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# Practitioner's Guide:

## Conflict Analysis



Deutsche Gesellschaft für  
Technische Zusammenarbeit  
(GTZ) GmbH



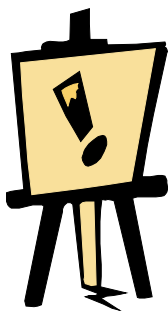
Bundesministerium für  
wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit  
und Entwicklung



**FRCS**  
Food Security, Regional  
Cooperation & Security  
(Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan)

### Conflict Analysis

#### Brief Description



The world-wide increase in intrastate violent conflicts and recent incidents of genocide and ethnic cleansing caused development policy to pay more attention to the theme of conflict management.

The purpose of conflict analysis in a developmental policy context is:

- ▶ To better understand why there is a conflict (historical and structural circumstances), and why this conflict is expressed violently.
- ▶ To better understand how stakeholders deal with conflicts.
- ▶ To inform the actors concerned how to respond sensitively to a conflict situation, thereby contributing to reducing or eliminating the likelihood of violent conflict.

Conflict analysis is a method for developing, in a systematic way, a multidimensional understanding of the causes and dynamics of conflict, as well as the opportunities for peace. In addition to the analysis of root causes, it focuses on the actors and their relationships. It captures the dynamic character of conflicts by observation from multiple perspectives, and takes into consideration the past, present and future. It combines methods from the social sciences, as well as methods from a systemic development approach.

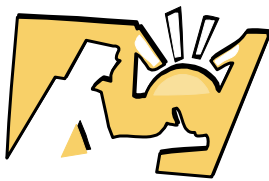
### Conflict Analysis

#### Proposed Main Users

Developmental Organisations, Non-Governmental Organisations, Private Sector, Change Agents



#### Purpose of the Method



Although Developmental Cooperation (DC) generally seeks to be neutral or non-partisan towards different conflict parties, the experiences with humanitarian aid and DC, in acute conflict situations at the beginning of the 1990s (Somalia, Rwanda), has shown that the impact of their work is not neutral, aggravating or reducing conflict. The risks of political instability and violence call for an in-depth understanding of the local situation, and place great demands on the management of developmental projects.

It is used to collect structure and to systematise information about different aspects of a conflicting environment. It analyses the socio-political and socio-economical context of an intervention from a particular perspective. It is the basis of an elaborate prognosis of future trends, and of the interaction of critical factors that may lead to destructive and violent behaviour.

In addition, conflict analysis can also be used as a first step for other purposes:

- ▶ **Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA):** Conflict Analysis can also serve as the first step towards a better understanding of the interaction of developmental interventions in a conflict situation. PCIA is a means to anticipate or evaluate the impact of interventions (Proposed, ongoing or completed) on the structures and processes that decrease the likelihood of conflict and strengthen the chances for peaceful co-existence. PCIA analyses the impact of project activities on conflicts and forms the basis for continuous conflict impact monitoring.
- ▶ **Early Warning:** Conflict Analysis can also serve as the basis for systematic observation of a latent conflict over a longer period of time, in order to either detect signs of conflict escalation in time (early warning itself), or to initiate preventive measures (early response, early action).

### Conflict Analysis

#### Advantages



- ▶ The involvement of project staff leads to an increase in their professional capability to work in complex environments.
- ▶ Conflict analysis encourages project teams to **think beyond their set objectives and planned impacts**, and to consciously consider the broader environment (Including cultural, political, and socio-economic factors) within which the project operates.
- ▶ Making conscious and explicit attempts to “**integrate a conflict lens**” into a project usually results in making additional attempts in adopting common good practices such as participation, transparency, and application of developmental policy criteria such as poverty orientation, good governance and sustainability.

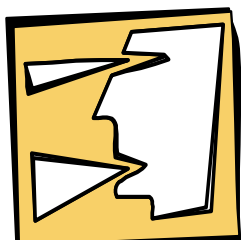
#### Limitations



- ▶ Conflict analysis might provoke various forms of **opposition from within and resistance from outside**.
- ▶ **Conflict analysis cannot be conducted at any moment.** Conflict analysis itself presents an intervention in the conflict, and therefore involves the risk of aggravating existing tensions.
- ▶ **Data collection is constrained.** In areas where free articulation of opinion might entail personal security risks for staff, first hand information cannot be obtained. In addition to that, most people do not want ‘outsiders’ to find out about ‘the state of internal affairs’.
- ▶ The quality of the conflict analysis depends on the **local capacity for professional conduct of conflict analysis**. There is no substitute for skilled regional analysts.
- ▶ Most of the time, conflict analysis is a **snapshot of a present situation**. Conflicts are highly dynamic and a regular updating mechanism is often needed.

### Conflict Analysis

#### Principles & General Procedures



#### Basics

There is no standardised method for conducting conflict analysis. The approach chosen varies according to the:

- ▶ Objectives and needs of the end user;
- ▶ Phase and nature of the conflict;
- ▶ Capacity of the end user to influence the conflict.

Therefore, what is presented below can not serve as a blueprint, but only as a collection of guiding principles.

Conflict analysis can be performed at the country and at the project level. At the country level, the national implications of the conflict and attempts to develop long-term political strategies of conflict management are examined. At the project level, the primary focus is on local impacts of the conflict, the interaction of the dynamics of the local and national levels, or on local conflicts themselves, and on devising strategies for interventions that respond sensitively to conflict. These guidelines concentrate on conflict analysis on the project level.

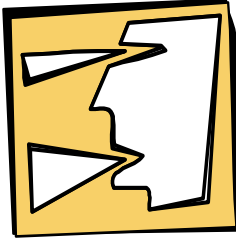
It is generally difficult to predict the onset or escalation of particular conflicts. Structural tensions alone do not lead to conflict. According to DfID (2002), the interactions between the following factors are critical:

- ▶ Societal structural vulnerability.
- ▶ The opportunity for some actors to benefit from instability and violence (This includes political as well as economic benefits).
- ▶ A society's capacity to manage or contain conflict.

The **main steps and principles** needed to analyse conflict are given below. Selected analytical tools are mentioned for most steps which help to structure or visualise complex information.

### Conflict Analysis

#### Principles & General Procedures



#### Structural analysis

This refers to the kind of preparatory work that is essential for conflict analysis and the analysis of long-term factors (security-related, political, economic and social) underlying conflict.

##### 1. Define the objective and potential area of application of the conflict analysis.

The 'why' and 'what' of conducting conflict analysis needs to be sufficiently clear for everybody involved before one can think of the 'how', which deals with questions concerning the method itself.

- ▶ **Steps to be taken:** Discuss and define objective and area of application of the conflict analysis

##### 2. Definition of the term 'conflict'

For analytical purposes, a common and clear understanding of the term 'conflict' has to be developed, which also requires translation into the respective local languages. Where open discussion about conflict is impossible, less awkward and more general or abstract ways to approach the subject have to be sought.

- ▶ **Steps to be taken:** Discuss and define, for the purpose of the analysis, the term 'conflict' (Consider thinking of less awkward terms).

##### 3. Compilation of a broad contextual analysis

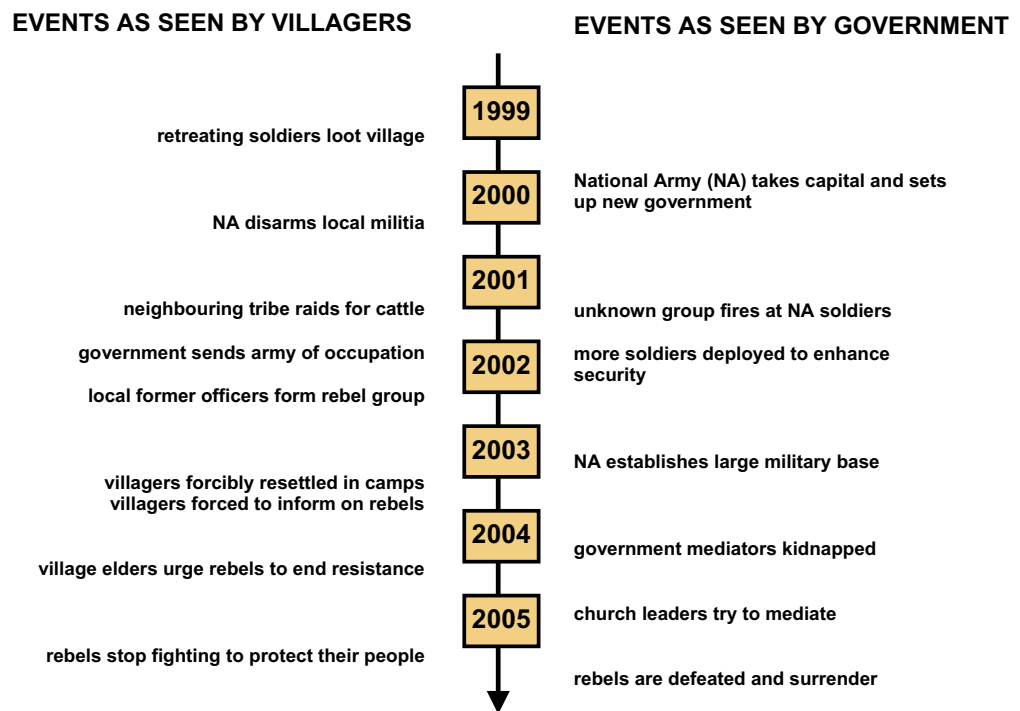
Describe the history of the conflict to date, and physical and demographic features relevant to the conflict. Conflicts have their own unique history, and each one runs its own unique course with various phases and levels of intensity and violence. It is important to recognise these various phases because they each present different challenges and opportunities for external actors as they attempt to exert influence. In particular, many internal conflicts have the tendency to drag on over years and decades with varying conflict intensity.

## Conflict Analysis

### Principles & General Procedures

- ▶ **Steps to be taken:** Review existing literature (Desk study). Conduct interviews with selected experts representing a broad spectrum of society. Discuss and clarify the various perspectives of stakeholders, looking at the history of the conflict (Analytical tools: conflict phases, timeline).

Figure 1: Timeline of events seen from different perspectives



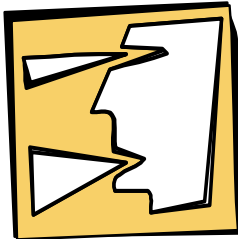
#### 4. Mapping out and weighing, in term of relative importance, sources of tension and conflict

The purposes of the analytical process are:

- ▶ To separate sources of tensions into security, political, social and economic sectors, as well as into local, regional, national and international levels;
- ▶ To identify connections and linkages among them;
- ▶ To develop an initial judgement of the key sources of conflict.

## Conflict Analysis

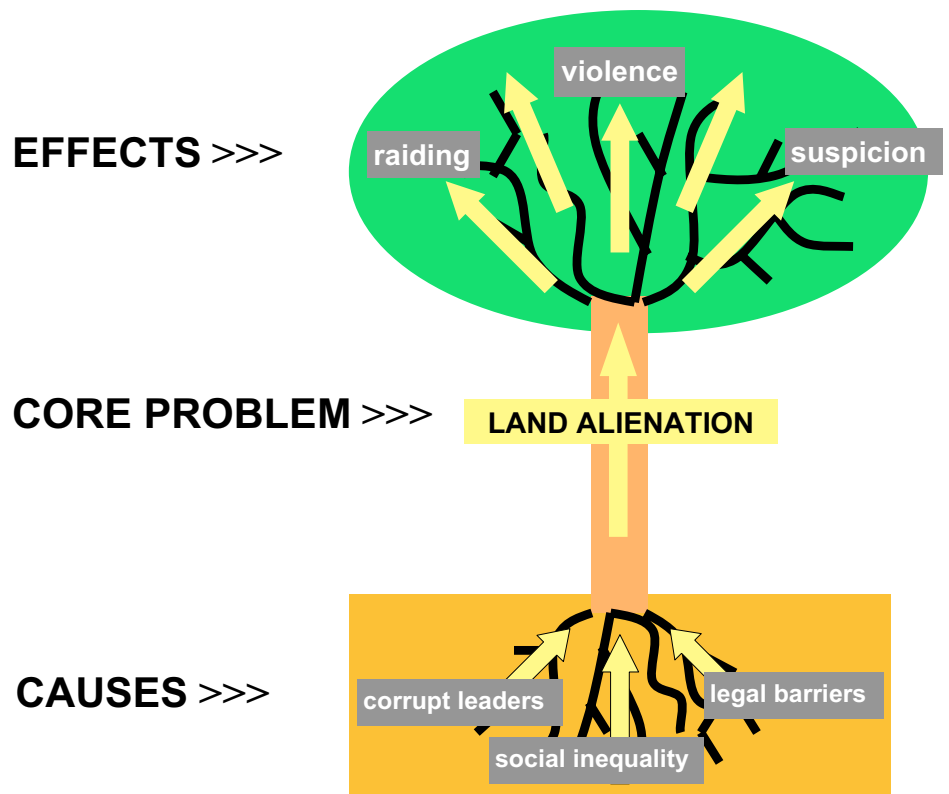
### Principles & General Procedures



Apart from the key factors, conflict situations are often stabilised or prolonged by a whole range of other factors. These factors might only arise as a result of the conflict; in some cases, they are based on a hardening of positions; in others, there are economic and other interests involved. These are conflict prolonging or secondary conflict factors, which sometimes have a greater influence on the conflict than the original causes.

- **Steps to be taken:** Structure information into analytical categories. Identify and differentiate key sources of tensions from conflict prolonging factors (Analytical tool: conflict tree). Assess the relevance of identified topics for own programme/project. Elaborate preliminary conflict analysis. Identify aspects still to be clarified.

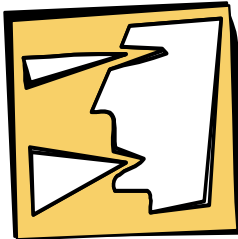
Figure 2: Conflict tree





## Conflict Analysis

### Principles & General Procedures

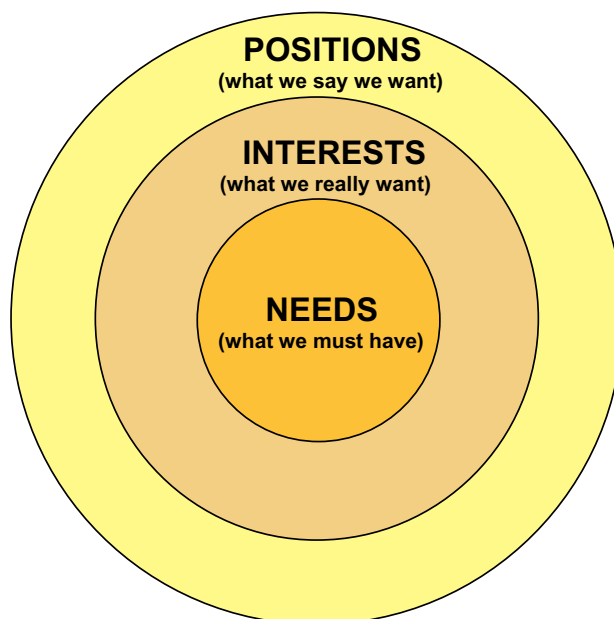


### Actor Analysis

An actor-oriented analysis is focused on shorter-term incentives and interests. As conflicts are about perceptions and the meaning that people attribute to events, policies, institutions, etc., the analysis has to be based on a wide range of views about its sources.

- ▶ **Steps to be taken:** List all relevant actors, who can significantly influence the conflict or are most vulnerable to it. The list of actors should differentiate between the local, regional and national levels, and should also take into account other groups, which are allied with the parties or which are able to influence them. Analyse for each actor, their interests, relations, capacities, peace agendas, incentives:
- ▶ **Interests:** What interests do they have in relation to the conflict, and how do these interests influence the conflict?
- ▶ **Relations:** What are the relationships between the various actors?
- ▶ **Capacities:** What capacities do they have to negatively or positively influence conflict?
- ▶ **Peace agendas:** Do they have an interest in peace? What kind of peace do they want?
- ▶ **Incentives:** What kind of incentives could be offered to them to choose peace? Or to disengage from the conflict?

Figure 3: The onion

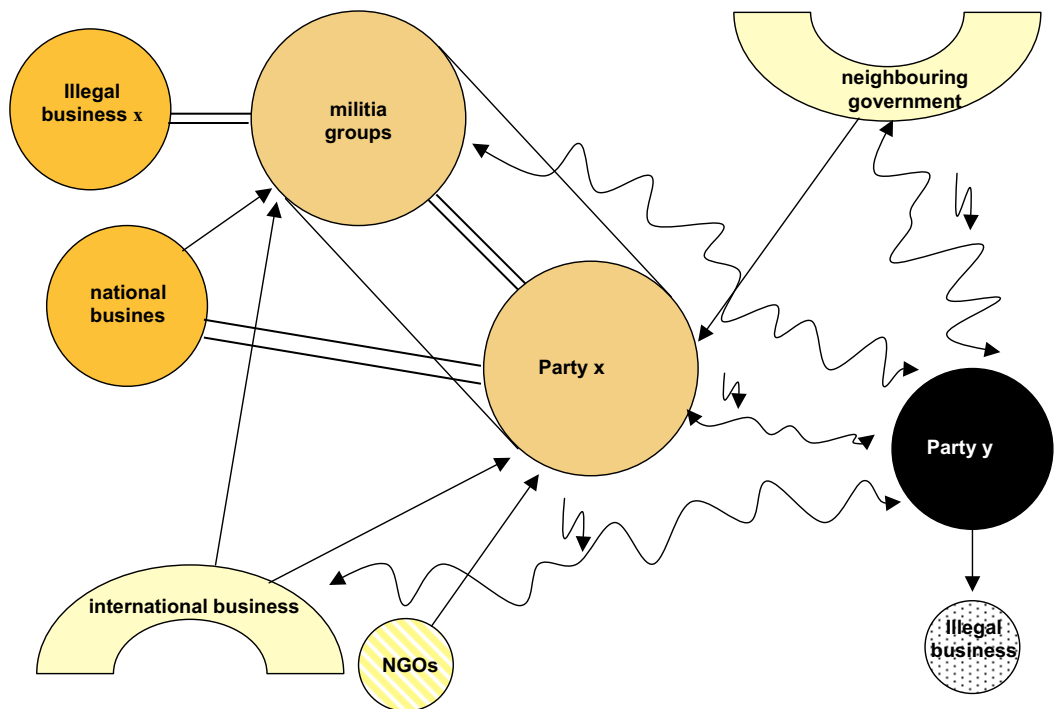


## Conflict Analysis

### Principles & General Procedures

- **Identify networks of relationships between the actors:** patterns of power, alliances, neutral third parties and potential partners for cooperation (Recommended analytical tool: conflict mapping).

Figure 4: Conflict map

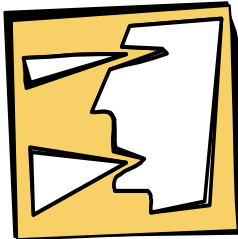


### Analysis of Dynamics

The next step is to assess important factors, which will presumably influence the course of the conflict, i.e. the likelihood for the conflict to increase, decrease or remain stable. Longer term trends and shorter term triggers should be investigated. This also includes an assessment of strategies employed by the local population to either adapt to gradual trends or to cope with sudden shocks and/or fighting. Based on this, predictions of future conflict scenarios can be attempted. Interpretation and prediction of conflict trends are not exact sciences and will never be – at best, they will be about identifying plausible possibilities.

### Conflict Analysis

#### Principles & General Procedures



- ▶ **Steps to be taken:** List longer term trends (Analytical tool: trend analysis). Identify the areas, in which peaceful conflict management has so far failed to make progress. Determine the direction, in which these areas are likely to develop in the near future. For example, infringements of human rights are an important area of conflict; as members of the police all belong to the dominant ethnic group, which is known not to respect human rights, and as justice is lacking, the trend is – without foreseeable interventions - most likely to continue.
- ▶ Assess the likely shorter term triggers. Identify the incidences, which are likely to have destabilising effects. For example, where xenophobic attitudes already exist, the influx of refugees is likely to aggravate tensions; where the level of frustration about official corruption is high, and a major corruption scandal confirms popular mistrust and rumours.
- ▶ Assess which factors are likely to accelerate or reduce destructive conflict dynamics (Including coping strategies of people). Every society in conflict has both the capacity for peace and for war. Identify systems and institutions, attitudes and actions, values and interests, experiences and symbols, and occasions that can mitigate or manage the tensions. For example, mitigating factors could be an independent media able to present a plurality of views, continued public confidence in the judicial process, etc.
- ▶ Think through a range of potential future conflict scenarios (Analytical tool: conflict scenario). Scenarios are particularly useful in conflict situations, where it is difficult to foresee how the conflict will develop in future. Scenarios should always be drawn up in cases, where there are dangers of rapid escalation of violence and a humanitarian crisis. By producing conflict scenarios, DC is able to prepare itself in advance for certain developments, and to make plans accordingly.
- ▶ Review the results and think of potential alternative directions, in which the conflict could develop, and the factors, which determine this direction.
- ▶ Identify the indicators that will define these scenarios.
- ▶ Make a judgement on which scenarios are most likely, and on which one's own planning should be based.

While the conflict analysis part ends here, the following step should be the consideration of the role of development interventions and other responses. On basis of the assessment of how the responses interact with the dynamics of the conflict, the potential for more coherent, effective and co-ordinated interventions can be evaluated. Peace and Conflict Assessment would build on the analysis to investigate the interaction between DC and the dynamics of conflict and peace.

### Conflict Analysis

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