

Acknowledgements

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In Permanent Marker completed the revision by proofreading and adding references.

GPPAC would like to acknowledge the vast resources that informed this publication, and thank all the contributors and reviewers for enhancing our conflict analysis framework. We hope it will be of use to peacebuilding practitioners within and beyond our network, and that it will contribute to improving the work that we do and the results that we can achieve for sustainable peace.

List of Abbreviations	
ANC	African National Congress (South Africa)
BATNA	Best Alternative To A Negotiated Agreement
CRIES	Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
EU	European Union
GNU	Government of National Unit (South Africa)
GPPAC	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
ICG	International Crisis Group
IDPs	Internally Displaced People
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MSP	Multi-Stakeholder Process
MSP Manual	Multi-stakeholder Processes for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding: A Manual (GPPAC 2015)
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NDC	National Democratic Congress (Ghana)
NP	National Party (South Africa)
NPP	New Patriotic Party (Ghana)
OAS	The Organization of American States
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
RPP Matrix	Reflecting on Peace Practice Matrix
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNOY	United Network of Young Peacebuilders
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WWP	Women Peacemakers Program

1 Introduction to Conflict Analysis

“Conflict Analysis is a crucial tool for the design, implementation and evaluation of peacebuilding programmes”



1.1 About this manual

This document represents a framework and practical guidelines for conflict analysis that members of the GPPAC network and various other organisations can adapt and localise to fit their respective contexts and organisational needs. We call it the ‘**Conflict Analysis Field Guide**’ in brief. It was developed by members of GPPAC’s Preventive Action Working Group and partners to support Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and practitioners with the following **objectives**:

- To strengthen CSOs’ capacity for conflict analysis as a basis for preventive action.
- To promote self-assessment and conflict sensitivity.
- To inform programming/project planning, whether it be direct intervention or advocacy to mobilise other actors.

This guide complements the GPPAC Manual on Multi-Stakeholder Processes for Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (referred to as ‘the MSP Manual’ from here on), which focuses on how to bring together different stakeholders around conflict analysis, action planning and peacebuilding processes.

This introductory section 1 discusses some **definitions and conceptual frameworks** towards a better understanding of the topic of conflict analysis. It introduces a set of guiding principles and gender considerations that can serve as good practice standards.

Section 2 guides you through the **key considerations and practicalities** for getting started and preparing a conflict analysis exercise. This includes thinking through the purpose and scope of the analysis, preparing a desk review for your preliminary analysis, as well as considering the resources required to follow it through.

Section 3 looks at the **skills and group dynamics** when putting a **team** together or when working in partnership with other agencies. It encourages **self-reflection** on the part of the analysts, by considering how the analysts themselves have an effect on the research and analysis process.

Section 4 provides guidance on **data collection** techniques, including choices about what information to gather and whom to approach. It introduces a number of specific considerations for different phases of conflict.

Section 5 is about how to make sense of the information you have gathered, with an introductory overview of the range of tools, frameworks and processes to **sort, analyse and validate** your findings.

Section 6 presents a number of **conflict analysis tools**, including templates, guidelines and examples for their practical use. Each tool or method starts with a description, a purpose and suggestions of the circumstances in which the tool might be particularly helpful.

Find your way through the manual

Look out for these icons throughout the manual to find out more on a particular topic or tool.



There are relevant tools and guidance boxes available for this topic.



More on this topic can be found in a different section of this Field Guide.



More on this topic can be found in the MSP Manual or another key resource



Additional resources on this topic, listed in full in the Bibliography.

1.2 Understanding conflict—and peace

Conflict is not, in itself, an unhealthy phenomenon. Rather, a certain amount of conflict is part of the human condition, and is often a necessary part of movements for change, for greater justice, and for peace. We are concerned about the damaging effects of **violence**: on people, on property, and on the prospects for development. Violence also has deep effects on the long-term social fabric, including issues of trust, national identity, and tolerance for difference. Therefore, the challenge for peacebuilding and conflict prevention is how to engage actively in conflict—to achieve necessary change—without escalating into destructive behaviours.

BOX 1: SOME DEFINITIONS OF CONFLICT

- “Social Conflict is an expressed struggle between two or more interdependent parties who perceive scarce resources, incompatible goals and interference.” (Hocker and Wilmot, 1978)
- “Conflict is an escalated competition at any system level between groups whose aim is to gain advantage in the area of power, resources, interests, and needs and at least one of the groups believes that this dimension of the relationship is mutually incompatible.” (Rasmussen, 1997)
- “Conflict is present when two or more parties perceive that their interests are incompatible, express hostile attitudes, or...pursue their interests through actions that damage the other parties. These parties may be individuals, small or large groups, and countries.” (Thomas-Holder and Henry, 2007)
- “For conflict to arise the actions of one party must affect another, if they do not, differences would exist, but conflict would not.” (Katz and Lawyer, 1993)

Source Developing Capacity for Conflict Analysis and Early Response (Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER) and UNDP, 2002).

Each of the definitions in Box 1 takes a slightly different view of conflict. As noted, conflict only becomes a serious problem—and the preoccupation of peace practitioners—when conflicting parties resort to violence (or show signs of doing so) to further their interests.

Because **conflict prevention** is concerned with addressing the structural conditions and root causes that lead to violence, it is also useful to refer to the concept of **human security**, which brings together the different factors and securities that contribute to making people and communities feel safe. Increasingly, analysts are not only focusing on conflict but also ask what defines peace. For instance, the Positive Peace Report and the Global Peace Index

describe the ‘positive peace factors’ as the capacity of a society to meet the needs of citizens, reduce the number of grievances that arise and resolve disagreements without the use of violence.¹

BOX 2: THE HUMAN SECURITY FRAMEWORK

Putting people and communities at the centre of analysis, Human Security acknowledges that people everywhere define their own security needs, and that they act or react accordingly. A human security approach implies that the analysis and how it is used is people centred, comprehensive, context-specific, and preventive. It encourages analysts to consider both capacities and vulnerabilities of people and groups at different levels. Human Security is summed up in three interconnected pillars:

1. *Freedom from Fear*: physical security—absence of wars, persecution, abuse
2. *Freedom from Want*: economic and food security, livelihoods, access to resources
3. *Freedom from Indignity*: political freedoms, equal rights and justice

Source Empowerment and Protection – Stories of Human Security, ed. by Kristin Wall, Jenny Aulin, and Gabriella Vogelaar (The Hague: GPPAC, 2014).

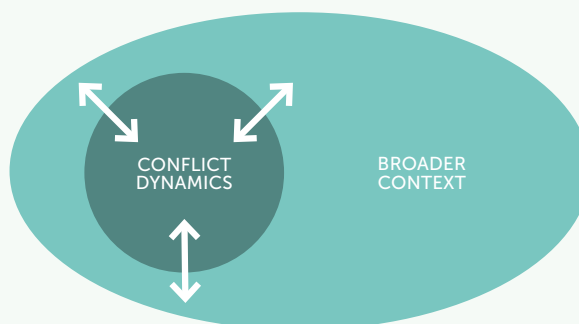
1.3 What is conflict analysis?

Conflict analysis is a crucial **tool** for the design, implementation and evaluation of peacebuilding programmes—whether for the prevention of armed conflict, attempting to bring war and violence to an end, to help societies recover in the aftermath of war, or to attain greater justice and equality. Conflict analysis is the deliberate study of the causes, actors, and dynamics of conflict. Peace practitioners engage in conflict analysis in the same way that a doctor performs a **diagnosis** on a patient before determining how to proceed with treatment. However, social and political conflicts are much more **complex** than diagnosis of a single patient, as they involve multiple actors, groups, issues and other factors. Nonetheless, conflict analysis helps organisations trying to address conflict to know how to promote positive changes in the situation to reduce the potential for violence and/or transform the conflict to make room for development and social justice.

Conflict analysis should be distinguished from context analysis—which seeks to understand the broader situation, including all economic, social, and political factors. A case in point is the issue of poverty. People often assert that the main cause of a conflict is poverty. Poverty may well be an important aspect of the broader context, but how does it generate conflict? It is necessary to examine the issues and dynamics around wealth, poverty, privilege, and access to resources to discover which economic factors contribute to the potential for violent conflict and how.

BOX 3: CONFLICT VERSUS CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The conflict exists within the context and is influenced by it, but the conflict has its own important dynamics.



¹ ‘Positive Peace Report’, Vision of Humanity, 2015

In some cases, the issue will be enormous differences in wealth based on ethnicity or race. In other words, the issue is not the absolute level of poverty, but the fact that some people gain while others lose along group lines. In another case, the problem may be associated with rampant corruption, in which certain officials make significant personal profits by misusing public funds and indirectly impeding development for all. Even here, further analysis may be important. Many societies tolerate or even encourage certain forms of favouritism, such as hiring your nephew or helping your sister to get a loan. At what point does nepotism become corruption and a cause of conflict?

In recent years, many approaches to conflict analysis have emerged, both formal and informal. Some models emphasise the **actors or stakeholders** in a conflict and seek to understand the motivations, needs, stated demands/positions, sources of power and influence and deeper interests of the various individuals, parties, and groups involved in a particular conflict. Other approaches focus on the **issues or problems**, the historical origins of the problems, the groups involved, how the issues manifest themselves, and the possible options for resolution. Another approach develops alternative future **scenarios** that describe realistic ways that the conflict might evolve, as a basis for planning interventions to avoid the worst possible futures and promote the best outcomes.

Another important dimension in conflict analysis relates to the **time or phase of conflict**. Some analyses strive to understand the long-term **structural causes** of conflict and how those might eventually result in violence and social breakdown. Other forms of analysis look for more immediate causes of **emerging crisis** through early warning systems, and often identify potential **triggers** of violence (such as elections, economic downturn, sharp increases in food or fuel costs). When the purpose of the analysis is associated with conflict prevention in particular, it will be important to explore both the deeper structural causes and more immediate ‘triggers’ of violence.

Discussions of conflict analysis use a sometimes confusing and overlapping array of terms, including actors, forces, triggers, proximate and structural causes and more. Often, these are lumped under the general category of ‘factors’ of conflict. Ultimately, what matters is that the terms and their purpose in any given conflict analysis exercise are clear to users, and applied consistently. This guide provides guidelines for integrating actor and issue analysis, as well as both long-term structural and shorter-term analysis of potential triggers.



The MSP Manual has a Glossary to help you navigate some commonly used terms

1.4 Guiding Principles for conflict analysis

The following principles inform our conflict analysis approach and methods:

- Conflict analysis/assessment is **not a neutral activity**. Depending on how it is done, it can be an intervention in itself. Analysis of the sources/causes of conflict is often a contested issue. A data collection and analysis process has potential for exacerbating conflicts. ‘Do no harm’ principles should be followed.
- Who performs data collection and analysis has a direct impact on the **reliability and credibility** of the resulting product. Local knowledge and information is paramount, but can be enriched by questions and observations from outsiders.² In any case, local culture must be respected.
- Analysis must be based on information from a full range of stakeholders in the conflict area; efforts should be made to seek information from **all perspectives**.
- When politically feasible, people living in the situation should lead the data collection and analysis process, supported by additional team members from outside when necessary. This can help ensure **cultural sensitivity**.
- In some circumstances, local people cannot or should not take a visible role in conflict analysis for political/safety reasons. At times, the understandable biases of local people will make it difficult for them to take the lead in conflict analysis; **sensitive outsiders** can conduct the process, with input from multiple local people.
- **Gender** perspectives should be integrated into the conflict analysis process throughout. In order to reflect several dimensions of the conflict and open additional ways of taking preventive action, a conflict analysis should be informed from a gender perspective.
- Conflict analysis is not an end in itself. It is only useful if it becomes the basis for further initiatives, such as programme planning and decision-making. The process should engage the question of **how to respond** to the conflict(s) analysed.
- Conflict analysis is **not a one-time task** to be completed during the programme development phase and then forgotten. Rather, the understanding of the conflict will evolve over time, and the documented analysis should be updated regularly as an integral part of programme work.
- The goal of a conflict analysis exercise is not THE perfect analysis! Rather, the analysis should be **good enough** for the purposes it will be used for—recognising that the analysis can be further developed and refined over time.



The section on ‘Key Considerations and Challenges’ in the MSP Manual goes into more detail on several of these principles.

BOX 4: SUMMARY OF CONFLICT ANALYSIS GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Do No Harm
2. Inclusivity
3. Local ownership
4. Insider-outsider roles and dynamics
5. Gender sensitivity
6. Purpose-oriented
7. Continuity

² In this Guide we use the terms “insiders” and “outsiders” to differentiate between people directly involved in the conflict through identity or geography, and those who are personally outside the conflict for those reasons.

In light of these principles, it is relevant to ask: **is there such a thing as ‘good enough’ conflict analysis?** Donors, peace practitioners and local organisations are all confronted with time and resource constraints. They may ask, therefore: “What is the least amount of analysis I can do and still develop credible and effective programming?” In many ways, the answer will depend on the purpose of the analysis—this is discussed further in Section 2. A broad indication is whether the organisation intends to address conflict factors directly, or whether the analysis will serve the purpose of conflict sensitivity of humanitarian assistance or development programmes in a conflict context. For instance, a dividers and connectors analysis may be sufficient for an organisation wishing to ensure that its humanitarian/development projects are conflict sensitive, whereas a more complete conflict analysis will be necessary if the aim is to implement programmes that will incorporate peacebuilding goals/objectives.



See more guidance on gender-sensitive conflict analysis in the **Gender and Conflict Analysis for Peacebuilders Toolkit (2015)** by Conciliation Resources.

1.5 Considerations for gender-sensitive analysis

As stated in the principles above, gender perspectives should be integrated into a conflict analysis process throughout—while, at the same time, remaining sensitive to local conditions and culture. This includes being aware of who was involved in planning and executing the analysis, determining potential ways to access gender-sensitive information while remaining respectful of local conditions and culture, and using gender-sensitive questions which can reveal different roles, capacities and vulnerabilities of men and women in conflict.

BOX 5: DEFINITION OF GENDER

Gender is an organising principle of social life, connected to other principles like class, race, age, ethnicity, etc. As an organising principle it ‘acts’ in all spheres of social life, in families, in communities, in organisations, and so on. As such, gender is a tool for analysis that helps us to understand (or to formulate questions) on the following levels:

- The activities as performed by women and men. Their tasks, roles, responsibilities.
- The degree in which women and men have access to and control over resources, rights and voice.
- 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.
- The self image of women and men.

Source Dorine Plantenga, “Working Definition: Gender as a Concept”, in: Gesa Bent and Sharon Bhagwan-Rolls GPPAC Gender Policy (The Hague: The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, December 2010).

The gender-sensitive perspective and the many tools available to support this lens of understanding conflict are relevant also from a broader human security or people-centred approach. The types of questions posed, and the sensitivities to diversity and power dynamics can also support a better understanding of other variations that exist within specific stakeholder groups – for instance related to age, social class, ethnicity (e.g. minorities) or sexual identity. Gender tools can therefore be relevant to support inclusivity in a broader sense.

The questions outlined below can help raise gender considerations for different phases and tasks of conflict analysis. In many cases, they can also apply to other variations and sub-groups that exist within stakeholder groups covered in the analysis.

Preparation:

- Have both men and women been actively involved in determining the overall purpose and ultimate uses of the conflict analysis to be produced?

Data gathering:

- Have both men and women been engaged in data gathering activities? Are they aware of the gender dimension and able to gather gender-sensitive data? If not, will training or other capacity building be provided to enable analysts to be gender-sensitive?

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- Have gender-sensitive indicators been developed and used during the conflict analysis? Have the views of both women and men been elicited?
- Are there practical problems in gathering data, conducting interviews and related tasks which are rooted in gender roles as practiced in the society, and have ways been found to address these problems?



The MSP manual has examples on how a gender-sensitive analysis can inform peacebuilding programmes.

Analysis:

- Have both women and men participated actively in analysing the data gathered and applying the analytical tools and frameworks?
- Has the resulting conflict analysis been validated by both women and men?
- What does the conflict analysis itself reflect regarding differential impacts of the conflict on women, men, girls, boys, youth and elderly (etc.)?
- Has the analysis process revealed any gender-based differences, in terms of particular potential roles for men or women in promoting peace or addressing specific conflict factors?
- Has the analysis revealed specific dynamics of the conflict that empower or disempower women and men in certain ways based on their gender? Could these dynamics inform steps taken towards a sustainable conflict prevention or peacebuilding process?

Results:

- Are the outcomes of the gender analysis followed-up, i.e. are gender-sensitive early response options developed as part of a preventive action plan?