as team members, trainers or resource persons.

A second aspect of partnerships is **regional knowledge**. In some cases, conflicts that appear localised might have regional or even international dimensions. For example, the conflict over the use of Lake Turkana waters in Northern Kenya between the Pokot and Turkana communities also links to the use and control of waters in Ethiopia's Omo basin. Therefore, an analysis of this conflict might require the involvement of partners from Ethiopia, as well as some basic understanding of integrated cross-border resource management.

BOX 7: CONFLICT SENSITIVITY/DO NO HARM CONSIDERATIONS – TEAM COMPOSITION

- How will the team composition affect conflict dynamics?
- How will the analysis team be perceived, in terms of potential biases or relations with the various actors/parties?
- Will anyone be endangered by participation in a conflict analysis process?
- Will partner organisations (at whatever level) be adversely affected by involvement in conflict analysis?